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Multiple methodologies: using community-based participatory research and decolonizing methodologies in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In this project, we examined the development of a sustainable inclusive education system in western Kenya by combining community-based participatory research (CBPR) and decolonizing methodologies. Through three cycles of qualitative interviews with stakeholders in inclusive education, participants explained what they saw as foundational components of how to create more inclusive primary school classrooms utilizing existing school and community resources. The combination of CBPR and decolonizing methodologies, along with other project factors ultimately led to more inclusive placements for primary students with disabilities. We highlight this increase enrollment of students with disabilities in primary schools with excerpts from qualitative interviews with participants. In addition to the increase of the number of students with disabilities accessing schools for the first time, we found many methodological tensions inherent in this research. Such challenges included: researcher positionality, researcher outsider status, decolonizing approaches to language, and disseminating results in meaningful, ethical, and culturally appropriate ways.

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Community-based participatory research (CBPR); decolonizing methodologies; qualitative research; Kenya; inclusive education

Aims of research

The aim of this paper is to provide one example of what transnational qualitative research methods can look like when informed by community-based participatory research (CBPR) and decolonizing methods. As two researchers, one insider (i.e. from the local community) and one outsider (i.e. not from the region), we collaborated with local stakeholders in inclusive education to increase the number of children with disabilities accessing primary education classrooms in western Kenya. The approaches we outline here are not intended to be prescriptive or absolute. Rather, they are meant to highlight the complexities the inclusion committees collectively negotiated as some students with disabilities began attending primary school for the first time. Our future research plan is to apply similar CBPR and decolonizing methods we used in Kenya to under-resourced schools in the global North.[1]

By applying such methodological lessons learned from Kenya to Northern countries, we attempt to shift the construction of Kenya as one of many 'poor' countries in Africa consistently in need of help from the global North, and reframe Kenyan schools as potential sources of creativity, resourcefulness, and resiliency that can inform Northern inclusive educational practices. We feel the transnational implications of such paradigm shifts are increasingly important as schools in Northern countries are becoming more diverse with students who carry labels of 'refugee,' 'immigrant,' 'disabled,' or any number

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of combinations thereof. To adequately support such school diversity requires engaging local school communities in research methodologies that maximize existing resources and develop creative ways to support a wide array of students in inclusive classrooms.

In this project, we expanded on our previous research in western Kenya and examined the use of inclusion committees (one committee at each school site) as one potential strategy to increase the number of students with disabilities attending inclusive primary schools at two locations (Damiani, Elder, & Okongo, 2016; Elder, Damiani, & Oswago, 2015). We facilitated three cycles of CBPR where inclusion committee members set, monitored, and adjusted research goals at each school site. We conducted teacher trainings and classroom observations, encouraged teachers to engage in structured lesson planning, and conducted individual and group interviews with participants.[2]

Through CBPR and decolonizing methods, we observed the tensions that arose from attempting to co-create a new model for post-colonial inclusive education reform. We studied the confounding progress narrative that exists in post-colonial spaces where Northern educators collaborate with local stakeholders on the development of inclusive education to provide more equitable schooling access for students with disabilities. Critics of such approaches will likely claim that this work is inherently neo-colonial, and reifies imposed Northern oppression (Mwaura, 2005). Although there is truth to such perspectives, we feel that these critiques are too one-dimensional and do not allow for alternatives that may have positive outcomes for communities engaged in such transnational collaborative work (Elder & Foley, 2015).

Theoretical frameworks

For this project, we utilized multiple theoretical frameworks to inform our methods in this project. To address the post-colonial realities of Kenya, we drew on post-colonial and decolonial studies as well as critical cultural theory as formerly colonized peoples cannot return to their pre-colonial ways of being (Fanon, 1963; Grech, 2015; Hall, 1990). Fanon (1963) described post-colonial populations as 'individuals without an anchor' who cannot return to their pre-colonial roots (p. 176). In this project, being responsive to these realities was critically important as the work took place in post-colonial and cross-cultural contexts.

Hall (1990) conceptualized oppressive colonial systems through two vectors – 'the vector of similarity and continuity,' and 'the vector of difference and rupture' (p. 226). When applied to education, the vector of similarity and continuity connects the current Kenyan education system with its colonial past. Similarly, the vector of difference and rupture dislocates the education system onto a different trajectory inherently different from, but simultaneously influenced by the first vector. At the point of rupture, tension is created between the past and the present. Such a rupture allows new contexts and structures to develop which influences the development of new ways of knowing in the world. We conceptualize the methodologies enacted in this project as potential points of rupture that may have allowed aspects of a new inclusive education system of education to develop in the region.

In addition to the above frameworks, implementation of decolonizing methodologies, as outlined by Smith (1999), was at the forefront of this project. Decolonizing methods include: conducting research in the local language (Skutnabb -Kangas, 2000), promoting local ways of knowing, and encouraging local participants to direct the research (Smith, 1999). Swadener and Mutua's (2008) work is important to note here as well as they apply Smith's (1999) work to indigenous populations in Kenya. Along with decolonizing methodologies, anti-oppressive pedagogy, specifically Freire's (1970) work on iterations of participatory research further informed our approach to this project. Our approaches to inquiry are rooted in community-based participatory research (CBPR). Participants in CBPR projects emphasize community collaboration and maintain collaborative practices with the ultimate goal of creating actions with clear and immediate application to local communities (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998; Stanton, 2014).

Additionally, we approached this project from a disability studies perspective. Disability studies reject the notion frequently found in Kenya and around the world in which disabilities are constructed

as negative or inherently in need of medicalized fixes and located within the individual (Ferri, 2006; Humphrey, 2000; Linton, 1998, 2005; Marks, 1997; Taylor, 2006; Young & Mintz, 2008). We also utilized a critical disability studies (CDS) lens which promotes participatory citizenship of people with disabilities in Southern countries. Critical disability studies scholars question the fact that disability theory remains grounded in the global North and then forcefully applied to regions in the global South with 'minimal attention paid to cultures, context, and histories, and rarely responsive or even acknowledging Southern voices, perspectives and theories that have been developing as a counter discourse' (Grech & Soldatic, 2014, p. 1).

Research questions

Informed by the literature discussed above, the following research questions guided this project:

(1) What are the local meanings and discourses of disability and inclusion operating within the western Kenyan primary school context?
(2) What methodologies do inclusion committee members enact in order to increase the number of students with disabilities in primary schools in western Kenya?

In the following section, we address our respective positionalities and how they pertain to the Kenyan context. Then, we introduce the various qualitative methodologies used in this project and present excerpts from qualitative interviews with project participants that show an increased enrollment of students with disabilities in primary schools. We conclude by discussing the implications of applying similar research methods in Northern countries, and how such methods can inform the development of similar practices in under-resourced schools in the United States and other countries in the global North.

Positionality

Both authors of this work took leadership roles in this project. Author One was the initial project facilitator. Author Two was hired as a Luo–English interpreter who later assumed a leadership role as the project evolved. Since Author One's positionality is inherently tied to Northern perspectives on disability and education, acknowledging his location is critical. Because he is an outsider in Kenya, he has no desire to speak *for* colonized people. However, he believes international collaboration is important so that colonized populations have allies committed to decolonizing practices outside of their communities (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Author One is aware that his privileged, educated position allows him to analyze indigenous epistemologies, but only through his own partial lens. He was raised in a middle-class European-American family and is aware of the many unearned privileges he has. In his research, he actively investigates how his work may perpetuate colonizing, marginalizing, or oppressive systems. His hope is that his Kenyan colleagues view him as an allied other who values local ways of knowing, and one who actively deconstructs positivist perspectives of the Northern academy. His positionality as an outsider is unavoidable since his epistemological foundations come from his experiences in the Northern academy. However, throughout this project, he attempted to continually understand these influences on his attempts at conducting CBPR and decolonizing research.

Similarly tied to his positionality as an outsider, Author One's dual roles of facilitator and researcher is something he felt was important to acknowledge throughout the project and document throughout this paper. He debriefed with the Luo–English interpreter (Author Two) after each project-related meeting and had regular open dialogs with committee members through member checks about his interpretations of project events. He knew he missed many cultural nuances, especially in the beginning of the project, and tried to address them as frequently as possible.

Author Two is a Kenyan who comes from a Luo community along the shores of Lake Victoria. Being a member of the Luo community, he was initially hired as a Luo–English interpreter and translator for the project. Initially, Author Two was not very conversant with inclusive education, CBPR, and decolonizing

methodologies. However, as his involvement and contributions to the project increased, so did his understanding and fluency with such topics and methodologies. His undertaking of business-related courses provided him analytical skills, communication skills, and the ability to multitask in order to understand the project better. This led him to assume the role of research facilitator. As a research facilitator, Author Two organized and ran various committee meetings whenever Author One was engaged in various research-related activities outside of the region. Author Two's insider status allowed him to independently oversee and successfully manage the project with maximum cooperation from pupils, teachers and community members who were involved in the committee.

Intersectional connections to transnational research methods

Much like participatory research resists uniform classification between its various methodological forms; it similarly intersects with a variety of disciplines in a multitude of ways. It is not enough to claim that engaging marginalized communities in CBPR methods will ensure participants will be 'empowered' and live more socially just lives. A notion of empowerment is troubling because it assumes that outside researchers allow participants to become empowered and establishes an unequal power dynamic (Bishop, 1998). Researchers who engage local communities in participatory research need to be knowledgeable of such pitfalls and understand the intersectional factors that may be present in the research context. Due to the colonized and indigenous populations in Kenya, decolonizing methodologies should inform participatory research approaches. Similarly, since participatory research is not just about *who* is involved in research, but also *how* they are engaged, participatory approaches should also incorporate decolonizing research methods. We outline these intersections briefly below.

An introduction to participatory research

The beginnings of participatory research can be traced to scholars like Paulo Freire (1970), whose critical engagement with oppressed populations led to the development of participatory research methods (Barinaga & Parker, 2013). Freire (1970) argued that the banking model of education (i.e. teachers filling up empty student minds with knowledge) did little more than prepare learners to automatically comply with hegemonic and oppressive teaching methods that replicate and maintain historic marginalization. Freire believed that social and political change could occur through an active process of dialog and reflection. Participatory reflexive processes are what Freire called praxis. Cycles of dialog and reflection are the foundations of participatory research (Herr & Anderson, 2005; Schön, 1983). It is through praxis that Freire felt hegemonic knowledge production could be decentered and historically marginalized populations could live more socially just and self-directed lives.

Depending on the lens a researcher chooses, participatory research can serve many different purposes (Wulfhorst, Eisenhauer, Gripne, & Ward, 2008). It can be a framework (Guevara, 1996), a method, a paradigm (Finn, 1994; Guevara, 1996; McTaggart, 1991), a model (Guevara, 1996; Sims & Bentley, 2002), an approach (Sims & Bentley, 2002), or a specific way to view the world (Reason & Bradbury, 2001). Participatory research is research done *with* rather than *on* local communities (Bamberger & Cahill, 2013; Bhattacharya, 2008; Jurkowski, 2008; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000; Ochocka, Moorlag, & Janzen, 2010; Whyte, 1989; Winkler, 2013; Wulfhorst et al., 2008).

As a research model, Wulfhorst et al. (2008) noted that participatory research allows for participants to guide the direction of research, including forming research questions, conducting the research, applying the outcomes to the targeted community and, at times, conducting analysis. For Barinaga and Parker (2013), participatory research challenges Northern forms of scholarship and emphasizes the co-production of transformative outcomes by the researchers and marginalized communities. Participatory research is practical, with political and epistemological consequences (Anderson, 2002; Barinaga & Parker, 2013; Bishop, 1998; Lather, 1991).

In the following sections, we describe both CBPR and decolonizing methodologies, and why we felt using both was a good fit for our project. Then we introduce the context of western Kenya, and detail our methods before discussing the implications of such approaches to research.

Why CBPR?

Though there are many approaches to participatory research we could have used to address the complex methodological realities of this project, we chose CBPR. Community-based participatory research engages community participants, but not necessarily in all phases of the project (i.e. analysis and publication) (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2003). Participants are not treated as uninformed subjects. Rather, they collaborate with researchers to provide research ideas, questions, and guide methodological directions (Greenwood & Levin, 1998; Wulfhorst et al., 2008). Like other forms of participatory research, the CBPR process is similarly iterative, cyclical and action-oriented, and shifts as the needs of the community change (Beh, Bruyere, & Lolosoli, 2013; Somekh, 2006).

Researchers have used CBPR methodology to mobilize other historically marginalized populations around the world (Beh et al., 2013; Bradley & Puoane, 2007; Habgood, 1998). Although CBPR has a strong history in Northern cultures, forms of it have also been implemented in certain cultures in sub-Saharan Africa, namely Kenya. Village chiefs in Kenya use 'marbaraza,' or chiefs' council, as a way to conduct community meetings and educate citizens on local issues (Naanyu et al., 2010). Historically, marbaraza were used to resolve conflicts between tribal factions prior to modern politics. A 'baraza,' singular of marbaraza, was an offering of peace and a pre-colonial method of conflict resolution (Boneza, 2006). With a history of community-based approaches to social issues in Sub-Saharan Africa (e.g. high rates of disease, poverty, rapid urbanization), participatory researchers view CBPR as a viable and familiar methodology that has the potential to build community capacity in the region (Kamanda et al., 2013). A CBPR approach, according to Tikly and Barrett (2013), is a way to make education socially and economically important to indigenous people who have to compete to sustain their lives in a progressively Northern-dominated world. It is for these reasons that we chose CBPR as one methodology of this project.

Why decolonizing methodology?

In addition to the CBPR framework, implementation of decolonizing methodologies, as outlined by Smith (1999), was at the forefront of this project. As with other critical approaches to research, a key tenet of decolonizing research is decentering the Northern academy and redistributing power to the margins (i.e. to those who have been historically marginalized) (hooks, 1989; McCarthy, 1998). Such researchers take an active role in performing decolonizing acts that focus on social justice, activism (Kaomea, 2004, 2005; Smith, 1999; Warrior, 1995; Womack, 1999). Decolonizing methods include: conducting research in the local language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), promoting local ways of knowing, and encouraging local participants to direct the research (Smith, 1999).

To minimize the potential colonizing effects of research in post-colonial contexts, Smith (1999) suggested researchers ask the following questions:

> Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated? ... Are they useful to us? Can they fix up our generator? Can they actually do anything? (p. 10)

The questions above can help create a shift in power in participatory research from researcher to participant and lay the foundations for collaboration and trust that are essential in decolonizing participatory research (Kral, 2014). These essential elements were why we chose to use decolonizing methodologies along with CBPR.

Context

This project took place in a Luo region of western Kenya. Ocholla-Ayayo (1976) published an ethnohistorical piece on the Indigenous southern Luo people and describes them as an 'agrico-pastoral-fishing society' (p. 11). Historically for the Luo, a large number of livestock is a sign of wealth, and typical crops grown in the region include: sorghum, finger millet, wheat, and common beans (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976). The Luo people traditionally value kinship, and tend to be patriarchal. Kinship needs are typically met when a Luo has other people to love and care for. Interpersonal relationships are important in Luo culture, and one premise of Luo reasoning states, 'Every relationship and action is defineable [*sic*] in terms of honour and good name' (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 42). Traditional forms of Luo education involve: verbal symbols (i.e. nodding, shaking head), symbolic learning (i.e. parents passing down generational knowledge to children), and learning through patterns (i.e. repetition of ancestral ways of living). Respect is at the core of traditional Luo education with the main goal of 'bringing up brave but respectful members of society' (Ocholla-Ayayo, 1976, p. 62).

This research was enacted at two sites – Dhiang School and Punda School. Each site contained one special school and one primary school, and were located at opposite borders of a rural school district in western Kenya. There are dormitories at both school sites campus for students who cannot commute to and from school on a daily basis due to physical disabilities or chronic illnesses, or for Deaf students whose parents live too far away to transport their child to school each day. Students at both school sites were in 'pre-unit' (pre-school/kindergarten in the U.S.) through 'standard six' (grade six in the U.S.). Both project sites were particularly impacted by many barriers to education.

Current research suggests that over one million students with disabilities are excluded from equitable educational opportunities in Kenya (Ministry of Education, 2008). According to the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR) (2011), 67% of students in Kenya with disabilities receive some form of primary education, 19% participate in secondary education, and 2% attend universities. All schools in these villages were in rural, agrarian communities, and most people did not have access to electricity or running water. There was a limited food supply, which was oftentimes exacerbated by drought and high rates of disease. These statistics are connected to the widely held belief that disability is a curse in western Kenya.

The curse associated with disability in many African cultures has been well documented (Abosi, 2003; Ihunnah, 1984; Mukuria, 2012). During project meetings and interviews, almost all participants we interviewed discussed some form of disability-related cultural taboo or stigma operating in the local primary school context (see Research Question #1). The following excerpt from an interview with a primary school teacher at Punda School exemplifies a commonly held belief on how disability is constructed and viewed in this region of western Kenya.

> TEACHER: We hear that [for a] long time they were thrown away. Once you detected that you [have] given birth to a child who is, unfortunately … who is unable, they could be taken to the bush and then left there to die or to be eaten by wild animals.
>
> AUTHOR ONE: And why do you think that is? Where does that come from that idea that children with disabilities should be thrown away?
>
> TEACHER: Because they were seen as if they were just a wastage. And parents were also ashamed of that because once you've given birth to such kind of a kid it is somehow shameful. They think that maybe through your parents, those grandparents, they did something that was not worthy. That could portray the weakness of your parents. And then they also saw them just as kids who were just there to eat, but not to help. They were a burden. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 9, 2015)

Methods

The purpose of this project was to create sustainable and replicable inclusive practices at two school sites in western Kenya through engagement with inclusion committee members. We held weekly committee meetings to monitor the progress of the development of an inclusive education system at four

schools in each respective region of the school district. In this project, to make sense of data we used qualitative analysis informed by CBPR and decolonizing methodologies.

The aim of qualitative research is to attempt to uncover how people 'make sense out of what is happening to them' (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 248). It is one way to better understand how individuals experience the world 'from their own frames of reference' (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 27). Qualitative research approaches can help researchers to understand how people create meaning in their lives. Flick (2007) maintained that qualitative research can help to make sense of 'how people construct the world around them' (p. ix). In Kenya, we used qualitative methodology 'to bring to the surface stories of those whose voices have not been heard, those who have been oppressed or disenfranchised in schools' (Pugach, 2001, p. 443). A qualitative approach provided a platform for participants to share their perspectives and experiences that may otherwise be ignored on their own terms (DeVault, 1999; Pugach, 2001).

Design

In this project, we used a qualitative approach to data analysis (i.e. grounded theory) informed by CBPR and decolonizing methods. Author One used a constructivist grounded theory approach, along with a constant comparison method, as outlined by Charmaz and Mitchell (2001) to inform his analysis. Continual comparative analysis allowed him to evaluate data while it was collected, and required him to complicate his understandings of the findings throughout the project (Charmaz, 2005). Weekly inclusion committee meetings and conversations along with three cycles of interviews with committee members from each school site provided the forum for participatory dialog. We used qualitative methods to investigate multiple perspectives and realities in a variety of school and community contexts (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

We asked participants to reflect on research questions, to plan and implement iterative next steps, and to monitor goal progress. Due to time and geographical constraints, only the Luo-English interpreter (Author Two) co-authored this paper. However, participants were encouraged to participate in the authoring, publishing, and dissemination of other forms of local publication (i.e. community awareness activities, reports to schools, reports to chief's council meetings). Communication with participants took place in modes that were most accessible and widely available (i.e. in person, mobile phone, SMS messaging, email).

Benson[3]: a critical insider

Author One met Benson in California in 2007 where Author One was a special education teacher. The two were randomly introduced by Author One's doctor when Author One was receiving vaccinations to conduct educational research in the Middle East. Author One's doctor connected him to Benson, and Benson came to observe Author One's inclusive education program the following day. While there, Benson commented that he had long wanted to make his local school district more inclusive, and was interested in collaborating to create similar inclusive programs in western Kenya.[4] Author One and Benson maintained contact throughout the years, and over time, planned a collaborative project in July 2011. That is why this research takes place where Benson lives in western Kenya. During the initial 2011 project, Author One partnered with the local Ministry of Education office in western Kenya. Benson, had just been promoted from a special education teacher, to an EARC in the local Ministry of Education where his main role was to identify children with disabilities in the community and facilitate their attendance in school. Benson felt the special schools in Kenya were not where students with disabilities should learn. He wanted them to be included in age-appropriate, primary school classrooms. Since 2011 and with another project in 2013, work between Author One and Benson has been based largely on creating more equitable access to primary education for students with disabilities in Benson's local school district.[5]

From the start of this partnership, Benson has had immense influence and power in the collaborative projects. He is the insider providing the outsider (Author One) with access to teachers, interpreters, local knowledge, schools, administration, students, parents, and community participants. Benson is a highly respected school leader, a valued local preacher, and a trusted community organizer. Without his willingness to collaborate and to provide Author One with intimate access to the local community, this project would not have been possible.

Project sites

Benson helped identify the two school sites that included four schools prior to Author One's arrival. There are approximately 28,000 primary school students with and without disabilities in the county (14,297 boys, 13,712 girls). Dhiang School (about 436 students at the school site) was on the southern border of the district and housed a special school for children with physical disabilities and primary school on the same campus. Physical proximity and a few barbed wire fences separated the two schools, but students shared a common playground area. It was not uncommon to see students from the primary school pushing students from the special school in their wheelchairs around the playground. In the past, a few students with only physical disabilities (i.e. without other intellectual or behavioral disability labels) were mainstreamed into the primary school daily. However, the special school now practices reverse inclusion where students without disabilities from local villages can attend if they so choose. The primary school similarly supports students with disabilities, but according to the head teacher, these disabilities are not significant enough to warrant placement at a special school.

Punda School (about 400 students at the school site) is on the northern border of the district and houses a school for the Deaf[6] and a primary school on adjacent campuses that are separated by a barbed wire fence. Prior to this project, students episodically interacted during brief extra-curricular activities (e.g. a dance performance). Aside from having students with a range of hearing impairments at the school for the Deaf, the school also supports students with intellectual disabilities, vision impairments, and autism. According to the head teacher at the primary school there are a few students with disabilities, but none with disabilities that are significant enough to warrant placement at a special school.

Timeline

Once school sites were identified in May 2015, Benson asked the head teachers to provide letters of support for the project for the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Syracuse University. We received IRB approval in June, and Author One arrived in Kenya in August. Cycle #1 ran from mid-September to mid-October, Cycle #2 ran from mid-October to mid-November, and Cycle #3 ran from early January to early February. The gap in Cycles #2 and #3 is due to the end of one school term and the start of another. Authors One and Two conducted 1:1 interviews for adult participants and small group interviews for student interviews at the end of each cycle of research.

Project groundwork

Benson helped set up meetings for Author One to meet the local Ministry of Education and the head teachers of each of the school sites. Benson also arranged for the Luo–English interpreter (Author Two), and the Kenyan Sign Language (KSL) interpreter to be present at all project events.

Benson and both authors held meetings with the head teachers of each school to decide on the composition of the inclusion committees at each school site. Meetings rotated from the special school to primary school weekly at each school site. At each meeting, participants had time to implement and reflect on the strategies developed by each inclusion committee each cycle of research. Throughout the project, participants were asked to provide member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) on the implementation of inclusive strategies and suggest directions for future cycles of research.

Language-related actions

One major component of decolonizing methodologies is language. Understanding that colonialists used language as one means to violently erase indigenous ways of life (Smith, 1999), we attempted to provide access to Luo as much as possible throughout the project. Language was at the forefront of project decision-making from the outset. It was one of the first items discussed when meeting head teachers and interpreters, and was a large part of discussions at initial and subsequent committee meetings at both school sites.

Not everyone needed to speak English. Depending on the KSL and spoken-language interpreter-project needs, committee members were encouraged to communicate in their preferred language. Similar access was provided to committee members for written communication. Recognizing that some parents and community members may not be literate in Luo or English, *all* participants could utilize dictation support that was provided if they preferred to speak or sign their responses rather than write them.

Though teachers are expected to be tri-lingual in the Kenya education system, not all teachers were necessarily 'fluent' in English, and should not endure English-only meetings on Author One's behalf. All committee members represented varying levels of literacy and English fluency. Due to Author One's lack of fluency in Luo, Author Two's role as a Luo–English interpreter was one of the most critical pieces of the project; hence, the co-authorship of this paper. Following each project meeting, both authors debriefed and co-constructed memos that captured the essence of events. Author Two was essentially the 'cultural broker' for when Author One missed cultural nuances during meetings. Regular debriefings helped triangulate project experiences and ensured a unified understanding of events.

Participant selection

Participants were asked to serve on an inclusion committee at either Dhiang School or Punda School. Adult committee members were chosen by the head teachers because of their known interest in inclusive education. Student committee members were chosen by the teachers because of their known leadership qualities. All participants were either fluent in the local language (Luo) or English, or would code-switch between each language depending on situational language demands and individual preference. However, collaboration and communication between participants occurred mainly in Luo or English.

Inclusion committees

The head teachers and some faculty members from each school decided on the composition and school representation of each committee. Table 1 outlines inclusion committee membership at each school site.

Table 1. Inclusion Committee Membership by School Site.

Committee member	Dhiang School	Punda School
Students with disabilities	4	4
Students without disabilities	3	3
Parents of children with disabilities	2	2
Parents of children without disabilities	1	1
SNE teachers (includes Author Two)	5	4
Primary school teachers	4	4
SNE head teacher	1	1
Primary school head teacher	1	1
Community members with disabilities	2	2
Community members without disabilities/Board of management members	1	3
Ministry of Education EARC	1	1
Author One	1	1
Total	$N = 26$*	$N = 27$*

*Due to fluctuating attendance, there was an average of 24 participants at each meeting.

To qualify for committee membership, all teacher participants had to be current teachers at Dhiang School or Punda School and have current Kenyan teacher status (i.e. be employed by the Teacher Service Commission). All teachers at the special schools had certificates permitting them to teach students with disabilities. The primary school teachers had taken at least one SNE course. In both locations, parents of students with and without disabilities were recruited by the EARCs and head teachers based on their active parent involvement in local schools. Community members with and without disabilities were asked to participate based on EARC and head teacher knowledge of their historic support of local schools and interest in inclusive education.

Age was the only a prohibitive factor for students in this project. Students had to be enrolled at either a local special or primary school and be old enough to independently assent to committee participation. Teachers at each school site decided that students between ages 10 (standard four/grade four) and 13 (standard six/grade six) were eligible because of issues related to maturity. Parental consent was required for their participation. We feel that including students on each committee helped ground goals in tangible outcomes that ultimately benefitted students. All participants lived in western Kenya and were able to attend weekly inclusion committee meetings. Participants did not necessarily need to be Kenyan or Luo, but all participants identified as both as the project took place in a largely Luo region of Kenya. Gender, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity were not prohibitive factors for participation. For participants who identified as having a disability, a specific label of disability was not a prohibitive factor for participation in this project as long as they could consent/assent to participation.

Data collection

We collected data in the form of written memos, photos, and written/dictated participant feedback forms from inclusion committee meetings. Audio-recorded semi-structured interviews occurred at the end of each cycle of research. We conducted 1:1 interviews for adult participants and small group interviews for students at the end of each cycle of research they would potentially feel more comfortable having project-related discussions. We conducted a total of 81 interviews between the roughly 50 participants in the project. In Cycle #1, we conducted 29 interviews with 35 participants. In Cycle #2, we conducted 24 interviews with 35 participants. In Cycle #3, we conducted 28 interviews with 36 participants.

We also utilized notes from school observations and pre-and post-questionnaires as appropriate throughout the project. Inclusion committee meetings occurred weekly. We observed roughly four classrooms per month throughout the project. During inclusion committee meetings, participants were regularly asked to fill out 'Did/Will Do' forms (see Appendix 1). The 'Did/Will Do' forms asked what each participant did and planned to do with respect to the inclusion and sustainability goals during each cycle of research. We interviewed as many participants as were available following each month-long cycle of research.

We collected data and assessed our goals throughout the seven months of the project. Committee members set goals and guided the project. Once inclusion and sustainability goals were developed, committee members had one month to implement actions to meet the goals in a variety of community locations. During each cycle, we observed committee members engaged in activities that were focused goals. At the end of each cycle of research, through member checks (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), each committee assessed goal progress and used that information to direct of the subsequent cycles of research. Monthly interviews and on-going discussions at weekly meetings provided opportunities for each committee to assess project directions and collectively interpret and triangulate the data. This approach to triangulation provided a greater reliability within the project, and helped us to make sense of the complexities that emerged from the CBPR and decolonizing methodologies used in project.

During each cycle of research, the open-ended questions were broad and focused on what each committee member felt was going well with the project and what needed more support, questions about educational outcomes for students with disabilities, and asked committee members to trace the

history of disability from the pre-colonial era to the present. See Appendix 2 for a comprehensive list of guiding interview questions.

Data analysis

Due to time constraints related to training on data analysis, Author Two did not code data. Author One analyzed the interview data through Dedoose (Lieber & Weisner, 2015). However, we used these data to guide the development of interview questions in order to receive participant feedback and insight about emerging codes and themes. Data analysis was informed by a constructivist grounded theory approach and by a constant comparison method (Charmaz & Mitchell, 2001). This allowed for a simultaneous evaluation and complication of data while they were collected throughout the analysis (Charmaz, 2005). Author One coded data in three phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding which concluded in the identification of three significant themes and outcomes (Creswell, 2013).

Results

The data gathered from the 81 qualitative interviews in this project was substantial. As a result, the data we present here supports the main objective of the project – using multiple research methodologies to increase the number of students with disabilities accessing primary schools. We present these excerpts not only to highlight the results of our methodological choices, but also to better ground participants' voices through a CBPR framework.

In this first excerpt, the head teacher from the school for the Deaf at Punda School confirms that she credits the increased enrollment of students with disabilities at her school to the community engagement methods used by the inclusion committee.

> AUTHOR ONE: How do you know the inclusion committee actions have had an impact on the local community?
>
> HEAD TEACHER: Well, one thing I realize is that there is improvement in enrollment of children with special needs in our school. Another thing I've realized is that the community is more and more aware of special needs children and what should be done for them. And that is why they are now recommending the school to those who have not been able to come to school. (Anonymous, personal communication, February 3, 2016)

Similar to the head teacher at the Punda School, the head teacher from the special school at Dhiang School also associated the increase of students with disabilities at his school to the collective action of the inclusion committee.

> AUTHOR ONE: So, what do you think changed? If you have had four new students that have never been to school before, why did these parents decide to do this?
>
> HEAD TEACHER: This is because of the sensitization. We have really sensitized the parents more so. When we admit severe cases and they stay in school the parents take the message home. So, when they go to the village they speak about our school and they sensitize other parents. Then you find that their parents also become impressed and they become open to [inclusive education]. They also sensitize the parents who have the same cases. (Anonymous, personal communication, February 1, 2016)

The increase in enrollment of students with disabilities at both school sites signifies a direct benefit to the local communities engaged with this project. These enrollment numbers are tangible examples of what Smith (1999) outlined as a main tenet of decolonizing methodologies. Such positive student outcomes also helped to decrease insider-outsider researcher tensions and increase community ownership of the project, which ultimately led to the enrollment of these students with disabilities in the first place. Bishop (1998) and Denzin, Lincoln, and Smith (2008) would consider these outcomes examples of effective implementation of decolonizing methodologies. The next excerpt highlights the effectiveness of these approaches, as a teacher at the school for the Deaf at Punda School confirms that word had spread throughout the community that both school sites had embraced inclusive education.

> AUTHOR ONE: So, you're saying there's an increase in number of students with disabilities at primary and special schools. That was one of our main goals so that's a tangible outcome. We can see that there is proof that something

is changing. Okay, good. And now you said that students with disabilities who have never been to school before are now coming to school here.

TEACHER: Yes, given those who are having disabilities, but were not in these two schools, some of them now opt to leave those schools and to come either [to the special school] or [the primary school].

AUTHOR ONE: Okay, so students are coming to these schools because of their inclusive practices?

TEACHER: Yes, because of the inclusion view that embraced they are taken care of.

AUTHOR ONE: That's good, so the word is out that these schools support inclusion. (Anonymous, personal communication, February 3, 2016)

The community support referenced here represents the cultural relevance embedded within the project that may have created practical knowledge about inclusive education and spurned committee member action. As Denzin et al. (2008) suggest, this is likely because methodologies were 'localized, grounded in the specific meanings, traditions, customs and community relations that operate in each indigenous setting' (p. 7). In the next excerpt, a parent of two Deaf children from Punda School also spoke about the positive community reception of the project.

AUTHOR ONE: So, you're talking about changes in the school that you have noticed. Have you noticed any changes in the community since our project began?

PARENT: The response from the community has been positive because the parents before were suffering maybe from stigmatization. They did not want to come out that they were the parents of those pupils with disabilities. But after sensitization and educating them on why we have this inclusive committee, they came out now and want their pupils to come to school, and a number of them have brought their pupils to school.

AUTHOR ONE: Did any parents that you have spoken to directly bring their children to the school?

PARENT: There is one parent who promised to bring his child to school, but due to inadequate finance he has not been able to do that, but I have been encouraging him. He has promised that he is going to do all that it takes so that come next term that pupil will join this school.

AUTHOR ONE: Good. Again, I think the work that you've been doing in the community has been fantastic. I'm really impressed. Thank you so much for all of your hard work. (Anonymous, personal communication, February 3, 2016)

This excerpt represents parent action aimed at disrupting systemic oppressive power dynamics that serve to marginalize people with disabilities in her community by encouraging other parents to bring their children with disabilities to schools. This action also represents a vector of difference and rupture that has the potential to lead to sustained inclusive change (Hall, 1990). By these actions, this parent is attempting to redistribute power to members with less influence (e.g. parents of children with disabilities) (hooks, 1989; McCarthy, 1998). It is through her action that this redistribution of power can occur and provide children with disabilities opportunities to receive their right to (an inclusive) education. In this last excerpt, a community member at Dhiang School shared a success story that he felt came about as a direct result of his community-based disability advocacy.

COMMUNITY MEMBER: There's a girl [with a disability] who was identified and I went to see her at home. The girl is there and we even called the mother, so I managed to win them and that girl is coming [to school] with the parents on Monday. (Anonymous, personal communication, October 8, 2015)

In this case, this committee member went to the home of a young girl with a physical disability who had never attended school, had an open discussion about disability stigma and inclusion with the family, and the parents subsequently enrolled their daughter at Dhiang School. This girl attending school for the first time represents a potential rupture in the negative disability narrative in this community. With ongoing inclusive supports, hopefully this rupture allows for new, less oppressive disability-related structures to develop, and that this event influences the development of new ways for people with disabilities in the region to know and interact in the world (Hall, 1990).

Limitations

One limitation of this project is that we did not use participants and Author Two to cooperatively and systematically code data as outlined by Patton (2002). Though we did conduct member checks

(Creswell & Miller, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) at the end of each cycle of research, due to weekly time constraints and other project-related commitments, we could not effectively engage participants in the data-coding process. There were many factors that contributed to this reality, including: limited time for participant training on qualitative methodologies, inadequate Internet access for data analysis with Dedoose (Lieber & Weisner, 2015), and limited time to discuss and write up results in meaningful ways. Though we did not collectively publish findings during Author One's tenure in Kenya, we disseminated results in more informal ways (e.g. chief's barazas, meetings with local community-based organizations).

One obvious limitation of this project, as discussed earlier in this paper, is that Author One is a white American outsider working in a post-colonial Kenyan context. We acknowledge this limitation and addressed it in part by making every effort to enact critical decolonizing and indigenous methodologies. However, though aware of such best practices, we cannot be certain that we did not perpetuate neo/post-colonial oppression. For example, committee members could have felt internalized colonial pressure to provide practice-affirming responses during project events. We tried to minimize these realities by giving participants many modes through which to access project content (e.g. KSL and Luo-English interpreters, translated documents), and provided opportunities for anonymous reflection.

Another limitation is that we are (temporarily) able-bodied, and do not identify with any disability labels. Though we consider ourselves allies of individuals with disabilities, this does not replace the fact that we do not have the experience of living with a disability in Kenya. An additional limiting factor was that the scope of the project was relatively small, and occurred over a short period of time in one localized region of Kenya. Subsequently, generalization of findings and replication of the project remain unknown. While this project does provide one example of sharing best practices within the international community, it does not reflect the breadth and depth of training that teachers would require to be sufficiently prepared to educate students with disabilities, especially those labeled with multiple significant disabilities in primary school Kenyan classrooms.

Implications and discussion

When we began this research, we wanted to know how to increase the number of students with disabilities in primary schools in western Kenya. We were aware of the methodological complexities of engaging in such work, especially considering our complex positionalities. Through the application of multiple research methodologies, we wanted to gain first-hand experience and knowledge of what the intersections of global issues present in Kenya (i.e. colonialism, capitalism, globalization, poverty, disease, hunger) actually *looked like* and how they impacted inclusive stakeholders' abilities to create more inclusive education opportunities for students with disabilities. The limited research that exists on this topic is narrow and mainly focuses on teacher attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in primary school settings (Bhatnagar & Das, 2014; Emam & Mohamed, 2011; Galović, Brojčin, & Glumbić, 2014; Kovačević & Maćešić-Petrović, 2012). This project goes beyond assessing teacher attitudes on inclusive education. Rather than asking, 'Can we? we ask, "How can we?'" and adjust our methodologies to meet the needs and complexities of the situation on the ground. We outline the implications of such practices below.

Our main objective of using multiple methodologies was to increase the number of students with disabilities accessing inclusive primary schools (see Research Question #2). At the time of writing, 14 new-to-school students with disabilities were accessing primary schools for the first time. Nine students began attending Dhiang School, and five at Punda School.[7] These findings suggest that such methodological approaches, if adopted by teacher education programs (e.g. Kenyatta University), have the potential to increase pre- and in-service teacher capacity to support students with disabilities in primary schools. Increased teacher and community capacity to support disability may represent an expanding awareness of disability as a form of human diversity and positively change cultural attitudes toward disability and inclusion in Kenya (Elder et al., 2015).

One of the more significant implications of this project is the potential for (re)importation and implementation of CBPR practices from Kenya to under-resourced schools in the global North. The

global South is largely ignored by the global North, which inherently devalues and rejects most research coming out of such countries (Connell, 2011). The methodologies used in this project promote the repositioning of Kenyan teachers and inclusive stakeholders as the experts of their own contexts whose approaches to inclusive education can be of value to teachers in under-resourced schools in the global North. By acknowledging teachers developing inclusive practices in the global South as strong sources of resistance to oppressive disability structures, this constructs them as professionals who have much to offer teachers around the world. The transnational co-authoring of this work has the potential to amplify this research, and increase its importance and validity on the global stage.

Employing CBPR and decolonizing research methodologies in under-resourced schools in the United States (and other Northern countries) has transformative potential to disrupt the top-down school reform process that is so prevalent in modern neoliberal school reform (Apple, 2016). In practice, Australian Indigenous Studies scholar Nakata (2006) suggests this reform process involves negotiating 'meanings attached to the social practices surrounding different systems of knowledge' and weaving them together 'into something quite different from both Western and Indigenous contexts of education' (p. 273). By infusing what Abdi (2015)[8] calls 'polycentric reconstructions of knowledge, power, and culture' into transnational CBPR approaches, under-resourced schools can disrupt the hegemonic power in schools and redistribute it to historically marginalized stakeholders in inclusive education (e.g. poor families of color) (p. 20). They can become vectors of difference and rupture that Hall (1990) theorized about. Such redistributions of power, coupled with sustained conversations on disability rights and inclusive education can not only increase the number of historically marginalized students with disabilities accessing inclusive schools, but provide the sustainable foundations for a bottom-up school reform. This would be a radical shift away from current neoliberal and capitalistic-based school reform that underserve and oppress students with disabilities in Northern countries (Erevelles, 2000).

Conclusion

In this paper, we have provided one example of what transnational qualitative research methods can look like when informed by CBPR and decolonizing methodologies. Through three cycles of qualitative interviews with a variety of stakeholders in inclusive education, we learned much about how disability is constructed in western Kenya. The data we collected and analyzed illuminated for us the creativity, resourcefulness, and resiliency these stakeholders use daily to mitigate systemic disability oppression as it relates to inclusive education. By sharing our methods, we hope that such approaches can be used by researchers in other countries to increase the number of students with disabilities accessing inclusive education. From this project, we plan to develop similar sustainable inclusive education practices in under-resourced schools in the United States and other Northern countries. It is our hope that such stories from the global South help to decenter hegemonic disability discourse from the global North (Connell, 2011) and reframe under-resourced countries like Kenya as sources of expertise and insight for making progressive and sustainable social changes with minimal extra resources.

Notes

1. Throughout this paper, we use terms like 'global North' and 'Northern countries' to reference wealthy countries that have colonizing histories (e.g. United States, the United Kingdom, countries in western Europe, Japan). In contrast, we use 'global South' and 'Southern countries' to denote countries that have been colonized and exploited by Northern nations (i.e. much of Africa, the Americas, Asia, and Australia).
2. It is important to note that this seven-month investigation of inclusive education was a part of Author One's dissertation (Elder, 2016), culminating in his PhD, and was made possible due to funding from a Fulbright Program grant. These funds allowed us to hire interpreters for all project events, provide committee member allowances, purchase refreshments for committee meetings, expand the project to two school sites, and travel to and from Nairobi to work with the Ministry of Education on national expansion of the project. All of these components were critical to enacting decolonizing methodologies within the project, and meeting goals related inclusion and sustainability.
3. His real name is used with permission.

4. The authors recognize that inclusive education is an idea imported from Northern countries, and the application of such practices in post-colonial spaces has the potential to cause further harm to colonized populations. However, we feel the risk of continuing to exclude people with disabilities from education is more harmful than the risk of potentially perpetuating neo-colonial practices (Elder & Foley, 2015).
5. For more on this work see Elder and Foley (2015) and Elder et al. (2015).
6. We use Deaf with a capital D to represent that people at this school identify with and embrace Kenyan Deaf culture.
7. These numbers were reported by school site officials at the time of initial writing (December, 2016).
8. Abdi's (2015) work is important here as he studies the intellectual, cultural, and historical context of Indigenous education in post-colonial spaces.

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Appendix 1.

Nyingi:
Name:_____
Chal mari kuom bedo e a put:
Role on the committee:_____
Okenge mag riwruok:
Inclusion Goals:

1. Gigo maisetimo nyaka wabed kod rombwa mogik?

   What you did since the last meeting?

_____
_____

2. Gima ibiro timo kopok waromo e bura ma wanabed godo mbele?

   What will you do before the next meeting?

_____
_____

Okenge mag tero a put kata komiti mbele:

Sustainability goals:

1. Gigo maisetimo nyaka wabed kod rombwa mogik?

   What you did since the last meeting?

_____
_____

2. Gima ibiro timo kopok waromo e bura ma wanabed godo mbele?

   What will you do before the next meeting?

_____
_____

Appendix 2.

Sample Open-Ended Interview Questions for Each Cycle of Research
Cycle #1

- What are your thoughts on the project so far?
- What is going well with the project? What needs more support?
- What have you done to help reach inclusion and sustainability goals?
- What do you plan to do to reach inclusion and sustainability goals?
- How is disability viewed in your community? If it is positive, how can we expand those views to others? If negative, how can we change those views to be more positive?
- What does sensitization to disability look like in your community?
- How can we hold members accountable for meeting project goals?
- What can I do to help support project goals?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Cycle #2

- What are your thoughts on the project so far?
- What is going well with the project? What needs more support?
- What does inclusion look like in your school? In your class?
- What do you do to support inclusion in your school/community?
- What are your thoughts on inclusive education and educational outcomes for students with disabilities?
- How has colonialism impacted disability and education in Kenya?
- Where do special schools in Kenya come from?
- How was disability viewed in the pre-colonial era? Post-independence? How is disability viewed now?
- What can I do to help support project goals?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?

Cycle #3

- What are your thoughts on the project so far?
- What is going well with the project? What needs more support?
- What are your thoughts on your co-teaching experiences (teachers/students)?
- Are there new students enrolled at your school that have never been to school before? Can you tell me more about that? How did this student come to be enrolled in school?
- How are people with disabilities viewed in your community?
- Can this project be expanded to other parts of Kenya? If so, which parts are most important to implement in other regions?
- Are there any barriers to inclusion or sustainability as the project goes on?
- What can I do to help support project goals?
- Is there anything else you would like to share?