

**DETERMINING ACTIVITIES AND INVOLVEMENT OF MENTALLY
CHALLENGED CHILDREN IN REGULAR CLASSES
IN ILMASHARIANI ZONE, CENTRAL DIVISION
NAROK DISTRICT
KENYA**

BY

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OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS
DEGREE IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION OF
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DECLARATION

I *Peter Rinyai* declare that this project is the work of my hands achieved through my own efforts and has not been previously published or presented to any college or university for any award.

SIGNED: 

DATE: 

PETER RINYAI

APPROVAL

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor.

SIGNED: 
MR. MISAGO PAUL

DATE: 26/08/09.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to all my family members; my wife Joyce Nashipae and friends; Saitoti.

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First and foremost I would like to acknowledge the almighty God for having granted me the good health to carry out the research.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

UPE:	Universal Primary Education
SNE:	Special Needs Education

ABSTRACT

This study intended to investigate the determination of activities and involvement of mentally challenged children in regular classes in Ilmashariani Zone, Central Division, Narok district. The most important and controversial issues in this study is the extent to which children with special needs should and can be involved in regular classrooms.

It should be noted that special needs education has moved historically from total absence, separate provision, partial integration to the inclusion stage. (*Clark 1997*).

Less attention was placed on transferring children with special needs from special to mainstream schools. However this is not the case today both a third world and developed countries. Kenya in particular, the introduction of UPE saw the increased enrolment of mentally retarded children into the education system which had a direct impact on the teachers' way of handling, assessing and evaluating the activities of their learners. Hence the research was carried out putting much emphasis on teacher's ability to identify the children with mental problems, teachers' attitudes towards inclusion of children who are mentally challenged, and to assess how teachers determine and involve mentally challenged children in the teaching-learning process in regular schools.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

One of the most important and controversial issues in special needs education at present is the extent to which children with special needs education can and should be included in regular classrooms. Special needs education emphasizes that some children have special needs which can be met in an inclusive learning environment. This refers to a regular class where the teachers, organization of classroom and assignment are adjusted and differentiated in accordance with the potential and needs of all pupils. The principle of inclusion on the other hand is that "schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other needs. 'Salamanca statement 1994:6 This School' for all ideology advocates for children with disabilities as far as possible attending the neighbourhood school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability.

In western countries for example United States of America, United kingdom and Italy, special needs education has moved historically from total absence, to separate provision, partial integration and to inclusion (Clark, Dyson, Milward and Skidnaore 1997). The concern was that there were many children already in mainstream schools who could scarcely cope with the standard curriculum and pedagogy to be found there and who were seen to be in need of some form of special education themselves.

Far less attention was placed on transferring children from special to mainstream schools than on transferring special education in the form of special classes and remedial teaching.

Later on, a steady stream of research began to raise questions about the effectiveness of special education in enabling children to learn and the breath of the educational experience which it was able to offer (*Galloway & Goodwin 1987*). The examples of other national systems began to suggest that special schooling could to a greater or lesser extent be dismantled without disastrous consequences either for its pupils or for mainstream schools.

Nyewe and Green 1991, and Zimba 1999; observed that in a number of countries in Africa education authorities are working towards transforming their education systems to an inclusive model. These efforts vary from country to country.

In Kenya the history of special needs education is young and lacking, traditionally the pattern of education has been characterized by education for some, with emphasis on teaching subject matter, which was examination oriented and competitive to the disadvantage of children with disabilities.

Ogwang 1998; found out that special schools and units were set up on the basis of what was seen as the common cause of learner's problems, for example, hearing impairment, physical and visual impairments, and mental retardation which is the major aim of this research. In these schools learners were trained by specialist teachers in a limited range of fields in self-care, reading, writing and vocational skills. It was presupposed that children with disabilities and learning difficulties cannot cope with a wider range of academic work provided in regular schools.

Similarly *Randiki (2002)*; pointed out that there have been attempts to move away from segregative education for children with disabilities in special schools and units. This created what came to be known as integrated schools. These means children with disabilities are taught in different classes by different teachers while sharing only the school compound, other facilities and activities with their normal colleagues. Still *Randiki* observed that provision for children experiencing difficulties in schools came to be characterized by an emphasis on categories, segregation and care increasingly, however, the negative effects of using categories and special learning needs, have come to be recognized as a disadvantage to those learners because it perpetrates their exclusion in society.

Kenya is one of the signatories to the 1948 United Nations Declaration for Education and full participation in society for all. The United Nation's published standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities, and 1994 Declaration of the world conference on special needs education adopted as the Salamanca statement on inclusive education. Therefore recognizable efforts are being made to address the educational needs of persons with disabilities and learning needs.

In line with the current world order, Kenya has set some bench marks to be achieved, that is by 2005 universal primary education was realized and by 2015 education for all should be achieved according to *Kisumu Conference 1992, (Randiki 2002)*. Also in the children's Act 2001 and the persons with disabilities bill (1997) both established a national council for persons with disabilities acting as the umbrella body that ensured that rights of persons with disabilities especially the mentally perturbed are protected.

On the other hand *Clark et al (1997)* point out that inclusive schools literature is far richer in critique advocacy and extortion than it is in evaluation. Relatively few studies exist which analyze the claims of particular practices to be elsewhere and integrate the assumptions of the inclusive school movement in the light of particular cases. Moreover where such studies exist there is a danger that they are premised in rear-guard actions in defence of the status quo rather than on a disciplined inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of inclusion.

Similarly *Haskel 1997*; criticizing the practice of inclusive education observes that attempts to force pupils with disabilities into regular schools and classrooms with poorly prepared non-disabled fellows, inadequately trained teachers, and poorly resources settings is a cruel and unjustified experiment by social engineers.

Thus in the light of the above studies, and implementation of universal primary education in Kenya. It necessitated carrying out a study on how activities of mentally challenged learners are determined and how teachers involve them in the teaching-learning process in regular classrooms.

1.2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Mentally challenged children are characterized with reduced ability to learn, language difficulties, academic difficulties, lack of concentration in class among others. (*Machodo J.M 1994*) henceforth becoming a problem to the regular class teaching and learning process.

However, *UNESCO 1997*; reports that by giving priority the children with disabilities and special needs education, the UPE programme has led to sizeable numbers of children with disabilities being registered in regular

primary schools which was not the case before. Thus more or less mentally challenged children have been enrolled. With this kind of situation, it remained to be seen how regular education teachers were determining the activities of mentally challenged children and involving them in the teaching / learning process in regular classroom.

1.3. PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to investigate on how teachers determine the activities of mentally challenged children and involve children who are mentally challenged in teaching-learning process in regular classrooms.

1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were;

- 1) To find out teacher's ability to identify children with mental incapability in the classroom.
- 2) To establish teachers' attitude towards inclusion of children who are mentally challenged in regular classrooms.
- 3) To assess how teachers determine and involve mentally challenged children in the teaching-learning process in regular classrooms.

1.5. SCOPE

This study was carried out in 20 selected primary schools in Ilmashariani Zone, Narok District. The study looked at 70 primary teachers with regards to the ways they determine activities of mentally challenged children and involve them in the teaching-learning process in regular classrooms.

1.6. SIGNIFICANCE

The study was of assistance;

1. Classroom and subject teachers to improve on their classroom management, evaluation and assessment skills amidst diversity of pupil's needs in a classroom.
2. In giving an insight to teacher trainers to give a relevant training to student teachers to enable them cope with children with differences.
3. Planners, policy makers and curriculum designers to design instruments that foster teaching-learning of children with various disabilities, and learning needs.
4. It would be a starting point for researchers on related topics.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed and analyzed some works by other writers, researcher, on inclusive education for children with visual impairment in regular classrooms. The review included journals, dissertation, newspapers, internet information and textbooks.

Several studies have revealed that failure to invest in disabled children is costly since they are always dependents. On the other hand, emphasizing education for all provides larger societal benefits, enhances poverty reduction. It goes without saying that disability is not inability. There is very limited research carried out in this area of study in Kenya, which is the force behind the research to be carried out.

The following literature reviewed considering identification of children with mental problems, in regular classrooms, teachers' attitudes towards management, integration and participation of children who are mentally challenged and learning difficulties in inclusive educational settings.

2.1. IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL CHALLENGES

Piaget 1994 notes that nearly all teachers have children with mental disabilities in their classes. He also noted that teachers have varying abilities in identifying children with mental challenges because in most cases they are trained to teach normal children and hence find it problematic to identify the perturbed children among the pupils. They normally take their abnormal activities as a result of stubbornness and poor performance for normally blamed on unseriousness of such pupils.

Identification of children with mental disability is crucial for their learning. Teachers need to be able to identify children with mental challenges in their classrooms so that they can use appropriate approaches in teaching (*Minette 1985*) produce and use suitable educational materials and assess performance of the learners. In this study mental retardation is defined as significance sub-average general intellectual functioning existing co-currently with deficit. In adaptive behaviour and manifested during developmental period. (American Association of Mental thus deficiency 1993). Teachers need to depict a child with intellectual sub-normality that would be lower than 97% persons in their classes.

There are four major classifications of mentally retarded persons. The first major, category is the mild with IQ below 70, these are easy to cyze with in regular classes, moderate with IQ below 55, severe with IQ below 40 and profound with IQ below 25. Hence forth the four categories being identified they should be treated and trained according to the effect of deficiency in them, hence they need supervision and guidance from the teacher. According to *KISE .S. 2006*, most of the time the severely and profoundly retarded children have multiple handicaps that often interfere with development; they have cerebral palsy, speech difficulties, hearing loss, and even physical handicaps thus such traits would help teachers to identify retarded learners their classes.

Onyango P. UNICEF (1990); notes that, children with mental problems are disabled by lack of awareness, ignorance and negative attitude towards their deficiencies by parents, societies in which they live and teachers at school.

They further say in most countries, programmes in regular schools, and are often more advanced. Yet children under mild and moderate category are the most misunderstood group as they are often not identified in

education and can sometimes be inappropriately tented as they are very insane, rather than maximizing their understanding.

2.2. TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

One of the major arguments has been in the debate about the integration or inclusion of children with special educational needs by both proponents and opponents of the idea has been, the attitudes of the teachers towards inclusion of children with special needs, in regular classes. In the field of Education, teachers' attitudes have been considered one of the major factors guaranteeing the success of school inclusion of children with special educational needs (Mentally challenged).

Several studies like *Thomas 1985, pastor and Timenez 1994, Pideliadu and Lampropoulou 1997*, reveal that regular education teachers do not hold positive attitudes towards inclusion of students with special educational needs; in regular schools. The majority of regular education teachers would prefer not to have taught students with special educational needs and they associate the presence of such pupils in their class with trouble.

In a comparative study conducted by *Leyser, Kapperman and Kelter 1994*; on teachers' attitude was found out that teachers in most countries had a neutral attitude towards school inclusion with exception of teachers in the USA and Germany who were mostly positive.

Traditionally regular education teachers not been supportive of the increased inclusion of students even those with mild and moderate special educational needs (*Padeliadu & Rampropulu 1997*). They also

found out that regular education teachers might in fact appear no more negative than their special education colleagues. While special education teachers are very concerned with accumulation of the students' needs in regular classrooms, regular education teachers on the other hand, are holding a more positive perspective of inclusion of services (*Ingule 1996*).

Relying on these findings alone may not be conducive enough to assure that, that is the way ordinary teachers' attitudes are in school. In Narok schools, this necessitates a study to be carried out to this effect.

2.3. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND LEARNING OF MENTALLY RETARDED PUPILS

Macino-Brown, Oke and Brown 1982 define classroom management as the organization of certain non-academic tasks which are essential for effective teaching. While *Wragg 1981*, mentions that class management is what teachers do to ensure that children engage in the task in hand, whatever that may be. On the other hand both agree that good classroom management is a necessity for the teacher to be able to teach with ease and for enhancing pupil's learning.

Wragg 1981 observes that the classroom is the most important arena for school learning. It is also a stage for two actors the teacher and the student and the nature of interaction that takes place between them greatly influences the amount and quality of learning that is produced. He continues to say that there are many ways of handling classes; unfortunately some practitioners would conceive only one of handling classes. He also says that other studies of teachers at work have shown that their teaching is relatively unchanging from one day to the next; hence the in basing on the above observation the increased enrolment in

Kenya comprised of increased number of mentally retarded children, need educational and instructional changes, amongst teachers.

Whereas *Gulliford and Upton 1992*, adds that, teachers of children with mental problems in their class face common problems in which it is not possible to specific about since the needs of all the children vary from one child to another even with the same mental retardation hence failure to manage, their activities in class and laying firm grounds to include all of them in the teaching-learning process.

Inspite of that, *Murungi K. 1988*, emphasizes that a child with mild mental disability (problem) should learn together with his or her normal peers such a child can achieve more much with the help of the teachers. He specifically points out that a teacher should always talk to the child directly never to speak to a child through another person.

The mentally challenged child should be included in all classroom activities. It is ideal to find out where the child feels comfortable and let him or her sit in that place should be allowed to participate in the study time fully.

The requirements that are needed for inclusion of children with disabilities and learning needs into ordinary schools take different forms. But common to all is the real to have a well qualified special needs teacher to manage and control activities in classes with special needs like mental (*Omago Loican 1998*).

Profoundly retarded and severely retarded children have multiple handicaps like speech difficulties, hearing loss, and physical handicaps, (*KISE 2006*). This expresses the importance of *Huebner & Ferell 1996*'s argument when they suggest that many teachers of mentally retarded

pupils are required to wear halls in different combinations. As a result they should become dual trained professionals who are required to have competencies not only in education, but in orientation and mobility. In dealing with other disability groups as well, for they may be connected to mental illness.

UNESCO 1994, In teacher resource pack stresses that, amidst individual differences of children, must influence their progress, what teachers do is also very important. Difficulties in teaching-learning process occur as a result of resources, teachers provide and the way, in which teachers choose to organize the classroom, consequently difficulties in learning can be created by teachers but can still be avoided for successful teaching/learning.

Although the above findings highlight the need for a teacher to have good classroom management skills, they do not specifically address the issue of having children with mental problem in regular classes. This may necessitate working at inclusion of disabled children in regular classroom activities in a more broad way thus a need for this study.

2.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided the study;

- 1) Are teachers able to identify mentally retarded pupils in regular classrooms?
- 2) What are the teacher's attitudes towards inclusion of mentally challenged pupils in regular classrooms?
- 3) How are the teachers managing and involving children with mental problems in teaching-learning process in regular classroom?

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the methods and procedures that were used to generate and analyze data. It discusses how the respondents were selected, how data was collected and analyzed.

3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher used cross-sectional survey design to generate data. This design is preferred because it was suitable for obtaining information from a small population of the respondents. Besides, the design was much time saving. Questionnaire interviewing and lesson observations were the techniques by which the method was applied.

3.2. SAMPLE CHOICE

Schools having children with mental problems were included in the study. Selected schools in Central Division, Narok District included; Ole-Tukat Primary School, Limanet Primary School, Siyapei Primary School, Pulunga Primary school, Model Primary school, Empopongi primary school and St. Mary's Primary school. Minimum of 70 Primary teachers were selected from the 7 selected schools. Random sampling was used by the researcher to help minimize the researcher's bias on teacher's sex, academic qualification, and teaching experience.

3.3. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

The study was both qualitative and quantitative, thus corresponding instruments were used. The questionnaire mainly collected quantitative data while the interview guide collected qualitative data. Search thorough documents in relation to the topic were done using both primary and secondary documents.

3.4. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

3.4.1. Validity

In order to establish the validity of the instruments, the researcher discussed with colleagues, from the department. Further assistance was sought from the supervisor.

They assessed the instruments, the language clarity, relevance, comprehensiveness and length of the instruments. Appropriate correction was made.

3.4.2. Reliability

To establish the reliability of the instruments, the researcher conducted a pilot study using 10 regular classroom teachers from primary schools in Central Division, Narok District excluding those schools included amongst the final subjects in the study.

3.5. PROCEDURE

A letter of introduction was obtained from the Dean faculty of special of special needs, Kampala International University, to enable the researcher carry out research in Narok District. The letter was taken by the researcher to the respective headteachers sampled for the intended study to seek permission to conduct research in their schools.

The researcher delivered questionnaires to the classroom teachers and as well carried out interviews with the teachers.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The data collected was analyzed qualitatively on basis of research questions and objectives. This was commenced by categorizing of information, the description was done on the basis of tabulated

frequencies and percentages and commentary was made on the significance or lack of it where applicable quotations and related literature were used in the discussion of the findings.

3.7. EXPECTED PROBLEMS IN EXECUTIN THE STUDY

The researcher was worried about the following delimitations;

- 1) Inadequate funds given that the researcher subscribes the tuition and as well has some other responsibilities at home, however he tried to use the available limited funds sparingly.
- 2) It was not so easy to get respondents for the interviews and questionnaires in their respective places of work; but the researcher tried to get phone contacts, for various teachers to make appointments with them before going there.
- 3) Time limit because the researcher was a full time student, that he has to attend lectures, revise and at the same time carry out research but the researcher formulated an appropriate time table for all activities.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

4.0. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presented the study findings and interpretation. The purpose of the study was to investigate how teachers determine activities and involve mentally challenged learners in regular classrooms. The results of study were presented according to the research questions.

The researcher sought first the period the teachers that responded to questionnaires have spent in the teaching profession. The findings are summarized in the table below;

TABLE 1: TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
1-2yrs	15	7.1%
Over 4 years	60	86%
Over 8 years	5	7.1%
TOTAL	70	100%

The findings illustrated that most of the teachers were experienced given that 60% of the teachers have been in the education system for over 4 years and 7% had just joined the system equaling to the more experienced teachers covering 7.1%.

The respondents were also asked whether they know, the concept of mental retardation and only. 60% of the teachers responded to these questions. The respondents gave definitions like;

The total loss of mental understanding by someone, other respondents described it as lack of IQ capacity in or individual but 2 teachers gave a very clear exploration of mental disability as significance.

Sub-average general intellectual functioning existing co-currently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period, which definition is in line with *Otule's (2002)*, explanation about mental retardation.

However, some respondents used *Paiget's (1994)*, definition of mental retardation as the intellectual sub normality that would be lower than 96% IQ.

CLASSIFICATION

Piaget (1994), explains that mental challenges vary from one person to another and thus expectation from such retardation people vary, thus should be treated different. However, basing on definition given by the respondents there is a clear mark of generalization which affects some students who would have been easy to be made function efficiently and well in society through proper training.

The third question sought to investigate whether the respondents were able to identify mentally challenged children in their classrooms. (See table 2)

TABLE 2: PROPORTION OF TEACHERS ABLE TO IDENTIFY CHILDREN WITH MENTAL PROBLEMS.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Able to identify	68	97%
Not able	2	3%
TOTAL	70	100%

The findings illustrated that 97% of the respondents were able to identify mentally challenged learners in their classrooms and only 3% are not able to identify them.

The respondents were also asked whether they had children with mental deficiency in their classrooms. The responses are summarized in Table 3 below;

TABLE 3: PROPORTION OF TEACHERS WHO IDENTIFIED CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN THEIR CLASSROOMS.

RESPONSE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Identified	53	76%
Not identified	17	24%
TOTAL	70	100%

The findings in the table showed that majority of the respondents 76% confirmed mentally challenged learners in their classrooms while only 24% had not identified them. This is a clear indicator that children with mental problem exist in regular classrooms.

The respondents were requested to mention indicators by which they identified mentally challenged pupils in their classrooms. They gave various indicators, including the following;

Physically handicapped, use abusive language, make high pitched noise, lack concentration in class, never as assignments and when they attempt they fail, poor general academic performance.

Some respondents gave other indicators like forgetfulness, beating other students, doesn't obey teachers, dirtiness, constant sickness and as well destroy property.

This indicates that in most cases teachers observe mental cases through determining the activities of the learners. And according to the responses it is in line with *Otule 2002*, when he said that sub average intellectual functioning exist co-currently, with deficits in adaptive behaviours, and physical abnormalities.

To further investigate about identification of mentally challenged learners, the researcher sought to find out practical aspects teachers initiate when they identify these children in their classrooms.

The responses include the following;

- Offering extra teaching
- Handling such learners in a special way,
- Constant lasting, assessment and evaluation
- Warning fellow students about the profound mental cases.
- Formulating mixed academic groups.
- Asking assistance from resource persons
- Paying close attention to such a child
- Positioning them to suitable sitting places
- Identifying their interests
- Varying teaching methods.

Findings indicate that teachers cater for the mental cases in their regular classes though a teacher was quoted suggesting complete dismissal of such students in regular classes as the only solutions.

Further the respondents were required to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the inclusion of children with mental challenges in the table below;

TABLE 4: TEACHERS ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSION OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIREMENT IN REGULAR CLASSES.

ATTITUDE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Agree	46	66%
Disagree	24	34%
Total	70	100

The findings indicate that 46% of the population had a positive attitude towards the schooling for mentally challenged learners making 66% while only 434% had rental attitudes. This indicates that the traditional attitude towards the ability of disabled persons has widely changed.

The researcher still wanted to investigate whether the respondents were trained in special needs education. The responses are shown in table 5 below;

TABLE 5: TEACHERS TRAINED IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN SELECTED REGULAR SCHOOLS.

TRAINING IN S.N.E	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Untrained	57	81%
Trained	13	19%
Total	70	100

The finding indicated that majority of the teachers in regular schools are not trained in special needs education, indicated by the 81% of the respondents. Only a few 13 making 19% were trained in special needs education.

This indicates that in most cases teachers just gamble while dealing with special needs pupils or end up rendering insufficient assistance to the learners.

Further more the respondents were required to mention methods they had found most effective in teaching children with mental challenges. The responses which were given are shown below (see table 6)

TABLE 6: EFFECTIVE METHODS IN TEACHING MENTALLY CHALLENGED

EFFECTIVE METHODS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Child to child	15	22%
Demonstration	1	01%
Chalk and talk	3	4%
Question and answer	30	43%
Trial and error	21	30%
None	-	-
Total	70	100

The findings indicate that 43% of the respondents found question and answer method more effective in teaching mentally challenged learners, 22% opted for trial and error. The findings show that respondents were knowledgeable of various methods by which they could teach children with mental retardation.

The researcher further asked the respondents they meet while dealing with mentally challenged learners and they talked of problems like, incapability to cope with the speed of learning-teaching in class, constant supervision, filling them in the class of normal students, lack of adequate and appropriate instructional materials, lack of skills in special needs education, lack of motivation in learners, negative attitude from parents and planning and implementing individualized tasks. The findings therefore indicate that the respondents experienced difficulties in identifying, managing and involving mentally challenged pupils in regular classrooms.

The respondents were further required to give suggesting towards improvement of teaching children with mental challenges in the regular classrooms. The responses are shown below;

- District officials and ministry of education in Kenya should intensify conducting special needs education seminars for teachers on job.
- Incorporating SNE component in the teacher training institutes curriculum.
- Ministry of education science and technology post SNE teachers in all schools.
- Motivating teachers
- School administrators call for parents and community support.
- Provision of special classes in some schools for children with mental causes.
- The findings indicate that mentally challenged children can be dealt with if all stakeholders play a crucial role in handling them as they stay in regular schools.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study was to investigate on the determination of activities managing and involvement of mentally challenged children in teaching-learning process in regular classrooms. In this chapter, the findings are discussed, conclusions and recommendations are governed. Finally suggestions for areas of further research are proposed. The findings for each research question is discussed separately, and related literature has been used to support the arguments of research questions.

5.1. DISCUSSION

5.1.1. Identification of Mentally challenged learners in regular classrooms

The researcher was interested to find out if teachers were able to identify mentally challenged learners in their classrooms. Teachers need to be able to identify children with mental problem in classrooms so that they can use appropriate approaches in teaching, produce and use suitable educational materials, assess performance of the learners and where necessary refer them for treatment. Results shown in table 2 shows that teachers are able to identify children with mental challenges in their classes.

On the contrary, findings through interview with teachers revealed that participants were able to identify only observable signs of mental problems. Respondents consented not being able to determine the degree of mental incapacibilities in individual pupils. The possible reasons that were given was that most of them had not been trained nor sensitized

about identification and assessment of learners with special educational needs.

Similarly, *save the children* (1998), substantially to these findings observes that children with special needs are disabled by lack of awareness, ignorance and negative attitudes towards their impairments by parents, societies and even teachers. They further say children with mild mental causes are the most misunderstood group as they are often not identified in education. One implication of this finding is the need to sensitize and train teachers on general basic skills and knowledge about special needs education.

The results further showed that mentally challenged children were found in regular classrooms. Only a few teachers said they did not have them. However, it's not known whether there were other children with similar problems in their classes who the teachers had failed recognize. The researcher therefore doubts the teacher's ability to identify mental cases in their classrooms and he agrees with school (1986) who cautions that sometimes for a variety of reasons children and even adults will try to take disabilities.

However further inquiry in this study has shown that there are a various indicators by which teachers can identify mentally challenged learners. The main indicator includes poor academic performance among others. These may not be the only signs necessary for identifying mental problems. *Labogo* (1994) indicates that the following indicators not raised by respondents should not be neglected as inability to self-care, self segregation.

The study has also shown that there were variety practical aspects teachers could initiate in their teaching as a result of identifying mentally

challenged pupils in their classrooms. It was mentioned by a number of respondents that when they identified mentally challenged learners they planned and implement individualized tasks, varied teaching methods. This finding is the resource teachers provide and ways teachers choose to organize the classroom determine the success of teaching-learning process. Thus teaching-learning difficulties can be created and overcome by teachers. About 56% of the teachers mentioned the issue of paying close attention to the mentally challenged pupils identified, from which the researcher observed some teachers pitying and over protected the mentally challenged learners thus exempting them from some class activities, implying that teachers concentrated on challenges but not abilities of various children under study. The researcher therefore agrees with Houston 1988 who suggests that "The regular classroom teacher is the primary educator of the disabled child in his or her class. It is the teacher's responsibility to teach all children in classroom giving the same to MI attention and help as he or she gives to other children.

5.1.2. Teacher's Attitude towards Children with Mental Challenges

Teachers' attitudes have been considered as one of the major factors guaranteeing inclusion of learners with special educational needs. In this study it has been found that teachers generally had positive attitudes towards inclusion of mentally challenged children in regular classrooms, as 66% of the respondents supported it. This finding is in agreement with *Padeliaudu and Lampropoulou (1997)* who also found out that regular education teachers appear more positive than special education teachers. On the issue of schooling for mentally challenged learners, the findings showed that majority of teachers had positive attitude. This finding is in conformity with what one of the respondents during interviews remarked "Children with mental problems are children like others, they have a right to the education". Similarly, the Salamanca statement on principles

policy and practice on special needs education (1994:2) proclaims "Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning.

On the ability to learn by mentally challenged children, the findings showed that the majority of teachers were positive. This positive attitude exhibited by the teachers could be attributed to some of them having been sensitized and government publicity about special needs for children with disabilities and learning needs.

On the contrary, some teachers had negative attitudes towards inclusion of mentally challenged to the mainstream classrooms. It had been noted by *Jimenez 1994* that there is a general feeling among teachers that mentally challenged students are sometimes excessively sensitive and difficult to handle. Similar findings by *Pastor 1994* showed that a majority of regular education teachers would prefer not to teach students with special educational needs and they associated the presence of such students in classes with trouble.

With regards to teacher qualification of mentally challenged learners the findings showed that a majority of teachers seem to have a negative attitude that teaching mentally challenged learners requires only teachers with special needs background. This finding was further supported by the responses given during the interviews by some teachers who said "We are trained for normal children an indication that teachers still have a negative attitude". Accordingly *Bell 1986* seems to support this idea that there are special children which need to be taught separately.

The researchers agree with Bell because, most of the teachers in Kenya have come through a system of education that recognizes special

teachers, special children and special schools. Therefore it becomes very difficult for such teachers to embrace an alternative view for instance to become special needs teachers.

On preference of teaching, the researcher found out that teachers had positive attitudes towards teaching children with mental challenges. On the other hand when the findings are integrated with findings from the interviews, it yielded inconsistent picture some respondents were quoted saying *"I would rather teach children with mental deficiency in their own class so that I can maximumly give them attention unlike when they are together with their normal peers"*. This implies that there is a need for a deliberate action to sensitize teachers to know and understand their own attitudes towards children with special educational needs.

5.1.3. Teachers' Management and Involvement of Children with Mental Challenges in the Teaching-Learning Process in Regular Classrooms.

Omagor-Loican (1998) suggests that, for successful inclusion of children with SNE in regular schools and classrooms, it is necessary to have a well qualified SNE teacher to manage classes that have children with special needs.

In this study, it was found that a majority of teachers in the surveyed schools had not been trained in teaching children with special needs as shown in table 5. The validity of this finding is again supported by *Randiki (2002)* who observed that, Kenya has been lack of trained teachers in SNE due to the fact that the teachers' institutions traditionally had not significant provisions for special needs on their training programmes.

Regarding actual management and involvement of mentally challenged learners in the teaching-learning process the teachers indicated that they used various methods. Among the methods teachers found effective in teaching mentally challenged learners Question and Answer ranked highest, and Trial and Error followed without mentioning, group discussions. The researcher found out that while the teachers agreed theoretically that they used alternative methods in teaching as shown in table 7, that when integration of the methods is made, in practice they mainly used one method at a time or throughout the lesson for example, chalk and talk. Similarly *Wragg (1981)* found that many teachers at work have shown that their teaching style is relatively unchanging from one day to the next. This therefore indicates that teachers are 'all equipped to deal with learning of mentally challenged learners'.

Furthermore, and in order to determine, manage and involve mentally challenged learners, in the teaching-learning process, some teachers indicated that they provided remedial teaching to these pupils. On the whole of, 23 out of 30 teachers interviewed revealed that they hardly had time to attend to individual children's needs given the current large class enrolment.

Concerning, identifying their interests, some teachers were quoted complaining of inconsistencies amongst the students more so the severely perturbed, therefore the above findings indicate that mentally challenged learners seem disadvantaged than the rest of their sighted peers in the teaching-learning process in regular classroom.

However the teachers felt that classroom management and involvement of mentally challenged children in the teaching-learning process was made difficult by large class enrolments. This was noted in some schools where teacher pupil, ratio was no less than 1:10 although as per now,

government has tried to reduce teacher pupil ratio to 1:70. These findings are in agreement with one respondent during interviews who said, "Class enrolment these days is very large, I hardly get time to pay attention to individuals in class. Concerning implementing and planning individualized classroom tasks teachers said they found it problematic. They complained that most of their time is consumed marking heaps of exercise books given the current large class enrolments, so little time is available for planning and implementing individualized tasks in the classroom. Moreover mentally challenged pupils are a negligible number.

As earlier noted, that teachers have a positive attitude towards the schooling of mentally challenged learners, there were a number of suggestions put forward by the respondents for the improvement of teaching-learning process of mentally retarded children in regular classrooms amidst difficulties.

The first suggestion given was to incorporate SNE component in the teacher training curriculum. In view of the known fact that "No education system is better than the quality of its teachers". The researcher observed that this has been already done in accordance to recommendations of Kenya's ministry of education, science and technology.

They further stressed that the education officers (authority) should post SNE teachers to all schools in the region. However the researcher feels that teachers should be deployed only where more teachers are needed but not for more purpose of having specialized personnel in the schools, due to the fact that even their number is low.

It was observed that there was need to provide teaching materials for children with special needs to all schools. Teachers felt that this limitation was indeed handicapping on both them and pupil.

There was a suggestion to raise teachers' salaries. The teachers noted that salary scales for teachers in Kenya in comparison to the work load are still low as compared with that of other professionals.

The researcher noted that this suggestion to motivate teachers is supported by Bloom and Bloom (1987) who argue that if the teaching profession is to attract most promising teacher candidates and retain those who are exemplary in practice, it is imperative that teachers need to be attended throughout the professional careers.

5.2. CONCLUSION

Having analyzed the data and interpreted in the following conclusions were arrived at;

- Teachers are able to identify the observable characteristics of mentally challenged learners. But they seem not to be able to determine the degree of their deficiency.
- Most of the primary school teachers in Narok District have not been trained in the skills of teaching children with special educational needs.
- Generally regular teachers seem to have a positive attitude towards inclusion of children with mental problems in regular classrooms.

However they depend in attitude on specific aspects.

- It appears teachers with special educational needs are necessary in all schools to facilitate teaching-learning process of children with the various disabilities.

- Lastly management and participation of children with special educational needs in regular classes seems minimal. Thus sufficient support to schools and classroom teachers is needed.

5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

In the view of the findings of this study, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

1. To create awareness and equip more teachers with skills about identification assessment and teaching of learners with special educational needs, more emphasis should be laid on organizing school based training programmes in the form of workshops, seminars and short courses.
2. Within the training programmes in teacher's institutes efforts should be made to sensitize student teachers about their own attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs.
3. To cater for the teaching-learning of children with special educational needs, the education / curriculum planning organ should incorporate the element of SNE in all schools syllabus and produce teachers' guide books and learning materials, suitable for learners with impairments.

5.4. AREAS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

The areas of research as revealed by this study include;

1. Attitudes of learners with learning disabilities towards inclusive education and its influence on their participation in regular classroom.
2. Management and participation of children with other disabilities and learning needs in inclusive settings.
3. Teacher's socio-demographic factors and its influence on management and participation of children with other learning needs in regular classes.

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APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR THE TEACHERS

Dear respondent,

I am a student from Kampala International University carrying out research on determining activities and involvement of mentally challenged children in regular classes in Narok district. I kindly request you to answer the following questions. The information attained will be confidently treated.

1) How long have you been in the education system?

1 - 2 yrs ☐ Over 4 years ☐ Over 6 years ☐

2) What is mental retardation?

.....

3) Do you have mentally challenged pupils in your class?

Yes ☐

No ☐

4) a. During your stay in the system have you been recognizing / identifying mentally challenged children in your classes.

Yes ☐

No ☐

b. If yes, what are some of the traits do they have

.....

.....

5) What do you do to cater for the mentally challenged learners in your classroom?

.....

.....

6) Are you a trained in special education?

Yes ☐

No ☐

7) Do you support the schooling for mentally retarded children

Yes ☐

No ☐

8) Which teaching method have you found more effective in teaching mentally challenged learners?

Child to child ☐

Demonstration ☐

Chalk and talk ☐

Question and answer ☐

Story telling ☐

Trial and error ☐

None ☐

9) Which problem do you meet while teaching mentally challenged learners?

.....
.....

10) Give suggestions for the improvement of the teaching of mentally challenged children in regular classrooms.

.....
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