

Determinants of Graduation Readiness for Learners with Intellectual Disability in Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate graduation readiness and employment of graduates with intellectual disability from special schools of Nakuru County, Kenya. The researcher adopted the Piaget's theory that deals with the nature of knowledge itself and how human beings acquire, construct, and use it. The study was conducted at Nakuru Hills and Pangani special schools for the learners with intellectual disability in Nakuru County. The target population was teachers and parents of learners with intellectual disability in public schools. This consisted of a total of two hundred and twenty eight respondents where there were 2 Head teachers, 30 teachers, and 196 parents. The sample consisted of thirty two (2 head teachers, 10 teachers and 20 parents) for the study. The researcher conducted a purposive sampling of schools and head teachers and simple random sampling of the teachers and parents for equal chances of inclusion in the sample. The quantitative data collected was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics by percentages. The main findings were that there was gradual imparting of skills for learners with intellectual disability though they were promoted to the next level having not fully mastered the content of the previous level due to inadequate teaching and learning resources. The employers do not understand and appreciate the graduates with intellectual disability thus rarely employing them. The study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology pay attention to graduation needs of learners with intellectual disability to enable them transit from school to work with ease. The major conclusion is that the learners with intellectual disability are inadequately prepared for graduation. The study recommends another study be done to investigate government's involvement in facilitating graduation readiness of the learners with special needs and disability in the special schools.

Key words: Adolescent, Adult, Curriculum, Education, Intellectual disability, Mental retardation, Learner with intellectual disability, Special school, Transition, Vocational skills

1. Introduction

Globally, for many young adults with intellectual disability, becoming a productive, sufficient and independent adult frequently remains an elusive goal. According to Hardman (as cited in Gargiulo, 2009), the graduates of special education programs do not yet participate fully in the economic and social mainstream of their communities.

According to Thressiakutty& Rao (2001), majority of *children with intellectual disability continue to be in special schools irrespective of their age, ability and the duration of schooling. As a result they rarely leave school to join the community as a productive member of the society; where as the ultimate aim of special education is employability and independent living.* According to Hallahan and Associates (as cited in Gargiulo, 2009), often times, uninformed people believe that persons with intellectual disability are not capable of obtaining and holding a job. This is not true, even though employment rate for adults with intellectual disability are minimal especially for young ladies with intellectual disability.

Secondly, according to Blacher, (2001), most research findings are derived from two ends of the continuum- childhood and old age. There is a wide gap in research between childhood and adulthood for persons with intellectual disability. Blacher further proposes that researchers "fill the gap" in the literature by examining the critical transition period for persons with intellectual disability from late adolescence to young adulthood between the ages 18-26 years where formal education ends and changes in where the individual lives, what he/she does and the socialization. Study of transitional experiences will help to fill this gap, providing information that can be utilized by policy makers and employers, especially to facilitate planning for the future of these young adults with intellectual disability.

Thirdly, in the AAMR, 2002 definition of intellectual disability there are five assumptions essential in using this definition. The third assumptions states that within an individual, limitations often co-exist with strengths,

the fourth states that an important purpose of describing limitations is to develop a profile of needed supports while the fifth states that with appropriate personalized supports over a sustained period, the life functioning of the person with intellectual disability will improve. The instructions provided to these children must be comprehensive and functional, equipping them to the maximum extent possible with the experience they need to live and work in their respective communities both now and in future (Gargiulo, (2009).

Fourth, the Kenya National Survey for persons with Disability (KNSPWD) preliminary report, 2008, had the intention of providing the basis for improving planning for persons with disability in terms of education, training, infrastructure, rehabilitation, assistive devices and environmental factors. In this way persons with disability were to be assisted and enabled to participate effectively and with dignity as full members of society. According to Kiarie, (2005), issues affecting other areas of special education services in Kenya also affect services for students with intellectual disability. According to Musima, (2014) in his study into Factors Influencing Transition Rate of Learners with Intellectual Disability from Vocational Training to Employment in Nairobi County Kenya, transition from school to employment for learners with intellectual disability remains a challenge in Kenya.

In efforts to seek a solution to the transition problem, some countries like India, the Special Needs Educators have come up with a transition guide to assist the students with intellectual disability to smoothly transit from school to work (Thressiakutty& Rao, 2001). Baltimore city in Maryland, United States has a model that supports the learners with intellectual disability to transit to the world of work by integrating their training with attachment to work stations (Grigal, Dwyre & DAVISAS cited in Gargiulo, 2009).

It is out of the challenges faced by learners with intellectual disability in transiting from school to work in Nakuru County and Blacher's call to research of the critical transition period that the researcher intends to investigate whether with appropriate planning and coordinated training, individuals with intellectual disability can secure and maintain meaningful and gainful employment.

2. Objectives of the study

The study was guided by the following objective which sought to:

Find out what determines graduation readiness for the learners with intellectual disability

Investigate employment of graduates with intellectual disability by employers after their training

3. Materials and methods

The researcher used the descriptive survey design to investigate adopting an exploratory approach which answers the question 'why' (Babbie, 2001) to investigate what hinders transition of the persons with intellectual disability from school to work. The descriptive survey research design was intended to produce good quantitative information through the use of questionnaires that were ideal in collecting information about the people's attitude and opinions about the current situation in the special schools for learners with Intellectual Disability (Kombo & Tromp, 2006). Data collected was quantitative in nature. The questionnaires were collected; the responses organized as per the objective. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics by percentages. The findings were reported in tables

4.0 Results and discussion

4.1 Demographic data

Demographic data was discussed under the following sub titles: Gender of respondents, academic qualification, area of specialization and teaching experiences.

4.1.1. Gender of Respondents

Table 4.1 Gender of respondents

Respondent	Teachers	Parents	Percentage (%)
Male	4	6	32
Female	8	13	68

Source: Researcher, 2015.

Majority of the respondents were female while few are male as shown in Table 4.1.

4.1.2 Academic Qualification

Table 4.2 Academic qualification of respondents

Highest qualification	Teachers	Parents	Percentage (%)
Master's Degree	3	0	25
Bachelor's Degree	3	0	25
Diploma	6	0	50
Diploma	0	1	5
Certificate Level	0	1	5
Secondary Level	0	5	26
Primary Level	0	12	64

Findings show that all the teachers in the two schools are trained in Special Needs Education where a quarter of the respondents were master's degree holders; another quarter was bachelor's degree holders while half were diploma holders as shown in Table 4.2 above. Most of the parents were of primary school level, a quarter were of secondary school level while few have gone beyond secondary school (Table 4.2).

4.1.3 Area of Specialization

Table 4.3 Area of specialization of respondents

	No of teachers	Percentage (%)
Intellectual disability	4	33
Learning disability	2	17
Hearing impairment	1	8
Inclusive education	3	25
Others	2	17

Findings show that only a third of the SNE teachers were trained in the area of intellectual disability while the majority were trained in other areas like learning disability, hearing impairment, inclusive education and autism (Table 4.3)

Learners with intellectual disability require teachers specially trained in the area of intellectual disability to understand the learner's special needs and ability so as to teach and train him accordingly. Musima (2014) found out that despite being qualified, there was need for specialized training for handling learners with intellectual disability

4.1.4 Teaching Experience

Table 4.4 General teaching experience of the teachers

Number of years	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
11-20 years	5	50
21 years and above	5	50

The teachers were asked to indicate for how long they had been teaching. The results are shown in Table 4.4

above. Half of the teachers have been teaching for a period of 11-20 years while the other half have been teaching for over 21 years.

Table 4.5 Teaching experience in the special schools

Number of years	Number of teachers	Percentage (%)
3-5 years	3	30
6-10 years	2	20
11-20 years	4	40
Over 21 years	1	10

Table 4.5 shows about a third of the teachers have been teaching in a special school for the intellectually challenged for 3-5 years, less than a quarter have been teaching for 6-10 years, slightly less than half have taught for 11-20 years and few for over 21 years. The two head teachers have been in the schools for the learners with intellectual disability for over 21 years. Teachers experience in teaching learners with intellectual disability would improve performance of learners. However, long teaching duration without refresher training and exposure to the changing trends in education of learners with intellectual disability could result in effectiveness in imparting skills (Orao, 2010).

4.2.1 Graduation among the Learners with Intellectual Disability

The findings of this study show that Nakuru hills special had graduations only when there was need and with the age of twenty five years and above being the main determinant and to some extent the skills the learners have acquired. Pangani Special School had never had graduation for the four years it had been in existence.

According to Thressiakutty and Rao, (2001), graduation of a learner with intellectual disability is not given much importance. The majority of learners with intellectual disability remain in special schools irrespective of their age, duration of schooling and skills learnt which hinders them from transiting into adulthood, work and /or contributing to the society. Findings show that graduation in the schools was not given much importance as well.

4.2.2 Employment of graduates with Intellectual Disability after their training

In this study the head teacher and teachers were asked if they would employ the graduate with intellectual disability after their training all (100%) of the teachers agreed that they can employ graduates with intellectual disability. Findings show that Nakuru Hills special has employed graduates with intellectual disability from the school who performed as expected while the Pangani special reported that it was still young at the time of study to have employed any of its graduates.

The next question to the head teachers was where most of the learners go after leaving school. Findings of this study show that most of the learners are back to their homes and dependent on parents if they are not engaged by the schools where they were learning. Other service providers and employers are not ready to engage the intellectually challenged graduates since they do not understand and appreciate them. The findings of this study also show that the saturated job market requires highly skilled persons. According to Musima (2014), the private companies and public organizations were less willing to employ or work with trainees with intellectual disabilities.

The parents were asked if they would allow their children with intellectual disability to be employed by other people to work for them in an area they have been trained. The results are indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Employed by others

	Frequency	Percent
No	5	26
Yes	12	63
Not sure	2	11
Total	19	100

Majority of the parents were ready to have their children employed by other people in an area they have trained in, about a quarter would not allow while few were not sure for fear of exploitation and being overworked.

Respondents were asked to give their suggestions on what they think should be done to make the graduates of the special schools lead an independent and more dignified life. The suggestions given included joint effort by all stakeholders i.e. the parents, community and schools, awareness campaigns and sensitization forums for all stakeholders, provision of adequate teaching and learning resources for the learners with intellectual disability, implementation of the disability act affirmative action's, and setting up sheltered workshops in every county for the graduates of special schools for learners with intellectual disability.

5. Conclusion

Findings revealed that there was gradual imparting of skills for the learners that determined the graduation from one level or grade to the next. The learners were moved to the next grade having not fully achieved the grade requirements due to inadequate teaching and learning resources. Teachers had inadequate knowledge of the expectations on graduation especially teachers who were not specifically trained in the area of intellectual disability.

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