

Determinants of Low Transition Rate of Learners with Intellectual and Developmental Disability in Selected Special Units in Kajiado County.

Pauline Waititu¹, Dr. Elijah Macharia Ndung'u², Rev. Dr. Fr. Joyzy Pius Egunjobi³

¹Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

²Lecturer, Department of Counseling Psychology, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, Kenya

³Lecturer, Psycho-Spiritual Institute of Lux Terra Leadership Foundation, Marist International University, Nairobi, Kenya

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2023.7843>

Received: 23 July 2023; Accepted: 03 August 2023; Published: 07 September 2023

ABSTRACT

Several studies done in Kenya reveal that most of the learners with mild and moderate intellectual challenges in special schools and special units remain in school for a longer duration than necessary. They neither join vocational institutions for further learning nor get integrated back to the community for basic independent living. Remaining in school for a prolonged duration while their peers progress academically, may have a social and psychological impact on the IDD learners in the special units/schools. This study explored factors leading to low transition rate of learners with Intellectually and Developmentally Disabilities (IDD). A mixed method approach, convergent parallel design was used to collect and analyze the data. Simple random sampling was done to select the 10 special units in Kajiado County. Purposive sampling was done to select learners with IDD who have been in the special units for a period of 7 years and above and their parents/caregivers. The learners were 85 and their parents/caretakers 85. All the 26 teachers in the selected special units participated in the study. The target population was 343 while the sample size was 196 respondents. Tools for collecting data were, questionnaires, focus group discussion guide and observation schedule. Teachers filled in the questionnaires; parents/caretakers participated in the focus group discussion while the observation guide was used for the learners as they worked. Quantitative data was analyzed through descriptive statistics while qualitative data was analyzed through NVivo software version 12. School records from special units in Kajiado show IDD learners who have been in the same class for a period of over 10 years (MoE Kajiado, 2021) while their peers in the mainstream schools transition every academic year to the next level. The study findings further revealed that low rate of transition is caused by a number of factors, among them, lack of prevocational skills, lack of certificates, unavailability of accessible polytechnics, and inadequate learning resources.

Key words: Intellectual and developmental disability, Transition, Mental retardation, Prolonged schooling

BACKGROUND

Education is the process of acquiring skills, knowledge, experience, and attitude, which paves way to success in future. (Sudhakar 2018) asserts that, Education is the only means to a civilized and socialized society as it provides opportunities to all learners to develop to their full potential. Sarason (2015), argues that the main purpose of education is to bring out self-reliant citizens who possess self-confidence, skills and knowledge who continue to pursue individual growth and self-empowerment even after school. Accessibility to basic education for all children is a goal for many nations not only in Africa but also all over the world. A number of treaties have been signed by the government to protect the right of education. UNICEF (2015) views quality education from five perspectives; learning environment, learner's experience,

education content, learning process and learning outcome. Poor quality teaching is nearly equal to no education at all (Ibrahim 2013). In other words, poor quality teaching compromises the output. Every child, disabled or non-disabled, has indispensable right to quality education that helps to acquire simple literacy and numeracy (UNICEF, 2015), that can help live basic living skills. Sadly, the disabled have been since times immemorial been disadvantaged.

A worldwide estimate shows 93-150 million children living with disabilities (WHO 2011). Recent reputable data shows about 40 percent of these children are out of school in low- and middle-income countries at elementary level, while 55 percent at lower secondary level (Global Partnership of Education, 2020). Disability reduces the probability of school attendance by a median of 30.9 percent, besides, there is a great discrepancy between discourse and concrete commitment in effectively implementing conventions and laws ratified by most of the African Governments, points out Global partnership of education (ibid). Education received by children with disabilities globally is referred to as Special Needs Education (SNE). Every nation is bound to fulfill these commitments. Failure to implement these educational conventions impacts more heavily on learners with special needs.

The Kenya Constitution moreover clearly stipulates that every Kenyan child has not only a right to education, but also access to relevant and quality education (Mugalavai 2012). It further adds that the marginalized and minority groups have a right to special needs education opportunities. Unfortunately, this right to education has not been actualized to all. Marginalized groups or special population often do not access quality education which is their right. Children with disabilities are among the marginalized who are excluded or discriminated from accessing quality education unlike their non-disabled counterparts (Mazrui 2014). In Kenya, the Ministry of Education has established a number of special units attached to mainstream schools in almost every sub-county where they follow special needs curriculum. Most of the learners found in special units are those who cannot fit in mainstream schools due to the nature of their disabilities (Salamanca 1994). Common conditions found in special units are; autistic, mentally challenged, intellectually challenged, cerebral palsy, learning disability and Down syndrome. Often the terms mentally retarded/challenged and intellectually disabled/challenged are used interchangeably in most of the studies. Another condition that is closely related and at times used to refer to the same is learning disability. Learners with intellectual challenges have learning disabilities. This study is concerned with learners with intellectual challenges and learning disabilities, and who may be also suffering from cerebral palsy. The study uses “intellectual and developmental disability” as the general umbrella term for all these conditions. The American Association of Mental Retardation (AAMR, 2002) defines intellectual and developmental disability (IDD) as a condition marked by significant limitations expressed in both adaptive behavior functioning and intellectual functioning. Throughout the study, IDD will be used as the short form of Intellectual and Developmental Disability.

People with intellectual challenges represent a heterogeneous group with a vast array of diagnoses and disabilities. Their diversity arises from the severity of the disabilities to possible coexistent medical conditions (Vedi & Bernard 2012). Individuals with severe disabilities may encounter more barriers in accessing same opportunities than their peers without intellectual challenges. Besides, learners with intellectual and developmental disabilities are more likely to suffer coexistent conditions than their peers with no disabilities. Epilepsy is one of such medical conditions. Vedi and Bernard (2012) point out that four out of every ten individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities suffer epilepsy. This condition of having more than one medical condition is known as comorbidity. With intellectual disabilities comorbidity may be either coincidental, impairment resulting to disability or overlapping with no link at all. However, these conditions may not be realized until at a later age. Education of learners with intellectual challenges may be jeopardized by the disability and more so by the presence comorbid condition (Hassiotis, 2015). Worse still, people/children with intellectual disabilities are seen by some cultures as having little to contribute to the society (Blacher & Baker 2007). Traditionally, they were thought to be incapable of

learning and segregated for many years in schools. Such a noble idea of education promotes growth and self-determination of learners with disabilities. Every education system has a structure that indicates duration, content and objectives of each academic year, finally the point of exit. Empirical studies show that this is not always the case among learners with IDD in special schools and special units in Kenya. Most of them remain in one class for years. Individuals with disability education Act ([IDEA] 2006), has clear guidelines on the process of assessment, evaluation and transition of learners with intellectual disabilities in special schools/units. Each learner progresses at his/her one pace depending on the ability and the goals set. In situations where IDEA guidelines are not fully followed, learners with IDD in special units, continue to spend many years in school, others drop out of school.

Statement of the Problem

Since 2010, the year when new Kenya Constitution was promulgated, the country adopted an education policy that ensures that all learners transition from one class to the next, every academic year, from primary school through post-primary education to University/TVET level. The 100% transition policy demands that every child transits from one class to the next, and eventually from primary education to secondary education “without leaving anyone behind”. Unfortunately, the spirit of “leaving no one behind”, as the government policy states, has not been implemented among learners with intellectual disabilities in most of Kenya special schools and units. Several studies done in Kenya reveal that most of the learners with mild and moderate intellectual challenges in special schools and special units remain in school for a longer duration than necessary. They neither join vocational institutions for further learning nor get integrated back to the community for basic independent living. School records from special units in Kajiado show IDD learners who have been in the same class for a period of over 10 years (MoE Kajiado, 2021) while their peers in the mainstream schools transition every academic year to the next level. Remaining in school for a prolonged duration while their peers progress academically, may have a social and psychological impact on the IDD learners in the special units/schools. In addition, prolonged schooling is not only detrimental to the IDD learners, but also poses a challenge to the government transition policy of “leaving no one behind”. “They are left behind “, only to leave or drop out of school later at an advanced age without any skill for independent living. It has created a wide gap between the intended-policy outcome and what is actually on the ground. This study comes in to bridge this gap by exploring determinants of the low transition rate of IDD learners in selected special units in Kajiado County.

Research Objective

The study purposed to find out the determinants of low transition rate of learners with intellectual and developmental disability in selected special units in Kajiado County.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study used mixed methods research approach adopting the convergent parallel design. Mixed method is a research approach that involves a rigorous method of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to answer a research question or hypothesis. Mixed method approach was chosen due to its strength, it has advantage over using either qualitative or quantitative singly according to Mvumbi and Ngumbi (2015). The approach gives a possibility for comparing the different perspectives drawn from both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Thusgiving a deeper understanding of the problem by combining the strength of each. In addition, mixed method design adds credibility of the study by strengthening the validity of the findings because of triangulation.

The study used the convergent parallel design, which is one method among the various mixed method designs. Convergent parallel design is preferred because it gives the possibility to collect data from multiple sources at the same time while examining the same topic (Jason, 2020). Both qualitative and

quantitative data was be collected concurrently, analyzed separately and the findings converged in the interpretation phase. The two types, qualitative and quantitative, of findings are merged to provide to provide comprehensive interpretation of the research question (Creswell & Clark, 2011). The researcher collected both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently, analysis of each was done separately, and the two results were merged during interpretation phase. Finally, the findings were compared. In comparing the results, the researcher was able to confirm the findings (Creswell & Creswell 2018). Key assumption of this design is that the qualitative and quantitative data will provide distinct type of information and when analyzed and merged together they give the same results, (Creswell, 2014). The convergent parallel design helped in analyzing both qualitative and quantitative data concurrently, that is, analyze the two data separately, merge the results and eventually interpret the combined results.

Study Area

This research was conducted in Kajiado County in Kenya. Kajiado County is 80 Kms south of Nairobi town. Kajiado lies at the boarder of Kenya/Tanzania on the South, on the North Nairobi County and on the East Kiambu County. Kajiado sits on longitude 360 5' and 370 5' East, between latitude 10 0' and 30 0' South. It is situated in the former Rift valley province of Kenya. Kajiado county covers an area of 21, 293 km², with a population of 1,117,840 according to 2019 census (County Track 2015). This study was conducted in Kajiado County because it has more prevalent cases of learners with different categories of disability than most of other counties in Kenya (MoE Kajiado, 2021). In addition, Nampaso (2016) points out that Kajiado is also one of the counties in Kenya where education for girls and boys is less valued due to strong cultural beliefs, and worse for learners with disabilities.

Sampling Procedures and Sample Size

Sampling is the process of selecting a statistically representative sample of individuals from the target population. The sample should be large enough to answer the research question (Majid, 2017). In a research study, sampling size between 10% – 30% is a recommended presentation of the target group as pointed out by Mugenda (2009). Sample size is the number of individual respondents selected from the target population of the study population.

Kajiado County has 20 special units with learners with IDD. The study was conducted in 10 special units which is 50% of the total number of the units in the County. To select the 10 special units the researcher got a list of all the special units from the Education office, listed them down alphabetically from the first to the last, i.e., Nos 1-20. Through simple random sampling, schools with even numbers were selected for the study. In total 10 special units were selected.

Kajiado county has 341 IDD learners in special units which is target population, the researcher sampled 85 learners and their parents, this 41% of the target population. The 85 IDD learners were purposively selected from the selected special units. These were all IDD learners who have been in the special units for a period of 7 years and above. Their parents/ caregivers too were purposively selected to participate in the study. The rationale of including the parents is to help solicit in-depth qualitative data that their children may not be in a position to give due to their intellectual impairment. The parents/caregivers who participated in the study were one from each learner. The third category of participants were the teachers. All the teachers in the selected special units were part of the respondents. They were 26 teachers.

The teachers provided quantitative data needed to answer the research question, this is because they spend most of the time in school with the learners.

The researcher selected 10 schools to participate in the study. Schools with even numbers were selected, that is, every 2nd school participated. Parent/guardians and all the teachers of the selected special units

participated in the study. The sample size was 196 respondents which comprised of 85 learners with IDD, 85 parents/caregivers and their 26 teachers. The sample size was arrived at by purposively selecting all the learners with IDD who have been seven years and above in the selected special units, their parents/guardians and their teachers. From the parents/caregivers the researcher collected qualitative data, while from the teacher's quantitative data was collected. From the learners, observation schedule was used to collect qualitative data.

Data Collection Instruments

Githinji and Njau (2014) define research tools as instruments used to collect empirical data for research. The researcher used questionnaires, focus group discussions schedule and observation guide to collect data. Observation guide was used to observe learners as they carry out the tasks given using the skills taught and their performance. With the help of the supervisors, tools were developed for variables being tested in a language easily understood; the questionnaire, focus group schedule and observation guide. Questionnaires were to be filled in by all the teachers in the selected special units. Focus group discussion was done with the parents/care givers of learners with IDD, while the observation guide was used by the researcher to collect qualitative data from the learners.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

IDEA (2006) has clear guidelines on the process of assessment, evaluation and transition of intellectually challenged learners who are in special schools and special units. Despite of the guidelines, learners with IDD continue to spend many years at the same level without transition. This section analyses transition rate of learners and further discusses the causes of low transition of learners with IDD.

Analysis of Transition Rate of Learners with IDD

Rate of Transition of Learners

Table 1 shows transition rate of transition of learners with intellectual challenges in selected schools in Kajiado county. It is evidenced that majority (76.9 %) of the teachers agreed on this. Few (15.4 %) said it takes place annually in their schools.

Table 1. Rate of Transition

	N	%
OFTEN	1	3.8%
ANNUALLY	4	15.4%
RARELY	20	76.9%
NEVER	1	3.8%

Duration Rate of Transition of Learners

The researcher went further to inquire specifically the period of time in years since the last time a learner was transitioned. This is because the research question sought to explore the low transition rate of IDD learners in selected special units in Kajiado County. Table 2 shows the responses given. Only 19.2 % did the transition one year ago. Majority (80.8 %) of the responses show transition is rarely done in the selected special units.

Table 2. Time since the Last Transition

	N	%
A Year Ago	5	19.2%
3 Years ago	9	34.6%
5 Years ago	4	15.4%
Many Years Ago	8	30.8%

Duration of Learners at Pre-Vocational Level

Table 3 below shows majority of the learners spend many unnecessary years at the pre-vocational level. It confirms the results showed by both table 1 & 3 above. Findings show that most of the learners age in special units since they rarely transition to post school activities.

Table 3. Do They Stay for Exceedingly Many Years in Special Units

	N	%
YES	23	88.5%
NOT SURE	2	7.7%
Missing System	1	3.8%

Low Transition Rate

One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to ensure all Kenyan children attain free equitable and quality education in both primary and secondary school. The same is highly endorsed by the Basic Education Act 2013 on the right to quality of education to every child. The government policy of 100% transition is a move towards the achievement of these goals. On the contrary learners with intellectual challenges spend years and years in special units without transition. Parents of IDD learners who participated in this study confirmed that their children have aged in special units with no transition. During the sharing the parents looked dissatisfied, disappointed and hopeless as they reflected of the situations their sons and daughters are in. First and foremost, they affirmed the teachers' responses that transition rarely takes place. Regarding the same a chairperson in one of the schools had this to say:

No transition takes place here. The oldest girl here is 26 years old, she has a child in preschool, after breast feeding her for some months she came back to school, the grandmother volunteered to baby sit the child. Another said, these children have been here for many years, some of them since year 2001. [Respondent from FGD 5, 13th Oct 2022]

My daughter has been in this class for the last 10 years. Nobody has ever told me anything about transition. For many years we have not seen any learner transition, my daughter and few other girls here have been here since 2014, the two teachers who started with them retired years back, a frustrated mother shared. [Respondent from FGD 6, 14th Oct 2022]

According to the parents those who get tired along the way after being in school for many years while their siblings progress academically living them behind, drop out of school for meagers paying jobs in the villages. One respondent commented,

Most of the boys drop out after spending many years in the same class, they are employed in the nearby village to fetch water and carry luggage for people using handcarts, often they are abused and exploited.

Another one said, Boys drop out of school and go back to the manyatta when they get tired of schooling, some will readily come back when there is food others may not. [Respondent from FGD10, 26th Oct 2022].

Parents expressions showed great disappointment and frustration from the government that seems to have forgotten the plight of their IDD children. They felt that the government didn't have transition structures for intellectually challenged learners. In their opinion the 100% transition policy seems exclusive of learners with intellectual challenges. They feel lack of structured timeframe for learners with IDD in special units could be the reason behind low transition rate. One of them said,

It seems there is no timeframe for how long a learner can remain in special unit. I have not seen any learner transition in the last 6 years. [Respondent from FGD 8, 19th Oct 2022].

About 3 years ago one boy had a transition, he joined Karen school for the deaf, though it was his parents' initiative. For parents who are able they can easily find a good private school for their children to learn vocational skills. Since then, we have not witnessed any other. [Respondents from FGD 2, 6th Oct 2022].

Respondents' views are in line with several empirical studies done in Kenya in relation to education of learners with intellectual challenges. Learners with IDD remain in one class for years without progression (Macharia 2018; Musima 2018; Maturana, et al. 2019;), whereas every education system has a cycle, after which the learners transition to another level. IDEA (2006), has clear guidelines on the process of assessment, evaluation and transition of learners with intellectual disabilities in special schools/units. Due to their diverse potentiality each learner progresses at his/her own pace depending on the ability and the goals set. Unfortunately, this not the case in most of the special units in Kenya.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses the various factors that contributed to low transition rate amongst learners with IDD.

Factors Leading to Low Transition Rate

The above quantitative results show there is low rate of transition of learners with IDD in selected schools in Kajiado County. In this section the researcher discusses the causes of low transition.

Teacher Preparedness

Table 4 portrays the findings about teachers' opinion on how well they feel equipped to prepare learners for transition to post school activities. It is clear from the findings that the teachers feel they are not fully equipped. From their responses about 80.8 % of the teachers felt they were not fully prepared to handle transition of learners with intellectual challenges. This raises a big question; if the teachers cannot handle the transition, then how do we expect progression to take place in the first place.

Table 4. Teachers Feel Well Equipped to Prepare Learners for Transition

	N	%
YES	5	19.2%
NO	6	23.1%
Not Fully	13	50.0%
Unprepared	2	7.7%

The same sentiments were echoed by the parents/caregivers of the learners, they felt the teachers were not

fully prepared to handle their learners. In the focus group discussion some of the respondents, on the question about teachers' preparation had this to share;

We feel they are not prepared because if they had a variety of skills, they would be teaching our children. They are prepared to teach and handle learners with special needs but not prevocational skills, that's why most of the times you will find in class learners repeating the same things, they are not equipped skill wise. [Respondents from FGD 10, Oct 26th 2022]

Teachers are prepared more in teaching academic knowledge than practical skills, and academic knowledge is not very helpful to learners with intellectual challenges, they need practical skills. [Respondent from FGD 9, 24th Oct 2022]

No! They are not prepared to teach practical skills, but we are happy they remain with our children the whole day. There is insecurity for such children in the villages. [Respondent from FGD 3, 1st Nov 2022]

Musima (2018) points out that pre-vocational skills learnt by IDD learners before joining vocational training are very beneficial. They help learners to transition to the world of employment easily, this then contributes to the factors influencing transition rate from vocational institutions to job market. She also noted challenges facing transition is inadequate learning resources as echoed by the parents/caregivers in this study. Therefore, it is right to conclude that inadequate learning and teaching resources in special schools is a factor that affects transition of learners with IDD in special schools/units (Kinuthia 2017; Macharia 2018; Maina 2014; Musima 2018).

Special Needs Curriculum has a Structured Process for Transition

Table 5 highlights the finding of whether the special needs curriculum has a structured process for transition of learners in special units. Majority of the teachers 80.8% agreed that the curriculum did not have structured process of transition of students, while 19.2% felt that the curriculum had the structured processes of transition. The respondents were almost in agreement that the curriculum doesn't have a structured timeframe of schooling for IDD learners. Regarding the same this what parents/caretakers said,

It seems there is no timeframe for how long a learner can remain in special unit. I have not seen any learner transition in the last 5 years. *Another shared*, It seems there is no defined time for one to be in special unit, because they remain in this class for so many years, they age in school whereas their peers keep on moving every new year. [Respondents from FGD 9, 24th Oct 2022]

My daughter has been in this class for the last 10 years. Apart from the basic daily living skills she learnt I feel she is just wasting time here; however she has to continue coming because I have nowhere to take her. [Respondents from FGD 7, 18th Oct 2022]

They see themselves different from their siblings, and they wonder what usually went wrong with them. [Respondents from FGD 1, 5th Oct 2022]

Table 5. Special Needs Curriculum and Structured Process for Transition

	N	%
YES	5	19.2%
NO	21	80.8%

IDEA (2006) has clear guidelines on the process of assessment, evaluation and transition of IDD learners in special units and schools. It clearly states that learners with intellectual challenges are eligible for transition

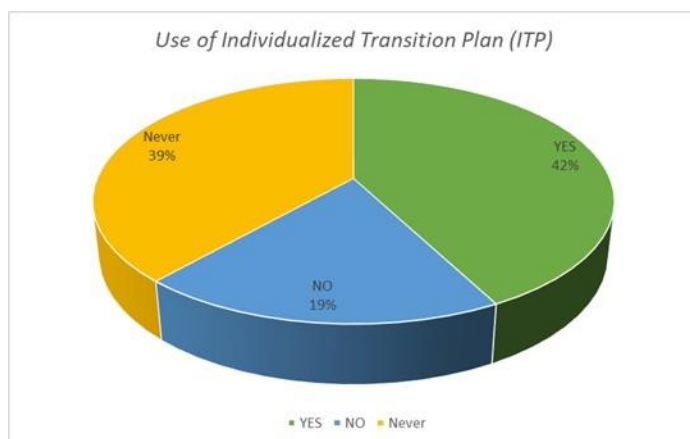
when they are 16 years old, and have acquired pre vocational skills that can help them lead an independent life or even further the skills in a vocational institution. Individualized Education Plan (IEP) program which is a requirement for every learner with special needs, if well adhered to, likely the scenario of aged learners in special units would not be there. Griffins (2011), emphasizes the role of the interdisciplinary team; teachers, parents, psychologist and a therapist in following the learning progress of the learner, saying it bears abundant results. The same sentiments are echoed by Maina et al. (2018) when he says that the current special needs curriculum doesn't prepare transition for learners with IDD. Olewe (2018) revealed that teachers in special units lacked adequate teaching resources and time to implement IEP, he further says, there lack a policy to reinforce the implementation of the same. Absence of an IEP means absence of continuous assessment and evaluation, as a result lack of structured transition plan.

Teacher's use of Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) for Learners

Figure 1 exhibits the findings that only 42.3% used the ITP, while 57.7 % never used it. However, this contradicts the reality on the ground. From the observation schedule checklist out of the 10 schools only one 1 school had the ITP program. This could a contributing factor to the prolonged school of IDD learners. If the teachers don't use ITP, likely the learners do not transition to post school activities. ITP is a tool that shows individualized transition plan for every learner with intellectual challenges. Among all the schools that took place in the study, only one had ITP program of the IDD learners was observed.

Individualized transition plan is a program that should be used by every special need teacher according to IDEA (2006). It clearly stipulates that each learner with disability is to receive transitional services in line with his/her abilities. This is achieved through Individualized Transition Plan (ITP) that is prepared by a team of experts, which comprises of the teacher, parent, learner, therapist and a community health worker where applicable. Lack of ITP may be a contributing factor towards low transition rate. In South Africa the educationist employ engagement learning techniques for learners with IDD. Engagement learning is an approach of learning whereby every learner is taught on the basis of individuals perceived capability instead of inability, what he/she can do to enrich learning process, develop one's potential to achieve a set objective (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This a powerful technique that makes learning efficient and affordable facilitates transition of learners to post school activities.

Figure 1. Use of Individualized Transition Plan



Aged Learners in Special Units with no Pre-Vocational Skills

Table 8 shows the finding that 96.2% of teachers agreed to the fact that it is very common to find aged IDD learners with no pre-vocational skills while 3.8% said no. This confirms the qualitative data collected through focus group discussion where the parents/caregivers strongly expressed their disappointments since

no pre-vocational skills are taught to their learners. One of participants had this to share,

No prevocational skills are taught, the only skills learnt are like self-care and self- hygiene. Prevocational skills that may prepare them for life outside school are not taught, as a parent this is the area that needs great emphasis at their age. [Respondent from FGD 6, 14th Oct 2022]

Skills learnt are like taking care of the environment, Personal hygiene and relationship skills. Respondent from FGD 9, 24th Oct 2022]

No prevocational skills, the only skills learnt are like self-care and self-management are learnt. FGD 8, 19th Oct 2022]

Korir and Mukuria (2007) reveals that most of the trained special needs teachers feel they are not well equipped to handle multiplicity of academic and behavioral challenges presents by learners with IDD. Chesaro (2020) points out several challenges faced by teacher in special schools, lack of collaboration amongst them, inadequate teaching resources and poor parental involvement. These factors demoralize the teachers, hence contribute to inefficiency in teaching and as a result poor outcome. Scarcity of instructional materials and specialized services for learners with intellectual challenges continue to hamper quality learning in special schools and units (Chomba et al.,2014; Gathumbi et al., 2015).

Table 6. Learners in Special Units with no Pre-vocational Skills

	N	%
YES	25	96.2%
NO	1	3.8%

Lack of next level

Lack of next level is one major cause of low transition according to many caregivers with IDD children according to the parents’ perception. Children who suffer from intellectual challenges do not transition because there don’t have formal institutions to move to. There could be village polytechnics or vocational institutions but unfortunately most of them are far from their reach. Far not only in accessibility but also financial impossibility. Their concern is the plans the government has for their children who may not fit in a normal classroom set up. They don’t know after exit where they should go.

Where do they go after transition, even us parents we are in a dilemma, we don’t know what should happen after here? Polytechnics that admit learners with intellectual challenges, we don’t have them near, we don’t know where to take them. Another one emotionally asks, Wataenda wapi ata wakitoka? (meaning, where will they go even after leaving?) [Respondents FGD 1, 5th Oct 2022].

In addition, parents feel that due to the mental condition of their children not many schools can accept them.

I don’t think there is any school that can accept to take them, after all they are very comfortable with their teachers. While others felt in school was a safe haven for them. The only benefit is providing security from the unfriendly environment in the slums where they live. I can’t live her alone in the house since I don’t know what can happen in my absence. In school I am sure she is secure. [Respondents from FGD 3, 1st Nov 2022].

On the other hand, learners who come from economically stable families though few have possibility of joining private boarding polytechnics to develop their skills. In such a case it takes the initiative of the parents to make the transition. A mother from a different school also shared such rare occurrence in their

school,

I remember one boy who transitioned to Don Bosco Boys Centre after being here for a period of more than 10 years. This the 2nd year since he left, the parents decided to take him away after being in this class for many years. [Respondent from FGD 5, 13th Oct 2022].

These sentiments confirm that there is a very low transition rate for IDD learners in special units in Kajiado County possibly due to lack of affordable next level. And the few who may transition come from families who may be more economically stable. Unfortunately, most children living with disabilities who are in public schools come from families in low social economic status. A care giver shared this about her sister,

The oldest girl here is my sister, she is 35 years old, her child is in primary school. She loves school so much, no way you can stop her. We are happy when she is here because it is safe for her. If there was a way to transition her, we can do it as a family, the nearest village polytechnic is about 10 km from here. [Respondent from FGD 1, 5th Oct 2022].

Lack of Certificates

Education is key and a fundamental right to every person including learners with special needs. It is the heart of nation's development, and a powerful tool to empower people in all fields of life points out Kimani (2016). For education and leaning to take place assessment and certification are very central in the learning process. However, this has been a challenge in special needs education as expressed by the participants of this study.

Parents felt that the fact that there are no papers or official documents that show what the learner has done the many years she has been in school becomes a big hindrance for them to transition to another level. For class 8 candidates to proceed to secondary school or to TVET they have KCPE certificates. When applying for any job in Kenya, academic papers are highly appreciated. Unfortunately, learners with IDD even after sending many years in the special units they don't have a certificate to show what they have done for the time they have been in school. To ascertain this one of the caregivers said,

They have no papers or certificates to show what they have done in school, after so many years in school, they seem to have wasted their time. Our children in the special unit don't have papers to show what they have done in school, no form of assessment takes place, unlike those in primary school who at the end of the year do a test to show their performance. [Respondent from FGD 2, 6th Oct 2022].

Parents' perception may be an eye opener to the Ministry of Education and the examining body in Kenya (KNEC). Possibility of graduating to another level is null if no evaluation or continuous assessment takes place. It calls for use of pedagogical tools that can assess abilities of each individual learner and an assessment that is continuous, valid and reliable. At the end of every academic year the report should show the performance of every IDD learner.

Limited prevocational skills

Lack of tangible skills during the schooling years was another bone of contention for the exasperated parents. IDD learners who participated in this study are at Prevocational level in their various special units where by design, they should learn prevocational skills to prepare them join vocational schools to help them further the skills already taught. At this level the curriculum suggests they be introduced to various practical skills that can assist them join the job market, in self – employment or further the skills in vocational schools. Unfortunately, this is not the case in most of the special units in Kajiado county. Most of the learners have no basic skills to help them join vocational institutions or the job market. Parents feel that lack

of skills may be a contributing factor, by the fact that their teachers are not prepared in prevocational skills, and secondly the government does not provide learning and teaching resources. Prevocational skills are not taught, IDD learners find themselves idling in class or repeating the same basic skills all year round. Regarding prevocational skills, this is what some of respondents said,

They have been taught daily living skills like teeth brushing, dressing, cooking and serving food, clearing the table. My daughter can comfortably cook if well directed, she cooks for the whole family, she can also do simple calculations, though I cannot send her to buy something since she doesn't know the concept of money exchange. Prevocational skills that may prepare them for life outside school are not taught, as a parent I feel this is the area that needs great emphasis at their age. [Respondent from FGD 8, 19th Oct 2022]

No prevocational skills are taught, the only skills learnt are, self-care, self- management and how to relate among themselves, are they really enough. [Respondent from FGD 9, 24th Oct 2022].

A study done in Kenya on graduation and employability readiness of learners with IDD revealed that there was slow rate of learning practical skills which compromised mastery of skills (Maina et al., 2018). According to the findings lack of learning resources was a major drawback. And therefore, due incompetence in skills mastery, majority of the employers were not enthusiastic to employ graduates from special schools. Learning of prevocational skills among learners with IDD is not only important but a necessity if they are to transition and live an independent life.

Unstructured Timeframe

Special education curriculum doesn't offer structured timeframe for learners with IDD in special units. Parents feel there is no structured timeframe that shows learning progression and the duration needed to achieve the set objectives. According to the parents, this is another contributing factor causing low rate of transition for learners with IDD. The normal school duration is one academic year per class, after eight progressive years, learners sit for national exam which marks the exit from primary school. Through the Government 100% transition policy, all the students must join secondary school where they continue for four years. This not the case in special units, intellectually challenged learners remain in the same class for many years without transition. Caregivers have a general feeling that it is a failure that the curriculum that doesn't show a structured timeframe for learning. Questioned on the effects of prolonged schooling for IDD learners the parents said,

We don't see any benefit of them remaining here for so many years, their younger siblings pass them and continue to secondary schools while they remain in the same class, there should be a defined timeframe for them to be in the special unit. [Respondents from FGD 3, 1st Nov 2022]

Another one said:

My child has been in this class for the last 9 years and I don't know for how long he should be here, may be one day he will just decide no more going to school, I feel there should a guideline on how many years to be at this level and the next step after here. [Respondents from FGD 4, 11th Oct 2022].

Many parents felt that apart from having no value addition to the learners, it has also a psychological impact. Their younger siblings join primary school years later, progressively they continue to even secondary schools or universities while the IDD learners are still at the same level. It is obvious that IDD learner self-esteem and self-acceptance will be affected. Some of the respondents were thwarted as they poured out their sentiments,

It is quite stigmatizing to remain in the same class for long period, the other "able" children label them as

“foolish”. This affects their self-esteem. They keep on comparing themselves with their peers and siblings who leave them behind as they progress. [Respondent from FGD 6, 14th Oct 2022]

In a different school parents shared,

My daughter asked me the other day, “*Mum will I do KCPE this year? I don’t want be left again by my brothers; I want to join secondary school like them*”. I didn’t tell her anything, but I know she is tired to be in this class. [Respondent from FGD 1, 5th Oct 2022]

Another said, My daughter has aged in this school, now she is 25 years old, at times I think about her future and I get stressed. I feel the government should have a way of getting these children leave school with skills that help them live a more independent life. I really wonder what will be of her when I will not be there. [Respondents from FGD 9, 24th Oct 2022]

The discussion with the parents/caregivers vividly shows parents are dissatisfied and exasperated by the situation of their intellectually challenged learners. It does not only affect the children who are stigmatized but also parents who see darkness in their future. This raises a lot of concern; a quick response is needed the soonest possible.

CONCLUSION

Quality education is a right to all Kenyan children regardless of their status. In every nation the government is charged with responsibility to ensure this right is realized and there is equity in education for all. Learners with mild and moderate intellectual challenges too are not left aside. Those who cannot fit in general class set up are placed in special units where they follow special needs curriculum under stage-based pathway as opposed to age-based pathway followed by their peers with no impairment. The main objective of this study was to explore the low rate of transition of learners with developmental and intellectual disabilities in selected special units in Kajiado County, Kenya.

This study confirms that learners with intellectual challenges remain many years in special units without transition. They spend many years at one level only to leave school at an advanced age, while others will drop out, without any practical skill that can help them live an independent life. Transition rarely takes place. This study sought to explore the prolonged school duration. Factors leading to low rate of transition were found to be; lack of prevocational skills, lack of assessment report to show what the learner has achieved over the years, no accessible continuity and unstructured timeframe showing the time a learner can remain in a special unit.

On the role of the curriculum and transition of learners with IDD the study found that the principles of progression, challenge and enjoyment as well as personalization and choice are not adhered to when it comes to teaching learners with IDD. Besides the laid curriculum principles, the study reveals that SNE teachers are not well prepare to teach prevocational skills, and there is also inadequacy of teaching and learning materials.

REFERENCES

1. Chesaro, E. (2020). Challenges Faced by teachers in Teaching Mentally Challenged and Communication Deficient learners in Mbagathi Special Unit, Kenya.
2. Chomba, M. J., Mukuria, S. G., Kariuki, P. W., Tumuti, S. & Bunyasi, B. A. (2014). Education for students with intellectual disabilities in Kenya: challenges and prospects. *Disability Studies Quarterly* Vol 34, No 4
3. Creswell, J. W., Fetters, M. D., & Ivankova, N. V. (2004). Designing a mixed methods study in

- primary care. *The Annals of Family Medicine*, 2(1), 7-12.
4. Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research and design. Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods*.
 5. Creswell, J. W., Klassen, A. C., Plano Clark, V. L., & Smith, K. C. (2011). *Best practices for mixed methods research in the health sciences*. Bethesda (Maryland): National Institutes of Health, 2013, 541-545.
 6. Flora, M., Wamocho, F. I., & Munyi, C. W. (2018). Strategies for Reducing Dropout Rate of Learners with Mild Intellectual Disabilities in Inclusive Primary Schools in Rwanda. *Journal of Special Needs Education*, 8, 72-86.
 7. Frederick H. Ochieng and Nathaniel M. Murungi, (2019). *Equity and Inclusion (PCF9 Conference). Attaining 100 percent transition from primary schools for learners with disabilities in Kenya: reality or fantasy? KICD*.
 8. Githi, Kamau, S., & Njau, M. N., (2014). *Research Methods. Design of a Research Project*. Nairobi: Multi-Face Solutions.
 9. Hassiotis, A. (2015). *Borderline intellectual functioning and neurodevelopmental disorders: prevalence, comorbidities and treatment approaches. Advances in Mental Health and Intellectual Disabilities*.
 10. Macharia John, (2018). *Cultural and environmental factors affecting transition of learners with physical disabilities from primary to secondary schools in Laikipia County, Kenya*. Thesis; Kenyatta University.
 11. Maina H., Muthee J., & Catherine, G. Murungi, (2018). *Effects of Curriculum on Transition to the World of Work for Learners with Intellectual Disability in Special Schools of Nakuru County*. Unpublished thesis; Kenyatta University.
 12. Maina, H. N., & Muthee, J. (2018). *Effects of Curriculum on Transition to the World of Work for Learners with Intellectual Disability in Special Schools of Nakuru County, Kenya*.
 13. Majid L. (2017). *Research Fundamentals: Study Design, Population, and Sample Size*. DOI Link: <https://doi.org/10.26685/urncst.16>.
 14. Maurice A. Nyamoti, (2018). *National goals of Education in Kenya. Curriculum Designs*.
 15. Mazrui L. Munir, (2014). *Determinants of Primary school wastage for learners with disabilities in Coast province, towards a theoretical prevention model. Department of Special Needs Education, Kenyatta University*.
 16. Mugenda, O. & Mugenda, A. G. (2009). *Research methods: Quantitative approaches*. Nairobi: ACTS.
 17. Mugalavai, V. K. (2012). *Challenges and reforms facing Kenyan education system in the 21st century: Integrating the principles of vision 2030 and constitution 2010. Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies*, 3(4), 471-478.
 18. Olewe Nyunya Alice. (2018). *Evaluation of development and implementation of individualized educational program by teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in Kisumu and Nairobi counties, Kenya (Unpublished PHD thesis) Kenyatta University*.
 19. Skinner, E. A., & Belmont, M. J. (1993). *Motivation in the Classroom: Reciprocal effects of teacher behavior and student engagement across the school year. Journal of educational psychology*, 85(4), 571 – 581.
 20. Vedi, K., & Bernard, S. (2012). *The Mental Health Needs of Children and Adolescents with Learning Disabilities. Current Opinion in Psychiatry*, 25 (5), 358-358.