

**INFLUENCE OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DISABILITY-FRIENDLY POLICIES
ON ACCESS TO QUALITY PRIMARY EDUCATION AMONG LEARNERS WITH
PHYSICAL IMPAIRMENT IN ISIOLO SUB- COUNTY, KENYA**

¹*Fugicha Jattani Gura & ²Dr. Japheth Ringera

^{1,2} School of Education, Mount Kenya University

Accepted, June 21, 2023

Abstract

School management plays an important role in ensuring that learners with physical impairment gain access to quality education in primary schools. However, in Isiolo Sub-County, access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment is still a challenge. Thus, the purpose of this study was to assess the influence of implementation of disability-friendly policies on access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment. The study was guided by the management systems theory and theory of all-round educational quality. The study adopted mixed methodology and descriptive survey research design. Target population was 74 respondents which comprised headteachers and special needs teachers from which 62 respondents was sampled using Yamane's Formula. Stratified sampling was used to create three different strata based on the number of zones in Isiolo Sub- County. Questionnaires were used to collect quantitative data from special needs teachers whereas interview guides used to gather qualitative data from headteachers. Data analysis was by identifying common themes from the respondents' description of their experiences. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically based on the objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and mean. The quantitative findings of the study were presented using tables and charts. There was thus lack of fully utilization of disability-friendly policies to assist in the learners with physical impairment access to quality primary school education in Isiolo subcounty. The ministry of education in partnership with the other education stakeholders ought to ensure that differentiation of curriculum is fully implemented.

Keywords; *Implementation, Disability-Friendly Policies Quality Primary Education, Physical Impairment*

INTRODUCTION

Education is recognized globally, not only as the foundation for lifelong learning and human development, but also as an essential ingredient in the fight to reduce poverty and promote development in all aspects of life of the learners with physical impairment (Camblin & Prout, 2014). For such noble course to be realized, learners with physical impairment must be enrolled into schools and above all, retained to pursue their education. According to Lam and

Pollard (2014), access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment entails a process of enrolling and keeping them in schools to complete their primary course. Lam and Pollard (2014) assert that the access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment is a critical act and raises many interesting issues which contribute to the debate regarding the provision of universal state-funded primary inclusive education.

In keeping with these assertions, Lloyd (2013) opines that access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment is a critical step where behavior is shaped and attitudes are formed that influences the learners throughout their education process. Access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment is most strongly influenced by their home environment, the primary school programme they are taking and transition from pre-school to primary school (Lloyd, 2013).

Despite these assertions, little has been done to interrogate the extent to which school management dynamics influence access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment. According to Nishii, Lepak and Schneider (2011), school management dynamics are a set of factors which contribute to access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment. In Austria, Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) posit that school management dynamics include, but not limited to, provision of adaptive facilities, provision of curriculum support materials, teacher factors and implementation of disability-friendly policies. Kuvaas and Dysvik (2010) assert that school management plays a critical role in ensuring that schools have systems that help create the conditions for staff and students to work effectively together. Everyone appreciates simple, clear goals and effective processes. School systems provide and effectively communicate the ground rules for everyone. Such systems ensure a measure of consistency in approach and action across the school.

Consistent with these assertions, UNICEF (2014) posits that every school management system has its unique practices which immensely contribute to access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment. In Nepal, Brista (2015) posits that there is a worldwide recognition that there is no investment more effective for achieving development goals than implementation of inclusive education. Yet reaching high levels of education equity by retaining learners with physical impairment in primary schools is still a major challenge in most countries. Nothing illustrates this better than the failure of close 45.9% of countries to attain the only Millennium Development Goal (MDG) fixed for 2015, which is to eliminate discrimination in access to quality primary education (UNICEF, 2014).

In many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, the scenario is the same with learning assessment data showing that the absolute level of education attainment among learners with physical impairment is extremely low and that many are dropping out of primary schools at an alarmingly high rate (UNICEF, 2014).

According to the recent Africa Learning Barometer released by the Brookings Center for Universal Education, almost 30 per cent of learners with physical impairment currently in school learn so little that they will not be much better off than those children who never attend school. Kapakasa (2018) opines that only half of Sub-Saharan Africa's 128 million school-aged children currently attending school are likely to acquire the basic skills needed for them to live healthy and productive lives.

National figures in some countries of Sub-Saharan Africa show that gross enrolment of learners with physical impairment in primary schools is overwhelmingly low: 12 % in Tanzania (2016), 17% in Rwanda (2016), 18% in Mozambique (2016), 20% in Ethiopia (2017), 33% in Nigeria (2016), and 37% in Kenya (2017) (Kapakasa, 2018). This indicates that, although poor quality in education adversely affects learning outcomes for all learners, it has differential impact on learners' access to primary education, often more likely than normal learners to be negatively impacted, in low-income countries, by the low standards of

education they receive. This is because many of the learners with physical impairment are less likely to be retained in primary schools, more likely to drop out and less likely to pass national examinations if they proceed.

In Ghana, Adam, Adom and Bediako (2016) assert that a major determinant of access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment is school management whose mandate is to provide trained teachers, adaptive facilities, curriculum support materials and create a disability-friendly learning environment. In Tanzania, cases of low access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment have been on the rise. Tanzania Country Highlight (2018) notes that access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment in Tanzania has remained a serious problem since the barriers to access education still persist. According to Department for International Development (2016) asserts that Tanzania has the largest increase in learners with physical impairment' enrolment from 49 % to 91 %. Access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment has, however, been low with retention rates standing at 34.8% (Tanzania Country Highlight, 2018).

In Kenya, education for learners with physical impairment is facing a major challenge in primary schools despite massive enrolment in primary following free primary education. Improving access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment and ensuring they are retained in school, with the goal of attaining total inclusivity and equality is a critical component of promoting development and meeting the millennium development goals (MDGs) in Kenya (Ministry of Education, 2015). According to Sifuna (2016), the government has made substantial efforts to assist learners with physical impairment to transit to primary schools. Despite the government initiatives in the past decades, the education sector, still faces greater challenges and calls for urgent measures of enhancing access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment.

Statement of the Problem

School management dynamics play an important role in ensuring that learners with physical impairment gain access to quality primary education since these are critical steps in the academic life of a learners with physical impairment which entails acquiring new competencies and knowledge. However, in Isiolo Sub- County, access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment has been low. As noted earlier in the background, in Isiolo Sub- County, despite the launch of 100.0% school transition programme by the government of Kenya, the access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment after enrolment still remains a challenge. For example, a report by the Ministry of Education (2019) shows that few learners with physical impairment access quality primary education and those who get enrolled into primary schools register low academic performance in national examinations was low. A report by the Ministry of Education (2020), for example, shows that, in 2015, academic performance of learners with physical impairment stood at 13.8%, in 2016, was 12.3%, in 2017, was 11.5%, in 2018, it was 10.2% whereas in 2019, their performance stood at 9.4%. Efforts to mitigate these challenges have not registered any remarkable progress. Despite these statistics, few empirical studies are yet to interrogate the extent to which school management dynamics influence access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment from public primary to primary schools, which is the focus of this study.

Purpose of the Study

To assess the influence of implementation of disability-friendly policies on access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment in Isiolo Sub- County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empirical Review

Educational quality has become a popular concept which is critical in educational outcomes. An effective understanding of educational quality addresses the aspects of learners with physical impairment' test scores in national examinations, completion rates and their performance in co-curricular activities. It also addresses the aspects of fairness, efficiency, and responsiveness of education systems. At the level of curriculum design, quality primary education should not be viewed in isolation, but need to be considered as an approach that plays an important role in a much wider context. Bandura (2001) stressed that there is a need to identify and measure learning objectives and to achieve observable and measurable results, which can only be realized if school inputs are available. In a study conducted in Paris, OECD (2012) notes that output indicators are more direct outcomes of schooling. These indicators are often measured using student assessment such as a standardized achievement test. On the other hand, OECD (2012) posits that outcome indicators are of a more administrative nature such as the completion rates among learners with physical impairment.

Observing the rights of learners with physical impairment is critical in driving social change and achieving inclusivity in education which are crucial to sustainable human development. This recognition comes at a time of increased global interest in understanding and offering solutions to the challenges which learners with physical impairment face as they enter the second decade of their lives. Consistent with these assertions, Jayaweera (2012), in a study carried out in Sri Lanka, established that aspirations and struggles frequently associated with being learners with physical impairment include making one's voices heard and counted; participating in community and peer activities; obtaining quality primary and higher education and protection from abuse.

These findings affirm the fact that social protection is highly relevant to the agenda of empowerment of learners with physical impairment as it brings a transformative approach, grounded in human rights. Given such a scenario, Stacki (2012) asserts that ensuring that learners with physical impairment, especially those in poor households, enrol to primary schools requires not only an inclusive quality educational system but also additional support to cover informal costs associated with schooling and transportation, access adequate food, and ensure their home environments are caring and nurturing. Consistent with these assertions, Drake and Owen (2017) undertook a study conducted in the United Kingdom which revealed that the role of school and social protection in realizing the rights of learners with physical impairment to education will differ based on each individual country context and the factors affecting learners with physical impairment and households' decisions around schooling. In some contexts, placing social workers in schools and providing stipends may go a long way to motivating to enrol into schools and preventing them from dropping out. According to Drake and Owen (2017), most school learners with physical impairment spend the majority of their waking hours in school and parents place their trust in school management and staff giving them the primary responsibility for assisting their learners with physical impairment to develop to their full potential. The vast majority of teachers and other school staff work tirelessly to ensure the education of future generations (Drake & Owen, 2017). There are, however, a select few who use the power inherent in their role to abuse that trust and to target vulnerable learners with physical impairment.

In a study conducted in the Netherlands, Brosig and Kalichman (2014) suggested that most schools need to formulate disability-friendly policies to provide a safe environment for the education of learners with physical impairment where there are professional relationships based on care, respect and trust. Brosig and Kalichman (2014) further posited that, for many teachers and other school staff, promoting the social and emotional development of learners

with physical impairment is a critical and central aspect of their role and there is no doubt that many who work in education have a profound effect on the lives of their learners with physical impairment.

The power imbalance present in this influential relationship may be abused, resulting in long-term trauma for the learners with physical impairment (Camblin & Prout, 2014). This is particularly the case for some offenders who use their role in educating learners with physical impairment to target and abuse victims. Thus, if there is need to prevent sexual abuse by teachers, other school staff and those who hold positions of trust in education, it is important to gain a better understanding of what grooming behavior look in the context of those working in schools. In another study conducted in Australia, Finlayson and Koocher (2013) asserted that this understanding will assist schools to develop and enforce effective safeguarding policies and engage in safe school protection dynamics to prevent abusive behavior from occurring and deal more appropriately with concerning behaviors when they are identified to enhance enrolment and education of learners with physical impairment. Consistent with these assertions, Slavenas (2013) indicates that creating a culture that enables concerns about safeguarding and child protection to be expressed and addressed may include whistle blowing procedures. Clear expectations of staff behavior should be set out in a code of conduct.

The Management Systems Theory

The management systems theory was postulated by Luhmann (2004) as an approach to organizations which likens an organization to an organism with interdependent parts, each with its own specific function and interrelated responsibilities. All parts of the organization are interconnected and interdependent. The school as an organization is an open system, which interacts with the environment and is continually adapting and improving. According to Luhmann (2004), the theory is applicable in a school set up as an organization in that the school as an open system receives inputs from the environment. This implies that learners with physical impairment from the larger societal environment go to school with a host of their own beliefs, goals and hopes, but become changed individuals as a result of educational experiences in school which are acquired through interaction with the school administration, teachers and learners with physical impairment. Luhmann (2004) asserts that the interaction between teachers and learners with physical impairment and other stakeholders also incorporates assessing the quality of education offered to learners with physical impairment.

Theory of All-round Educational Quality

The theory of all-round educational quality which was postulated by Xiangyang (2009). This theory holds that all-round quality education is the application of all-round quality management in the area of education. That is, an organization, which is based on full participation, treats quality as its centre. All members will benefit from this organization, and thus the organization will achieve long-term success. Xiangyang (2009) asserts that, as the continued expansion on the concept of education quality, the quality of education is not only to train learners with physical impairment to possess knowledge, but also to help them have other various qualities such as working attitude, sense of cooperation and competition, professionalism, moral cultivation, environmental adaptability and mental endurance capabilities. In the context of this study, all-round quality management is applied in the field of primary education since it emphasizes education as a service which is provided to meet learners with physical impairment' and their parents' needs, who are considered to be "consumers" and "customers". For this reason, study on the quality of the primary education should focus on the quality of talents. This theory underscores the fact that twin functions of schools are; the function in the quality of education which are the most fundamental. The

theory functions of primary education indicate that there are varieties of quality standards in the quality of primary school education, but the quality of school management dynamics.

METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed methodology which employs quantitative and qualitative methods. The study adopted descriptive survey research design to implement both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study was carried out in Isiolo Sub- County in Isiolo County. Isiolo Sub- County had 51 public primary schools and thus, the target population was 74 respondents which comprised 51 headteachers and 23 special needs teachers. The researcher used Yamane's Formula for sample size determination to calculate the sample size of 62 participants. Stratified sampling was used to create three different strata based on the number of zones (Oldo Nyiro, East and West) in Isiolo Sub- County. The research used a questionnaire with close-ended test items to collect quantitative data from special needs teachers. Structured interview guides with open-ended test items were used to gather qualitative information from headteachers. The responses to the close-ended items were assigned codes and labels. Frequency counts of the responses were obtained to generate information about the respondents. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically along the study objectives and presented in narrative forms. Quantitative data was analyzed descriptively using frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation in Statistical Packages for Social Science (SPSS Version 23). The quantitative findings of the study were presented using tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study sought to assess the influence of implementation of disability-friendly policies on access to quality primary education among learners with physical impairment in Isiolo Sub-County. The results were presented in form of counts and percentages in Table 1.

Table 1: Implementation of Disability-Friendly Policies

Curriculum differentiation	VLE f(%)	LE f(%)	SE f(%)	VSE f(%)	N/A f(%)	Mean
Content of various subjects is adapted to fit learners with special needs	24(34.3)	38(54.3)	3(4.3)	4(5.7)	1(1.4)	1.86
Learners with physical challenges are given oral test instead of writing	13(18.6)	37(52.9)	16(22.9)	4(5.7)	0(0.0)	2.16
Learners with special needs are given extra time to complete assignment	15(21.4)	36(51.4)	11(15.7)	6(8.6)	2(2.9)	2.20
Teachers' asses each learners learning style and develop support aimed at progressing it	27(38.6)	39(55.7)	2(2.9)	2(2.9)	0(0.0)	1.70
Learning activities are differentiated for learners with special needs in class	9(12.9)	37(52.9)	15(21.0)	8(11.8)	1(0.8)	2.20
Grand mean						2.09

The results indicate that content of various subjects was adapted to fit learners with special needs (mean= 1.86), learners with physical challenges were given oral test instead of writing (mean = 2.16), learners with special needs were given extra time to complete assignment (mean= 2.20). The grand mean was 2.09. These implied that the extent to which the curriculum had been differentiated for learners with special needs was to a smaller extent (mean= 2.09).

From the interview it was evident that teachers did not value curriculum differentiation and secondly, they lacked the knowledge and skills for differentiating the curriculum. These disadvantaged learners with special needs as they could not cope with the rigid regular school curriculum. The present findings differed with the findings of Wiggins (2006), who emphasized the need for curriculum differentiation. Similarly, Beale (2005) promotes the exploitation of affordances of intelligent (adaptive) learning environments to individualize the instructional process in response to information provided by the behaviors of the individual learner in the learning environment.

Moreover, the findings indicated that learners with special need did not require adjustment in curriculum, adjustment in content covered in class or enriched environment for teaching. These findings contradicted the findings by Aderson (2007), who observed that teachers need to differentiate content, in order for the learners with special needs to the content in the curriculum. Lack of curriculum adaptation made learners to be unable to access the content of the regular curriculum. In addition, the findings of the present study differed with the findings by Tomlinson (2003), who indicated that differentiating the curriculum created conditions for optimal learning of the child with special needs in the regular school. Lack of adjustment in curriculum, adjustment in content, provision of extra time and adaptation in assessment procedures could be the major contributors to low retention rate among learners with special needs in regular schools.

Head teacher 9 stated that:

*“Teaching children who are physically challenged is a big challenge, especially in terms of creating a friendly environment. Inaccessible environment within or outside the school may contribute in excluding them from learning institutions. An accessible environment helps to keep the physically challenged in schools unlike where schools have inaccessible environment. To alleviate this problem then the environment should be adapted to suit the physically challenged learners” needs. This involves organizing the classroom and the school compound. Such include adjustments being made to the school buildings and leveling the playgrounds for ease mobility of such learners.” **Head teacher 9***

Inclusion of learners with physical disabilities in the education curriculum means such learners participating in school life in all aspects (Smith, Polloway, Patton and Dowdy, 2001; Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow, 2003) it requires the educational system to meet the needs of the child as normally and inclusively as possible rather than the child with physical challenges being made to adapt to suit the needs of the system (Kluth, Villa and Thousand, 2001; Evans, 2000).

Conclusion

The extent to which curriculum had been differentiated was to a smaller extent. The content of various subjects was partially adapted to fit learners with special needs. There was thus lack of fully utilization of disability-friendly policies to assist in the learners with physical impairment access to quality primary school education in Isiolo subcounty. This resulted to low retention of learners with special needs as they could not cope with the rigid curriculum in the regular primary schools in Isiolo Sub-County.

Recommendations

The ministry of education in partnership with the other education stakeholders ought to ensure that differentiation of curriculum is fully implemented in all primary schools to ensure effective inclusion and retention of learners with special needs.

REFERENCES

- Adam, S., Adom, D., & Bediako, A. B. (2016). The major factors that influence basic school dropout in rural Ghana: The case of Asunafo South district in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(28), 1-8.
- Bandura, A. (2001). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive perspective*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Brista, M. (2015). A Survey on the Status of learners with physical disability in Nepal. Kathmandu: UNESCO.
- Brosig, C. & Kalichman, S. (2014). Child abuse reporting decisions: Effects of statutory wording of reporting requirements. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 23, 486–492.
- Camblin, L. & Prout, H. (2014). School counselors and the reporting of child abuse: A survey of state laws and practices. *The School Counselor*, 30, 358–367.
- DfID (2016). *DFID's learners with physical impairment' education strategy. Learners with physical impairment' education: towards a better future for all*, First progress report.
- Drake, P. and Owen, P. (2017). *Gender and Management Issues in Education: An International Perspective*. UK: Trentham Books.
- Finlayson, L. & Koocher, G. (2013). Professional judgment and child abuse reporting in sexual abuse cases. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*.
- Gross, N, Glacuinta, J. B. & Bernstein, M. (2010). *Implementing Organizational Innovations*. New York: Harper and Row.
- Isola, O.M. (2010). *Effects of Standardized and Improvised Instructional Materials Students' Academic Achievements in Secondary School Physics*. M. Ed Thesis, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Jayaweera, S. (2012). *Gender and Education in Sri Lanka: Women, Schooling and Work*. Sri Lanka: Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR).
- Kapakasa, A. (2018). *Determinants of Learners with physical impairment Participation and Persistence in School*. World Bank Population and Human Resources Division, Southern Africa.
- Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2019). *Census-2019*. Nairobi: Government Printer
- Kuvaas, B. & Dysvik, A. (2010). Exploring alternative relationships between perceived investment in employee development, perceived supervisor support and employee outcomes. *Human resource management journal*, 20:138-156.
- Lam, M. & Pollard, A. (2014). A conceptual framework for understanding learners with physical impairment as agents in the retention from home to kindergarten. *Early Years* 26(2): 123–141.
- Lloyd, C. B. (2013). *Growing up Global: The Changing Retentions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Washington, DC: The National Academic Press.
- Luhmann, N. (2004). Principles of management systems theory and practices. *International Journal of Management Theory & Practices*. Vol. (3), 234-255
- Ministry of Education (2015). *Reporting suspected child abuse: Conflicting roles for the counselor*. Nairobi: Longman Publishers.
- Ministry of Education (2019). *Status of Learner Retention to Primary Schools in Kenya*. Nairobi: Longman Publishers.
- Ministry of Education (2020). *Status of students' academic performance in primary schools in Kenya*. Nairobi: Longman Publishers.

- Nishii, L. H., Lepak, D. P., & Schneider, B. (2011). Employee attributions of the “why” of HR practices: Their effects on employee attitudes and behaviors, and customer satisfaction. *Personnel Psychology*, 61(3), 503–545
- OECD (2012). *Education at a glance*. Paris: France.
- Sifuna, D. (2016). *Universal Education in Kenya, Social Classes and Quality Primary Education, Unpublished Manuscript*, Kenyatta University.
- Slavenas, R. (2013). The role and responsibility of teachers and child care workers in identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. *ECDE Care*, 31, 19–25.
- Stacki, S. (2012). *Women Teachers Empowered in India: Teacher Training Through A Gender Lens*. New York: UNICEF.
- Tanzania Country Highlight (2018). *Learners with physical impairment’ Education: Tanzania at Glance*. Accessed on 28th March 2020.
- UNICEF (2014). *Learners with physical impairment education progress analysis and achievement in 2002*. Medium-Term.
- Xiangyang, M. (2009). Change of the Quality Evaluation in Graduate Education. *Journal of China University of Geosciences*, 3, 58-61.