

**CHALLENGES AFFECTING THE LEARNING OF MILD MENTALLY  
CHALLENGED LEARNERS IN REGULAR SCHOOLS  
OF MATUGA DIVISION  
KENYA**

**BY**

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF BACHELORS  
DEGREE IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION OF KAMPALA  
INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**AUGUST 2009**

## **DECLARATION**

I *Mohamed .J. Mafimbo*, declare that this report has been a result of my own effort and has not been submitted in any other institution of higher learning for any award.

### APPROVAL

This report has been submitted for examination with my approval as the candidate's university supervisor.

Signed:.....

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Date:.....

*25/08/09*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Although I may be listed as the sole writer of this research project, I have been fortunate to have a great deal of assistance in writing it.

First and foremost, I must thank my lecturers of Kampala International University whose ideas, insights and clear commitment to the field of research project writing. They have provided much of the driving force behind my writing and completion of the project.

Special thanks go to Mr. Misago Paul whom I can describe as a task master who always insists that I stretch my talents to the limit. Yet he also provides the guidance and support that I need to achieve the things that initially seem so impossible.

Last but certainly not least, my family has been ever so patient with me as I continue to stare at my books night after night.

To my wife Halima and to my only son Hamisi – I will love you always.

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## **ABSTRACT**

The report study was based on team work composed of teachers and stakeholders in education at the DEO's office Kwale Kenya and was guided by the following objectives;

- To establish the characteristics of mentally retarded learners.
- To find out the problems affecting the learning of mild mentally challenged learners in regular schools.
- To assess how teachers manage and involve children with mental disorders in teaching learning process.

Based on the above objective, the research questions were formulated.

The study focused on the relationships between learners and teachers with Special Needs Education (SNE) in education. The report presents the description of the research designs, methodology used to collect, processing and analyzing of data and its limitation and delimitation.

A summary of the key issues have been laid out with empirical and theoretical literature review from which comparisons were made in a more systematic way to draw inferences.

Conclusion and recommendations were arrived at based on the research questions.



## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.0. BACKGROUND

For many years people with mental disabilities have gone through horrifying experiences. Their treatment and lifestyle has evolved through generation after generation. This demonstrates clearly that the social climates of a society and a society's attitudes towards the retarded, was not all that good.

The unfortunate and disenfranchised groups play an important role in determining the policies adapted for the care and treatment of the mentally retarded. In most cases the experiences have been demeaning in regard to their wellbeing.

Macmillan 1982, says that extreme of cruelty towards the mentally retarded can be seen in the society of the Spartans who abandoned and killed anyone who was handicapped. Tremendous variability characterizes the treatment of the mentally retarded; behaviour that deviated from the norm was increasingly pursued as caused by Satan.

In the old days mentally challenged were neglected. They associated with witchcraft, and God's punishment, and isolated families' several abusive terms were used to refer to mentally retarded including' fools, subnormal, imbeciles, mentally sluggish, etc.

From ancient times there has been several changes of the treatment of these individuals. The stages included the No right period, segregation period, and immigration period. In the no right period, people with special needs, had no right to education, power, etc and disability meant inability in all aspects of life. During the segregation, period persons with disability were isolated in special institutions. Then came the integration

period where human rights were recognized and they were placed in the regular classes and schools.

Those experiences were felt almost globally with a few exceptions. To date these with mental handicaps still experience in human treatment. A glimpse at the earlier times since it was believed they were possessed by an evil spirit to drive out the process of purgation or expression was invoked with the retarded being mentally scourged and physically tortured.

Nyewe and Zimba (1999), observed that in a number of countries in Africa education authorities are working towards transforming their educational systems to an inclusive model. These efforts vary from country to country Kenya in particular, traditionally the pattern of education system has been divided to education into regular and special provisions. This is education for some, with emphasis on teaching subject matter which is examination oriented and competitive to the disadvantages of children with various disabilities and learning difficulties.

Nyewe (1999) again stressed that special schools were set up on the bias of what was seen as common cause of the learner's problem, e.g. mental retardation, hearing impairment etc. the schools had specialists in a limited range of activities like self care, reading and writing. It was presupposed that children with disabilities and learning difficulties cannot cope with a wider range of academic work provided in regular schools.

Recognizable efforts are however being made to address the educational needs of persons with disabilities and learning needs and most them stress the needs for all children to pass through the ordinary system of

education whether disabled or not. *Kristersen (1997)* observes that with the implementation of the education for all programme/policy in various African countries has meant that children with mild and moderate educational needs are now increasingly being found in regular schools and classes.

On the other hand, *Hiskell (1997)* criticized the practice of education when he observes that attempts to force pupils with disabilities into regular schools and classrooms with poorly prepared, disabled peers, inadequate trained teachers and poorly resources setting is a cruel and unjustified experiment by social engineers.

With a live regard, challenges, affecting the learning of the mild mentally challenged in regular schools in various schools in Kenya are still being registered. It has been noted that all learners with mental retardation are in special institutions, but being heterogeneous group, some learners are and can benefit from the regular class setting.

This is an area where the placement is vulnerable to pros and cons. As the economies of people change the society's expectation, over its individuals to change. In this respect the competitiveness in our schools put on learners with special needs to dilemma, hence not given a chance to display their abilities. The education of learners with mental handicaps is prone to be affected by many factors. Therefore for any remedy should address this situation so that there is freedom and education for all, the problem has been identified and ways of cubing it to create a barrier free environment.

In light of the above studies and implementation of education for all in Uganda, it necessitates carrying out a study on how regular classroom teachers manage and involve children with mild mental disability.

The teaching-learning process and the factors affecting their learning in regular schools and units a case study of Matuga Division.

### **1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

UNESCO (2003) report that by giving priority to children with disabilities and special needs education, the UPE programme has led to increased numbers of children with various disabilities being registered in regular schools. However, most of the learners with mental handicap in regular schools have not been given a chance to exploit their abilities to the fullest. This is done due to negligence by those who are supposed to provide proper guidance. With this kind of situations, it remains of importance to investigate the factors affecting the learning of the mild mentally challenged in regular schools in Matuga Division.

### **1.2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of the study was to investigate factors affecting the learning of the mild mentally challenge in regular schools in Matuga division.

### **1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The study was guided by the following objectives

- To establish the characteristics of mentally retarded learners.
- To find out the problem affecting the learning of mild mentally challenged learners in regular schools.
- To assess how teachers manage and involve children with mental disorders in teaching learning process in regular schools.

#### **1.4. SCOPE**

The study was carried out in 10 primary schools in Matuga division. The study looked at teachers, with regard to the ways they identify children with mental problem, challenges faced when handling them, and how they manage them in regular classes / units.

#### **1.5. HYPOTHESIS**

The following research questions guided the study;

1. What are the characteristics of mild mentally challenged learners?
2. What problems affect the learning of mild mentally challenged learners?
3. How can mentally challenged learners be helped out through regular schools?

#### **1.6. SIGNIFICANCE**

The findings of this study were of significance to school heads, teachers and educational planners in the following ways;

- Assist to increase knowledge to teachers of learners with mental cases on how to handle them.
- Help the curriculum developers to come up with a sensible curriculum which addresses the needs of the learners with mental problems.
- Create awareness to the community to come up with relevant support required by the intellectually challenged learners.
- Assist the ministry of Education in making favourable policies to all learners.
- To help teachers improve their teaching methods.
- In giving insight to teacher educators, to give a wholistic training to student teachers and include a part of handling disabled pupils.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.0. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the researcher reviewed and analyzed some work by the writers on inclusive education for children with mental problems in ordinary classrooms. The review included identification of children with mental problems, in regular classrooms, factors affecting the learning of children with mental problems, and how teachers try to manage these children in regular classrooms.

#### 2.1 IDENTIFICATION AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED LEARNERS.

*Ingalls 1986*, says that AAMD has developed a system of diagnostic classification of the retarded based on the individual level of functioning, principally the IQ level. According to *Ingalls (1986)* mild learners who can be helped to grasp what is taught. They are not fully academic failures henceforth given audience and serious concentration they can cope up with the teaching in regular classes and units.

*Dew et al (1986)* says that the historical development of classification schemes of mentally challenged has evidenced confusion in concept and direction nearly parallel to the apparent in definition efforts perhaps the most difficulty with classification and identification schemes. This problem has been particularly troublesome in the mental retardation field again because of the wide variety of disciplines interested in the phenomena.

The learners with mild mentally retardation are found in most of the regular schools and classes. Hallahan and Kattman (1991) indicate that most individuals classified as retarded are retarded. They typically do not

differ from appearance from the non-handicapped and usually not diagnosed as mentally retarded individuals as having cultural familiar retardation.

On the contrary according to *Gearheart (1980)* the mild mentally challenged also referred to as educable mentally challenged may not be identified for several years. Such a student can remain in the regular class setting without additional support services. Therefore there is no need to identify him or her as mentally challenged his or her adaptive behaviour is most likely to be within the normal range. Thus the learner can be assisted to develop intellectually and cognitively to approach the level of normal mental ability and they may occur in all socio-economic levels.

Majority of educable mentally retarded disappear into the larger society at adulthood and escape identification as mentally retarded beyond their school careers. Most mild retarded avoid the attention of authorities and are capable of meeting the demands of the environment for normal adult functioning. The mild retarded are more vulnerable to adverse economic condition than are their retarded peers. (*Macmillan 1982*)

The characteristics of the mild mentally retarded are closely related to the characteristics of mental retardation. Knowledge of these characteristics may help in the identification of these learners and in planning for them. *Gearheart (1980)* says a certain traits are observed in mild mentally challenged learners and their growth out will often be found than in age peers of normal mental ability.

*Hallahan & Kauffman (1991)* points out that the most obvious characteristic of retardation is reduced ability to learn. Retarded persons exhibit cognitive problems in different ways. Research has documented that students are likely to have difficulties in at least four areas related to cognition, including lack of attention, low memory, language problems and academic failure i.e below conceptualization and as well as sensory and motor coordination handicap, low tolerance for frustration, among others.

Learners with mental retardation are candidates of a variety of social and emotional problems in particular. They often have problems in making friends, have poor self concept may be because some of their behaviours may turn off peers not retarded and shun off for they don't want to associate with people who are disabled. *Wanyera (2002)*.

Finally they end up having problems in social interaction with others.

As per leaving the mentally challenged learners have memory deficiency with inability to focus on stimuli in learning situations, inefficiency rehearsal strategies, unable to benefit from incidental learning areas in their environment and deficiency in the development of learning set up (*Skidmore 2007*)

Save the Children (1998) notes that children with disabilities are disabled by lack of awareness, ignorance and negative attitudes towards their impairments by parents in the societies in which they live and from teachers. They further say in most countries programmes for persons with disabilities are often at a more advanced stage than those for normal people. Yet children with moderate mental cases are the most misunderstood groups as they are often identified in education and sometimes be inappropriately treated as of they lost their mind totally rather than offering special academic structure and treatment.



However, according to Randiki (2002) Not all those characteristics will be found in all educated mentally retarded, students for they are highly interacted though always related to the normal level of mental functioning.

## **2.2. PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED IN REGULAR SCHOOLS**

A number of countries in Africa, education authorities are working towards transforming their education system to an inclusive model (Nyewe, Green 1999 and Zimba 1991). The efforts vary from country to country, though there are still loopholes which hinder full participation of learners with mental weaknesses more so the educable that are not fully mad or badly off registered mentally retarded.

*Clark et al (1997)* point out that the inclusive schools literature is far richer in critique advocacy and exhortation than it is in evaluation. Relatively few studies exist which analyze the claims of particular practices to be inclusive, example the implication of those analysis for practices elsewhere and integrate the assumptions of the inclusive school movement in the light of particular cases. More over even where such studies exist there is a danger that they are premised on rear ground action in defense of the status quo rather than on a disciplined inquiry into the possibilities and limitations of inclusion.

*Ngugi (2002)* points out that most schools have guiding and counseling personnel to support teachers and learners with special needs and equip them with skills.

Similarly *Haskell (1997)* criticized the practice of inclusive education by observing that attempts to free pupils with disabilities into regular

schools and classrooms with poorly prepared non-disabled peers, inadequate trained teachers and poorly resource setting is a cruel and unjustified experiments by social engineers.

Teacher's negative attitude towards mental cases in class; several studies like *Thomas (1985)* *Lampropoulou 1997*, reveal that regular education teachers do not hold positive attitudes towards inclusion of students with special education needs in regular schools. The majority of regular education teachers would prefer not to have to teach students with special educational needs and they associate the presence of such students in their classes with trouble.

In addition, most teachers have a neutral attitude towards school inclusion with exception of teachers in the USA and Germany who seem to be positive.

Further more, *Lampropoulou (1997)* on teachers' attitude, asserted that traditionally regular education teachers have not been supportive of the increased inclusion of students even those with mild special educational needs. He also found out that regular education teachers might appear no more negative than their special education colleagues. He further observe that, while special education teachers are very concerned with accommodation of the students' needs in regular classrooms, regular education teachers on the other hand are holding a more positive perspective of inclusion of services.

Curriculum barriers, for any smooth learning to take place, an appropriate curriculum must be in place therefore a curriculum must be in place. Therefore a curriculum plays a vital role in any education system and setting. It can spearhead education or be an obstacle in the *Koech report (1999)* the Kenyan school curriculum exhibits some of shortcoming for it doesn't favour the intellectually challenged. Evaluation

procedures are based on mean scores which make teachers concentrate more on normal learners to uplift the mean score, meanwhile neglecting the mild mentally challenged in class. Due to their inability to develop new concepts and poor performances, the mild intellectually challenged are forced to repeat classes hence dropping out of school.

Regular teachers in regular schools are not adequately trained to be of importance to the challenged learners. They end up using approaches which are not benefiting the intellectually challenged learners. *Atim (1994)* even the facilities to support learners with mild intellectually challenged in regular schools is a big challenge to the learners.

Basing on the above findings the barriers to education and learning of mild mentally challenged cuts across several aspects and factors. Barriers may come in different forms and may depend on the society's culture, social, economic, political and academic background. *Atim (1994)* observes 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 labels to describe children with disabilities and special learning needs, have come to be recognized as a disadvantage to these learners because it perpetuates their exclusion in society.

### **2.3. TEACHERS MANAGEMENT AND INVOLVEMENT OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED LEARNERS**

Teachers face a wide range of problems in trying to involve children with special needs in the learning process. As earlier noted, the curriculum is no appropriate to accommodate the inclusion education system for it overload the teachers and rigid thus in most cases teachers fail to accommodate and succeed in teaching of mild intellectually challenged (*Ramani 2004*). Teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 is also hindering effective

teaching, more so the problem comes with the handling of students with special needs especially when it comes to handling each learner individually (*Ngugi 2002*).

*Wragg 1981* mentions that class management is what teachers do to ensure that children engage in the task in hand, whatever may be the case. On the other hand he stresses that good classroom management is necessity for the teacher to be able to teach with ease and for enhancing pupils learning. *Wragg 1981*, stresses that every teacher in a regular school has a mild mentally student so it's through good management that they can be helped adequately.

*Wragg 1981* again observes that, the classroom is the most important area for 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 influence the amount and quality of learning that is produced. He continues to say, there are many ways of handling classes. He also says that other studies of teachers at work have shown that their teaching is relatively unchanging from time to time.

*Gullifort 1992* adds that teachers of children with mild mental problems in their classrooms face common problems of which it is not possible to be specific about since the needs of all the children vary tremendously from one child to another with the same IQ capacity.

Inspite of that, *Labogo (1994)* emphasizes that a child with mild mental retardation should learn together with his or her sighted peers, such a child can achieve much with the assistance of the teachers. She specifically points out that a teacher should always talk to the child directly and should be included in all classroom activities.

The requirements that are needed for inclusion of children with disabilities and learning needs in to ordinary schools take different forms. But common to all is the need to have a well-qualified special needs education teacher to manage classes that have children with special needs. (*Omagor Loican 1998*). Further still *Huebner and Ferell 1986*, suggests that a teacher should become dual or multi-competent trained professionals who are required to have competences not only in education and mobility with other disability groups as well.

Curriculum innovations can be used to find ways of managing, solving problems faced by Mild learners. *Ngugi (2002)* stressed that curriculum barriers can right away be overcome by teachers through basic integration to find a way out to include and help the mild mentally challenged go through regular schools but successfully.

Teachers themselves should set clear policies, guidelines and legal status on special needs education, diversifying the curriculum to suit individual needs.

Although the above related literature highlights the need for a teacher to have good management skills that do not specifically address the issue of having children with mental problems. Inclusion education has just been introduced in the regular schools and education system. This may necessitate looking at including learners with mild mental cases in the current education system.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0. INTRODUCTION**

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

#### **3.1. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The researcher used the cross-sectional survey design to generate data. This design was preferred because it was suitable for obtaining information from small population of respondents.

Questionnaires, interviewing and observations were used to apply the method.

#### **3.2. SAMPLE SIZE AND SELECTION**

##### **Sample selection procedure**

The population involved in the study was; the teachers in regular primary schools in Matuga Division. It was carried out in 10 schools selecting 5 teachers from each school making a total of 50 teachers.

#### **3.3. SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

The researcher used random sampling to select the schools. The researcher used this procedure because most schools had a chance of being selected.

#### **3.4. DATA COLLECTION METHODS / TOOLS**

The researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection. Quantitative data was collected through personal interview

with 62 respondents, using semi-structured questionnaires; qualitative data was collected through in depth interviews with key informants. 50 teachers were purposely selected from the selected schools.

### **3.5. VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

In order to establish the validity of instruments / tools a discussion was made with colleagues from the department, assistance was sought from the supervisor and lecturers. The questionnaires were proofread and then submitted to the respondents.

To establish reliability of the tools, the researcher conducted a pilot study using 30 regular classroom teachers from Matuga Division.

### **3.6. PROCEDURE**

Letters of introduction were obtained from the supervisor to enable the researcher carry out the research in Matuga division. The letters were taken to school administrators to seek permission make research in their school. After receiving permission, questionnaires were taken to the teachers selected.

### **3.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

- The researcher got worried about the workload of teachers who failed to find time to respond to questionnaires or finish them in time.
- Lack of adequate funds, because the researcher has to pay tuition and at the same time do research. However the researcher tried to minimize by using available local resources.

- The researcher got worried about finding difficulty in meeting the deadline for he has many academic obligations to meet. However he divided his time adequately and appropriately.
- The researcher has planned a limited scope because of limited financial support and time constraints hence the researcher did not get enough information.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### 4.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the study findings and interpretation. The purpose of the study was to investigate the problems affecting learning of children with mild mental problems in regular classrooms. The results of the study are presented below;

The researcher first sought to know whether the respondents knew the meaning of mild mental cases. The findings are as indicated below;

**TABLE 1: RESPONDENTS UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF “MILD MENTAL CASES”**

Definition	Frequency	Percentage
People who need much attention to grasp	08	16%
People with low cognitive ability	40	80%
These are trainable people with slow learning capacity	02	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

From the findings majority if not all respondents indicated that they understood the concept of mild mental retardation as all concepts compromise of trainable concept.

The researcher went ahead to ask the respondents whether they had recognized mild mental cases in their classrooms. The findings are as indicated below;

**TABLE 2: ARE THERE ANY MILD MENTALLY CASES IN YOUR CLASS?**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	42	84%
No	08	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings showed that majority of the teachers had mild mentally challenged learners in their classrooms and only 6% said they did not have. However, this might a prove way to Randiki's observation when he said that not all mild mentally challenged learners can be easily identified but they are in every regular class.

The researcher went further to investigate how the teachers were able to identify mild mentally challenged learners from a big class. The results are as indicated below;

**TABLE 3: IDENTIFICATION OF CHILDREN WITH MENTAL PROBLEMS**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
They are so forgetful	10	20%
Always ask for pardon	02	4%
Always the worst performers	07	14%
Are not social	11	22%
Don't have interest in learning	08	16%
Rarely participate in classroom activities	06	12%
Do not tolerate frustration	06	12%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings in the table showed that teachers knew the characteristics of children with mental cases. 20% of the respondents said such learners are so forgetful, 4% said they always ask for pardon in class, 14% said

they are the worst performers, 22% said they are not social with fellow students. On the other hand 12% said such students are identified by their rear participation in classroom activities while 16% said they don't have interest in learning and 12% said they do not tolerate frustration.

The researcher went ahead to investigate whether the mentally challenged had interest in learning. The finding areas indicated below;

**TABLE 4: INTEREST OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED IN LEARNING**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	19	38%
No	31	62%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings in the table showed that mild mentally challenged learners do not have enough interest in learning as majority of the respondents said i.e 62% and only 38% said that their children have interest in learning.

The researcher went further to investigate the characteristics of children with mental cases in regular classes. The findings are as indicted below;

**TABLE 5: CHARACTERISTICS OF LEARNERS WITH MENTAL PROBLEMS**

CHARACTERISTICS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Have low concentration	01	2%
Take long to understand	12	24%]
Below average ability to conceptualize	10	20%
Below average language ability	20	40%
Poor self concept	06	12%
Sensory and motor coordination handicap	11	22%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The finding in the table showed that teachers knew the characteristics of learners with mild mental problems. Majority of the teachers, 40% said that such learners are below average language ability hence they take long to grasp communication and themselves cannot communicate efficiently, 2% said they have low concentration, 24% stressed out taking long to understand, 20% indicated that they are below average ability to conceptualize, while 12% said they have poor self concept and 22% said that such learners have a low sensory and motor coordination.

The researcher went further to investigate of how teacher try to manage and initiate children with mental problems in regular classrooms. The findings are as tabulated below;

**TABLE 6: MANAGEMENT OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED LEARNERS**

<b>RESPONSES</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
Organize special teaching sessions	13	26%
Giving remedial tests	08	16%
Paying close attention to such a child	20	40%
Varying teaching methods	03	6%
Guiding and counseling them	04	8%
Use of trial and error	02	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings in the table showed that teachers try to manage and initiate the mild mentally challenged learners in the regular lessons. Majority of the respondents, 40% said they give special attention to such learners, 26% said they organize special teaching sessions for the learners, 16% said they give continuous remedial tests, 6% said they keep on varying the teaching methods, 8% said they counsel and guide the learners and

4% use trial and error when in class to make the learners participate the more.

The researcher went further to investigate whether the respondents were trained in teaching children with special needs education. The responses are shown in table 7 below;

**TABLE 7: TRAINING IN SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	09	18%
No	41	42%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings showed that majority of the respondents were not trained in special needs education hence 42% of the teachers just gamble. While only 18% had acquired knowledge about special education.

The researcher wanted to investigate whether the curriculum setting is somehow somewhere including learners with mental problems. The findings are indicated below;

**TABLE 8: CURRICULUM SET UP**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	03	6%
No	47	94%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The findings in the table indicated that the curriculum do not sufficiently accommodate children with mental problems. Majority of the teachers; 44% said the curriculum do not sufficiently assist them to deal wit such

learners, while 26% said they are assisted in the curriculum to assist children with mental problems.

The researcher posed a question to investigate whether teachers had made some innovations in the curriculum as they teach to cater for identified children with mental problems.

The results are indicated in the table below;

**TABLE 9: CURRICULUM INNOVATIONS**

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
I begin from simple to complex	25	50%
Formulated a special class	01	2%
Use varying teaching methods	15	30%
Always revisit what I teach	9	18%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

The finding showed that teachers took personal efforts to include learners with mental problems in the curriculum and make them fit. 50% of the leaders said they use the existing curriculum but beginning from simple to complex as they teach, 2% said they formulated special classes for their learners, with mental cases to make them fit in the curriculum, 30% said they use varying teaching methods and yet 18% said they always revisit what they teach specifically for their special mental learners.

The researcher wished to investigate the problems faced by the teachers in teaching children with mild mental problems.

The findings showed that teachers face a number of problems as they handle mixed students.

Respondents raised challenges like acute shortage of teaching aids and equipments to enhance teaching of mild mentally challenged in regular

schools, teacher population ratio 1:20, this hinders handling of individual identified leaders, lack guiding and counseling personal to support teacher and learner with special needs, some respondents complained of a wide and overloaded curriculum, lack of clear policy guidelines and legal status on special need provision.

Some teachers said the attitude of parents is not all that good for they normally put the bad performance of their pupils to teachers and make them hold a big blame instead of helping them find ways to solve the problem, some said they are not well motivated, planning and implementing individualized tasks which are not included in the general curriculum; and lack of skills in special needs education creates a big learner.

Finally the researcher sought to investigate possible solutions to problems faced by teachers in handling children with mild mental problems in regular classrooms, and as well strategic measures that can be adopted to enhance the learning of mild mentally challenged learners amidst all problems affecting their learning.

The respondents gave various solutions like, introducing special needs education in the teachers' colleges, and institutions of higher learning, government ministry of education and technology to organize seminars for practicing teachers to equip them with skills in special needs education, Kenya institute of special education to intensify their distance learning programmes, government to increase funds to schools to enable the administration to buy materials and equipments suitable for learners who are intellectually challenged.

The government to employ more teachers to match the ratio of learners to teachers; Some respondents suggested overcoming negative attitude in both teachers and parents to create awareness to parents, teachers and

public on the nature causes; presentation and interventional measures. This can make other learners to accept others with special needs in activities in class and outside the class.

These findings indicated that although the mild intellectually challenged learners are facing many challenges in schools, the damage of the brain which is behind all these accuses can be reversed though with much difficulty.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to investigate on the challenges faced by mild mentally challenged learners in regular classrooms. In this chapter the findings are discussed, conclusions and some recommendations are given. Finally the suggestions for areas of further research are proposed.

#### 5.1. DISCUSSION

##### **Identification and characteristics of mild mentally challenged learners**

The researcher was interested to find out if teachers were able to identify children with mild mental disability in their classrooms and how they managed to identify them i.e the streamline indicators of such children.

Teachers need to be able to identify children with mental disability in their 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 showed that teachers are able to identify children with mental problems in their regular classrooms.

On the contrary, findings through observation teachers revealed that participants were able to identify only observable serious cases of and signs of mental disability. Respondents stressed that they were not able to determine the degree of mental problems in individual pupils; with reasons like lack of enough sensitization and assessment of learners with special educational needs. Similarly *Macmillan (1982)* stressed that majority of educable mentally retarded disappear into the larger society were so among children in regular classes and escape identification as mentally retarded beyond their school careers.

The results further showed that children with mild mental retardation were found in regular classrooms. Only a few teachers said they did not have them. Table 2 results similar findings by *Gearheart (1980)* stresses that learners with mild mentally retardation are found in most of the regular schools and classes, and as well *Hallahan 1991* indicate that most individuals identified as retarded are classified as retarded.

However further inquiry in this study has shown that there are various indicators by which teachers can identify children with mild mental challenges in their regular classrooms as shown in table 3. Among the indicators identifies included, Bad performance, lack of tolerance to frustration, inability to participate in classroom activities, forgetfulness, they are not social, and such learners lack interest in learning and are always not attentive in class.

This finding is supported by the classroom observation that were made during a fall up of a student where the researcher noted that the child was not attentive in class and in an interview stressed that he hates studying.

## **5.2. PROBLEMS AFFECTING THE LEARNING OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED LEARNERS**

Mild mentally challenged learners are trainable meaning that with rendered assistance from the teachers they can do better in class more in competitive regular education. Factor affecting the smooth learning of mild mentally challenged learners was considered by the researcher and was the leading problem of the study. In this study it has been found that mild mentally challenged learners face various challenges in regular classrooms. This finding is in line with save the children 1998 when they observed that children with impairments are disabled by lack of

awareness, ignorance and negative attitude from teachers. They further said most countries programmes for persons with disabilities are more advanced which so much affects their learning.

The findings shared that mild mentally challenged learners are so much affected by the curriculum barriers. The findings in table 8 it was noted that teachers are not helped by the curriculum set up as 94% of the teachers confirmed this. The curriculum is overloaded and lacks vocational aspects which would be of importance to the mild mentally challenged learners. This finding agrees with *Koech (1999)* when it was reported that Kenya school curriculum exhibits some shortcomings. It doesn't favour the intellectually challenged.

However, this finding does not do any thing to the problem henceforth strategic measures should be laid to change the curriculum.

The findings further showed that the evaluation procedures are based on measures, which makes the teachers concentrate more on normal learners to uplift the mean score meanwhile regating the mild mentally challenged in the class. On the other hand, *Labogo (1994)* stressed that a child with any disability can learn with his or her peers, who are normal and achieve but with the help of the teacher in a way of using favourable teaching, personal content and considerate evaluation measures for such students.

Further more, mild mentally challenged learners face a problem of ill-trained teachers regular teachers are not trained in special needs education as indicated in findings in table 7. This is in line with pastor and Jimenez 1994, when they observed that, in the field of inclusive education teachers' attitudes have been considered one of the major factors guaranteeing the success of school children with special needs.

Further more Atim (1994) observes that, in a way of helping mentally challenged learners tend to emphasize on categories, segregation and care. Increasingly however, the negative effects of using categories and labels to describe children with disabilities and special learning needs have come to be recognized as a disadvantage to those learners because it perpetuates their exclusion in society and classroom.

Finally it is clearly observed that mild mentally challenged learners face a challenge of lack of facilities to support them in learning, poor parents' attitude, teacher pupil ratio of 1:40 which hardens direct contact by a teacher to such special cases, lack of guidance and counseling sessions, and lack of motivation among others. However about parents' attitude, it was observed in an interview that the parents themselves need motivation and sensitization by the teacher which they haven't bothered doing and thus the problem might remain unsolved for quite long and continuously affect the learning of mild mentally challenged learners.

Relying on these findings alone, may not help to curb the problem faced by children with mental problems for there might be more effects unidentified to by grounds overcome them.

### **5.3. TEACHERS' INVOLVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF MILD MENTALLY CHALLENGED LEARNERS**

*Randiki 2002* suggests that for successful inclusion of children with special education needs in regular classrooms, it is necessary to have well qualified SNE teachers to manage classes that have children with special needs. In this study it was found that majority of the teacher 94% had not been trained in teaching children with special needs.

Regarding actual management and involvement of mild mentally challenged learners, teachers said they use various methods including;

organizing special class lessons for the special education needs learners, giving remedial tests, paying close attention to learners with mild mental cases, guiding and counseling them, using trial and error.

However about, paying close attention it was observed in classroom observation that majority of the teachers cannot manage that more so those who had more than one child in a class as earlier noted the number of students is too big on the teachers to carry on good management and separate care, and attention; in addition one teacher was quoted saying "I have a lot to teach and within a limited time, so I cannot find enough time in class to cater for the SNE children I just teach normally."

About organizing special teaching sessions, it was found that none of the teachers had done this with an excuse of time but they were thinking about it. Concerning guidance and counseling only 30 out of 50 had tried to do this but they also complained that they did not have experience in handling SNE children yet the specialists were hardly got, thus it remained hanging.

Concerning assigning remedial tests to the learners it was observed in an interview that the teachers hardly had time to handle such tests and general classroom tests.

On the other hand, teachers confirmed that they had undertaken some innovations as they teach in the already existing curriculum. They gave measures like use of varying teaching methods, revisiting what is already taught, beginning from simple to complex among others. However, about varying the teaching methods, it was observed that only a few teachers like 30% could do this sufficiently. Similarly *Wragg (1981)* substantiating to the findings, observed that many studies of teachers at work have

shown that their teaching styles is relatively unchanging from one time to another.

Conclusively the findings indicated that teachers are ill-equipped to support the learning process of mild mentally challenged learners.

Finally in the analysis the teachers suggested possible solutions which can be implemented by all stake holders, including the government, curriculum designers, teachers, parents and the community to help mild mentally challenged learners fit in the education system involving inclusion. These included; providing teaching learning materials, more finding cooperation of parents with teachers, undertaking training of teachers about special needs education in teachers' training colleges.

#### **5.4. CONCLUSION**

Having analyzed the data, the following conclusions were drawn;

- Teachers are able to identify children with mild mental cases in the regular classrooms.
- Teachers have a positive attitude towards inclusion of children with mental cases as they are laying various strategies to help them.
- Teachers need more training in special needs education to equip them with techniques.
- Management and involvement of children with special education needs is still minimal hence more support is needed in schools. However some measures used by teachers can help out if implemented well.

#### **5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In a view of findings the researcher makes the following recommendations;

- To equip teachers with skills and equipments of handling SNE children.
- Special needs education should be catered for in all teacher training institutions.
- The government should provide special equipments, funds to regular schools to cater for such cases like mild mentally challenged learners.
- Curriculum designers should mind about the involvement of children with mild mental challenges because they are trainable.

#### **5.6. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- Management and involvement of learners with mental problems
- Factors hindering the setting of inclusive curriculum
- Measures to motivate teachers and parents cater for children with visual impairments.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRES

Dear respondent, these questions intend to investigate the problems affecting the learning of mild mentally challenged learners. You are requested kindly to attempt them any information obtained will be confidential.

1. What do you understand by mild mental problems?

.....  
.....

2. Do you have mentally retarded learners in your class?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. If yes, how do you identify them?

.....  
.....

4. Are the mentally challenged learners interested in learning?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Which specific identifiable characteristics have you seen in children with mental cases?

.....  
.....

6. How do you try to manage and initiate such children in regular classrooms?

.....  
.....

7. Are you trained in handling children with special needs in regular classrooms?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8. Is the curriculum set up smoothening your work of handling children with mental cases?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9. If No, have you innovated effective teaching methods in handling children with visual impairment in regular classes.

Yes ☐ No ☐

10. If yes, which measures have you undertaken to initiate these children in the already existing curriculum?

.....  
.....

11. Which problems do you face in teaching children with mild mental cases?

.....  
.....

12. Which factors limits the learning capability of children with mild mental cases?

.....  
.....

13. How can such obstacles be overcome in your own view?

.....  
.....

***Thank you***