

Effects of Curriculum on Transition to the World of Work for Learners with Intellectual Disability in Special Schools of Nakuru County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate transition plans in the curriculum of learners with intellectual disability in special schools in 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 a curriculum existed though with inadequate teaching and learning resources aimed at preparing the learners for life after school, majority of the teachers teaching in those schools were not specially trained in the area of intellectual disability and lacked an inter disciplinary transition teams in the schools. The study recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, pay attention to current and future 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 transition. The study recommends another study be done to investigate government's involvement in facilitating transition 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 (Gargiulo, 2009).

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 assumption 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:

- i. Find out transitions plans in curriculum for the learners with intellectual disability
- ii. Find out whether the curriculum addresses the individual needs of the learners with intellectual disability in readiness for their future life after school?

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 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 revealed 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 showed 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)

A learner with intellectual disability requires 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
6-10years	2	20
11-20 years	4	40
Over 21years	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 21years. 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 ineffectiveness in imparting skills (Orao, 2010).

4.2 Transition plans in Curriculum for the Learners with Intellectual Disability

The task of the study was to study presence of transition plans in the curriculum guiding the teaching and learning activities aimed at preparing the learners for their future life after school. The head teachers and teachers were asked whether there existed a curriculum guiding their teaching and learning activities where all of the head teachers and the teachers agreed that there is a curriculum. For how long they had used the curriculum the results are indicated in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6 Duration the curriculum has been used

Number of years	Frequency	Percent
1-2 years	7	58
3-5 years	1	8
Over 5 years	4	34
Total	12	100

Majority of the teachers including the head teachers agreed they had used the curriculum for less than three years while a third had used it for over five years. According to Kiarie, (2003), the curriculum in units and special schools in Kenya does not seem to be consistent. Muuya, (2002) as quoted in Kiarie, (2003), found out that the need for the learners with intellectual disability to acquire skills in self-reliance amongst others, are largely dependent on the goals and orientation of the funding religious, private or other organizations. This showed that there was a difference on the number of years the curriculum had been used showing there was no consistence on the use of the curriculum. Majority of the teachers reported that they had used the curriculum for about two years showing it may have been too short the period to show its impact during the time of study.

On whether the curriculum has plans specifically preparing the learners for their future life after school. The results are indicated in Table 4.7

Table 4.7 Presence of transition plans in the curriculum

	Frequency	Percent
No	3	25
Yes	9	75
Total	12	100

Three quarters of the teachers including head teachers reported that the curriculum has transition plans preparing the learners for future while a quarter said it does not have.

To what extent the curriculum addressed the individual needs of the learners with intellectual disability in readiness for their future life after school, results are indicated in Table 4.8

Table 4.8 Curriculum addressing individual learner's needs

	Frequency	Percent
Fully	1	10
To a great extent	4	40
Partially	5	50
Total	10	100

Half of the teachers agreed that the curriculum partially addressed individual needs of the learners with intellectual disability for their future life after school while slightly less than half said it addresses individual needs to a great extent and few of the teachers said that it fully addresses the individual needs of the learners with intellectual disability. Kiarie, 2003, argues that the curriculum should not only focus on the skills the learners with intellectual disability need to use frequently in school, at home and in the community, but teaching the functional skills in the natural contexts in which they are performed is necessary.

PL108-446(IDEA) stipulates that each student with disability is to receive transition services, which are defined as coordinated set of activities for a student with disability which in this study should be the teaching and learning activities stipulated in the curriculum. The goal of the Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) is to link the curricular content to the demands of living and working in the community as an independent adult. Table 4.8 shows that a quarter of the teachers said the curriculum has no transition plans, which indicates that they do not have any deliberate teaching and learning activities to prepare the children for transition.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that there is a curriculum guiding the teaching and learning activities. The curriculum had transition plans that have been in use for about five years.

Most of the teachers teaching in these Special schools for the intellectual disability were not well equipped with the appropriate training required to impart relevant skills in preparing the learners with intellectual disability for life after schools. Therefore, they may not fully understand and utilize the teaching and learning activities in the curriculum and due to this learners may not acquire sufficient skills in preparation for transition leading to independent living.

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