

**FACTORS AFFECTING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE MENTALLY
RETARDED LEARNERS IN REGULAR SCHOOLS: A CASE STUDY OF
MUTHAMBI ZONE, MERU SOUTH DISTRICT
KENYA**

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**A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO INSTITUTE OF OPEN
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DECLARATION

I ANDERSON CHARLES MUGAMBI MIRITI, declare that this research project is my original work and has never been submitted for any academic award. Where the works of others have been cited acknowledgment has been made.

Signature.....

Date.....

APPROVAL

I certify that the work submitted by this candidate was under my supervision. His work is ready for submission, to be evaluated for the award of a Bachelor of Education in special education at Kampala International University.

Sign.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research work to my wife Jackline Makena. Thanks so much, especially for taking up my responsibilities in my absence. Special dedication to my child Joy Mugambi for accepting answers to questions that she asked for being away.

I Further wish to extend my dedication to the head teacher of Mbacaca primary school Mr Karianyu Moses and the entire staff for their great support throughout my course.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION	i
APPROVAL	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
 CHAPTER ONE	 1
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 Background to the study	1
1.2 Statement of the problem	3
1.3 Purpose of the study	4
1.4 Objectives of the study	4
1.5 Research questions	4
1.6 Scope of the Study	4
1.7 significance of the study	5
 CHAPTER TWO	 6
LITERATURE REVIEW	6
2.0 Introduction	6
2.1 Empirical studies on inclusion and implications	6
2.2 Placement options for children with mental retardation in Kenya	10
2.3 Problems of placement	11
2.4 Studies on teachers attitude toward integration	12
 CHAPTER THREE	 15
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	15
3.0 Introduction	15
3.1 Research Design	15
3.2 Area and population of study	15

CHAPTER FOUR.....	18
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION.....	18
4.0 Introduction	18
4.1 Questionnaire return rate for respondents	18
CHAPTER FIVE.....	27
SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION	27
5.0 Introduction	27
5.1 Summary of the study	27
5.2 Conclusion.....	27
REFERENCES	30
APPENDIX A	32
TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE	32
APPENDIX B: TIME FRAME	36

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 Introduction

This chapter gives the definition of the concept “mental retardation” according to the American association on mental retardation (AAMR) the six definitions used in the American based individuals with disabilities education Act (IDEA), the other definition is according to the (Ministry of Education 1995) the Republic of Kenya (1995). Mental retardation levels of functioning and their categories are also mentioned in this chapter. It has also mentioned the most controversial issue on special education at present few according to the United Nations Education, Scientific and cultural organization(UNESCO) on inclusion.

1.1 Background to the study

The concept of mental is continually changing and these changes can be seen as a reflection of a change in the perspective of an individual with mental retardation based both on research and a clear understanding of the issues involved in defining the concept. For example the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR), a professional organization founded in 1876, recently drafted a new definition but also focuses on the relations among capabilities environments and functioning (Luckasson, Coulter, Pollway, Reiss, Schalock, Snell, Spitalnik and Stark 1992). According to this definition, Mental retardation refers to substantial limitations in present functioning. It is characterized by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning existing concurrently with related limitation one, two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas: communication, self care, home living, social skills, community use, self direction, health and safety functional academics, leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18 (Luckason, Coulter, Palloway, Reiss, Schalok, Snell, Spitalnik and Stark 1992)

In addition to the perception of mental retardation with respect to a person's functioning in daily life according to his or her practical, social and conceptual intelligence, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAMR) lists four essential assumptions to be carefully considered in the application of this definition. Without going a length elaboration of this definition, it is important to note that it has far reaching implications which have not been addressed. The more widespread

definition of mental retardation is the American Association on Mental Retardation sixth definition used in the American based Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Under Individual with Disability Act (IDEA) mental retardation is defined as significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with deficits in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the development period (Grossman 1983) that adversely affects a child's educational performance. Significantly sub-average intellectual functioning is defined as a score that is at least two standard deviations below the mean on a test of intelligence. Based on the American Association on Mental Retardation (Grossman 1983) and the diagnostic and statistical) manual of mental disorders (American psychiatric Association, 1994) and using intellectual (10) test scores, mental retardation occurs on the four levels of, mild (score 50 through 55 approximately 70) moderate scores 35 through 40 to 50 through 55 severe scores through 25 to 35 through 40), and profound (20 through 35)

In Kenya a mentally handicapped child is one who has a limited level of intelligence and deficits in adaptive behaviour. The condition usually arises between conception and 18 years of age. (Ministry of education 1995). The Republic of Kenya (1995) In its hand book on how to handle children with special needs goes on to note that mentally handicapped children are usually categorized according to severity of mental impairments as mildly , moderately, severe or profoundly handicapped, or as educable, trainable ,severe, and profound in terms of their measured intelligence scores on IQ tests.

The classification of education and trainable are referred to by other (Bernie, smith et, al 1998). It would appear that the definition of mental retardation in Kenya has some parallels with the Individual with Disabilities Education Act definition used in the united states.

Given that their condition is in most cases never identified or recognized as a disability children with mild mental retardation in Kenya schools are educated with students without disabilities in Regular schools and classrooms(Mutua & Dimitrov,2001) with no supports, adaptations, or modifications, students with moderate or severe forms of mental retardation are educated mainly in units in regular education schools and in special schools and residential settings for children with mental retardation (Kiarie , 2006& Mutua &Dimitrov,2001).) One of the most controversial issues in special

education at present is the extent to which children with special needs, whether mental or otherwise. Can and should be included in ordinary regular classrooms.

According to United Nations Educational, Scientific and cultural Organizations (UNESCO) 1994 inclusion has become the most effective approach to address the learning needs of all students regular schools and classrooms. International initiatives from the United Nations, UNESCO, the world Bank and Non-governmental Organizations jointly contributed to a growing consensus that all children have the right to be educated together, regardless of their disability or learning difficulties and that inclusive education is a human right that makes good education and social sense.

The current thinking advocates educating the person with disability within the regular school community, rather than segregating them in special schools except the very severe to profound handicapping conditions. They have a right to lead signified lives and should be given every opportunity to compete on equal terms with non-disabled children.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In spite of numerous efforts put forth by families, the skilled special education and mental health professionals the individual with mental disability has one final challenge to meet in life: social acceptance (Frengut 2003). Today, mentally handicapped (MH) learners must be capable of gaining acceptance into a social structure that can be cruel and rejecting at times. By definition the mentally challenged individuals is marginalized, from the mainstream society, and entry into the world community places a tremendous burden on their parents. It is very likely that majority of children with profound mental and other disabilities do not receive any education services in Kenya. These are the children and youth most likely to be denied access to the schools as they are deemed unlikely to benefit from any education or be hidden away (Dorothy, 2003) by their parents. Even though parents may recognize education as a right for every child and rise above society's negative attitudes, they cannot require that schools open their gates to all children. School can still decide that some children are uneducable and therefore do not belong in the school environment. There are bound to be challenged that schools face in the effort to include learners with mental deficits into regular schools.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to find out the factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficits in regular schools; the study will look into attitude of teachers towards inclusion of learners with mental deficit in regular schools.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The specific objectives of the study were to:

- (i) To establish the factors affecting academic performances of learners with mental deficit in regular schools.
- (ii) To find out whether there are teachers in regular schools with appropriate skills to handle learners with mental retardation.
- (iii) To find out the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of learner with mental deficits in regular schools.
- (iv) To find out the existence of learners with mental retardation in regular schools.
- (v) To identify the factors that need to be considered before implementation of inclusive education programmes for learners with mental deficit in regular schools.

1.5 Research questions

- i) Are there teachers in regular schools trained in special education needs education?
- ii) Are there learners with mental retardation in regular schools?
- iii) What's the attitude of teachers towards inclusion of learners with mental deficits in regular primary schools?
- iv) What factors need to be considered before implementation of inclusive education programmes for learners with mental deficits?

1.6 Scope of the Study

The research was carried out in Muthambi Zone, Meru south district Kenya. It investigated about the factors affecting the academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular schools within the given area.

1.7 significance of the study

The study will be useful to various stakeholders in education. This includes the school administrators, teachers, student's policymaker and parents in Muthambi zone and beyond. The educational administrations, parents and policymakers will be enlightened by the study on the factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental retardation in regular classrooms, hence use the findings to strategize on how learners with mental retardation can be put in the mainstream. If inclusive education is implemented. Children with mental deficits will enjoy learning in the home environment with support from parents, siblings and the community that will provide education for all the Kenyan could population because it advocates for offer special needs education that suits children with or without disability.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of literature related to the study. The literature is organized into five sections.

First is the review of empirical studies on inclusion, together with their implication, after which literature is reviewed on placement options for learners with mental retardation in Kenya, Followed by the types of options then the problems of placement, next studies on teacher attitudes toward inclusion are reviewed .

2.1 Empirical studies on inclusion and implications

There are a number of views and meta-analysis that consistency report little or no benefit for students when they are placed in special education setting(Karale& Glass,1982; Maden and Salavin,1983) However in so studies reviewed by weiner(1985)comparing the academic performance of mainstreamed and segregated students with mild handicapping conditions, the mean performance of the mainstreamed and segregated students with mild handicapping conditions, the mean academic performance of the integrated group was in 80th percentile, while the segregated students score was in the 50th percentile (Welner 1985).

Using this evidence, inclusion proponents claim that segregated programs and detrimental to students and do not meet the original goals for special students education. Recent meta- analysis confirm a small to moderate beneficial effect of inclusion education on the academic and social outcome of special needs students(carlberg,and Kavale, 1980; Baker, wang and Walberg,1994-1995)

Another study assessing the effectiveness of inclusion was done by John's Hopkins University.

In a school wide restructuring program called Success for .All Student achievement was measured. The programme itself is a comprehensive effort that involves family support teams, professional development for teachers, reading, tutoring, special reading programs, eight-week reading assessments and expanded opportunities for pre- school and Kindergarten children. In assessing effectiveness, a control group was compared with the students in Success for all programs. Comparative measures included: Wood cock Language proficiency Battery (1980); Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (1980); and retention and attendance, comparisons were made at first, second

and third grades. Students identified with exceptional education needs were included in all comparisons. While assessments showed improved reading performance for all students, the most dramatic improvement occurred among the lowest achievers. In spite of the fact these inner city schools have normally high retention problems, only 4% of the fourth grades in the experimental group had ever been held back one or more grades, while the five control schools had 31% who had failed at least one year.

There was a similar finding in the comparison of attendance rates. The research also found the best results occurred in schools with the highest level of funding. They concluded that when resources are available to provide supplementary aids, all children do better. The primary importance of research on Success for All is that it demonstrates that with early and continuing intervention nearly all children can be successful in reading. Common practice in compensatory and special education is to identify children who have already fallen behind and provide remediation services that last for years (Allington and McGill-Frazen, 1990). Research on Success For All and other intensive early intervention programs such as reading recovery Pinbennell, 1991 and prevention of learning Disabilities (Silver and Hagen, 1989) suggests that there are effective alternatives to remedial approaches. While researchers are cautious in their conclusions, there are some positive signs. In particular, Students in special education and regular education showed several positive changes, including: A reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness (Peck et al. 1992); Growth in social cognition (Murray-Seegest, 1989); Improvement in self-concept of non-disabled students (Peck et al; 1992); development of personal principals and ability to assume an advocacy role towards their peers and friends with disabilities; and warm and caring friendships (Bogdan and Taylor 1989).

The final issue shared by proponents of inclusion relates to cost-effectiveness.

A 1989 study found that over a fifteen year period, the employment rate for high school graduates with special needs who had been in segregated programs the employment rate was 35%. But for special needs graduates from integrated programs the employment rate was 73%. Furthermore, the cost of educating students in segregated programs was double that for educating them in integrated programs (Pioma, 1989). A similar study by Affleck, Madge, Adams and Lowenbrawn (1988) demonstrated that the integrated classroom for special students with special needs was more cost-

effective than the resource program, even though achievement in reading, math and language remained basically the same in the two service delivery models.

Inclusion of students with mild disabilities in general education classes is becoming more prevalent (Winn & Blanton, 1997). Within the special education community, however, researchers continue to debate about the proper extent of inclusion (e.g. Fuchs & 1994; Lipsky and Gartner, 1990 call for the provision of services to students with disabilities (including those with severe impairments) in the neighborhood school in age appropriate general education classes with the necessary support services (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996b). Other researchers emphasize the importance of maintaining a continuum of services (for example, resource rooms and pull-out) and assert that full time general education placement for all students denies students with disabilities the individualized, special education supports they need (e.g. Schumm and Vaughn, 1995; Zigmond and Baker 1995). Additionally, these researchers question whether "special education" can occur within the general education environment and define "special education" as specific, directed, individualized, intensive, remedial instruction of students who are clearly deficient academically and struggling with school work they are being given (ie, Hallahan and Kauffman, 2000, Zigmond and Baker, 1995).

Nonetheless, full inclusion is being implemented in many schools around the world, and especially in developed countries like the U.S. As a result, many special education researchers have begun to examine the success of inclusion, as well as attitudes and beliefs of general education teachers towards students with disabilities mainstreamed in their general education classrooms (Schumm, Vaughn, Gordon and Rothlein, 1994; Soodak, Podell and Lehman, 1998). According to this research, certain factors contribute to successful inclusion, including: Meaningful adaptations to instruction and curriculum that differentiate and individualize instruction for students with disabilities, positive teacher beliefs and attitude towards inclusion and students with disabilities and contextual support for general education teachers (Rogers, and Simenson, 1997; Lipsky and Gartner, 1996). However, some research has also shown that general education teachers may attempt to meet the need of students with disabilities but often feel prepared to do so, are constrained by their standardized view of instruction and curriculum, believe that mainstreamed students should enter content area classes ready to learn the same material at the same level of their students and do not make any significant changes to their curriculum development or instructional approaches (ie, Schumm and Vaughn, 1992; Soodak, et al, 1998).

Students included in the general education classroom could be identified as having learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, emotional, or behavioral disorders, communication disorders, hearing impairments, visual impairment, and /or physical disabilities. Students with disabilities could experience problems in reading, writing, math, spoken language attention, memory and cognition, social -emotional motivation and meta-cognition (Hallahan and Kaliffman, 2000). Although impossible to generalize across disabilities, students included in the general education classroom typically require meaningful curriculum and instructional accommodation and adaptations in order to succeed academically.

Additionally, special educators argue that the success of students with disabilities require teachers to differentiate curriculum, provide a framework for learning, intensively model learning processes and strategies, present information in multiple ways, teach students to use memory strategies, teach self – regulation and self monitoring. Provide opportunities for extended practice and application, and adjust work load and time requirements.
(Vaughn, Bos, and Schumn, 2000).

Special educators argue that “differentiating curriculum” involves planning too the success of all students in the class and explicitly establishing goals for the range of students will learn , what most but not all students will learn, and what all students will learn. (Vaughn, Bos, and Schumm,2000)

It is apparent throughout the literature that the moment of time those children are pulled out of regular classrooms has become a concern. While in many cases pullout is supported by the exceptional and regular education teachers and parents, there is mixed evidence of improved academic performance (Elliott, Barbara, Riddla and Margeret,1992).

Most groups and individuals believe that inclusion in the regular classroom is appropriate and that a continuum of placement options and services must be available. These decisions must be based on the system’s ability to meet these needs.

One of the greatest challenges contributing to this debate is the relative lack of similarity between the regular and special education systems that exists in todays schools (wang, reynods and Welberg, 1988) Successful inclusion practices depend on restructured schools that allow for flexible warning

environments, with flexible curriculum and instruction. Under ideal conditions, all students work toward the same overall educational outcomes. What differs is the level at which these outcomes are achieved, the additional support that is needed by some students and the degree of emphasis placed on various outcome. A restructured system that merges special and regular education must also employ practices that focus on high expectations for all and rejects the prescriptive teaching, remedial approach that leads to lower achievement (Guess and Thompson 1998, heshusius,1998)

As the number of students with disabilities in general education setting increases (Katsiyannis et al; 1995:U.s. Department of Education, 1996), it becomes imperative that educators possess the ability to great interesting, engaging, and educationally responsive environments for all students (Me Gregar and Vogelsberg, 1998). The roles skills and attitudes of teachers play a central role in successful inclusion of students. Thus in order for teachers' educators to better prepare for future teachers capable of accommodating the needs of diverse learners in the classroom, more information about how teachers view inclusion is necessary.

2.2 Placement options for children with mental retardation in Kenya

Given that their condition is in most cases never identified or recognized as a disability, children with mild mental retardation in Kenya. Schools are educated with students without disabilities in regular school classrooms (Mutua & Dimitrov, 2007), with no supports, adaptations or modifications. Students with moderate to severe forms of mental retardation are educated mainly in units in regular education schools and special schools and residential settings for children with mental retardation(Kiarie,2006: mutual& Dimitrov, 2001). Whether they are in units, Special schools, or residential settings, their educational services are specialized in that they do not follow the academic curriculum. Services for these individuals in specialized settings date back to 1948 when two schools, Later merged into the Jacaranda special School were established (Kiarie, 2006).Programmes for these students have continued to grow as enrolment has continued to increase.

In the mid 80s; students with mental retardation were served in 52 programs which included 17 schools, and one sheltered workshop (ndurumo 1993).

In the General education settings, students curriculum is very academic oriented and all students are exposed to the same subjects. This orientation illuminates the disadvantaged at which students with mild mental and other intellectual disabilities are placed. As Mutua and Dimitrov (2001) further note, Kenyans educational system is characterized by entrance examinations that are used to predict academic success. Non-successful students are often retained.

2.3 Problems of placement

There are various problems that arise due to different placements. In many cases the mentally challenged children are but in regular schools without modifying the curriculum. The child just sits in class without given any support since we cannot cope with the curriculum given in regular schools. Anderson (1973) sites the following problems

- Inadequate advice or consultation with parents.
- Refusal of the regular schools to accept the mentally challenged.
- Unsatisfactory treatment within the regular school due to teacher's negative attitude and non-provision of support services.
- Bitter et al (1972) also found that most of the class teachers receiving handicapped children frequently complained of already overcrowded classes. An evaluation of integration by Jones Gtrshkin and yoshida (1978) tends to show that regular classroom teachers do not feel equipped to deal with challenged children in the classroom. According to a reseacher the problem of overcrowded classes can be addressed by organizing seminars for regular teacher so that they can get basic skills of handling the learners. Change of altitude can help the teachers to be determined to support the learner. It has been possible in many countries. In Uganda for instance, schools with over 100 pupils have done quite well in provision of challenged learners which is quite encouraging.
- In most cases, teachers prefer other disabilities to mentally challenged. This could be that the children with all the other disabilities are intellectually better than mentally challenged and therefore teachers feel that they do not take a lot of time. They could also feel that the mentally challenged may never be independent due to the nature of their disability.
- On the goals and orientations of the finding religious, or other organization.

2.4 Studies on teachers attitude toward integration

Rajecki (1982) argues that attitude is such an important area to study because it influences so much of our personal lives. To him attitudes include desires, convictions, feelings, views, opinion, belief, hope, judgments and sentiments. The study of attitudes is thus important because there is a general belief that human behavior and actions are influenced by attitudes, whereby attitudes are seen as the cause and behavior as the consequence (mushoriwa 1998)

Favorable teacher's attitudes are thought by many educators to be crucial if inclusive education will succeed. Booth and Ainscow (1998) contend that in studies involving inclusive education, it is absolutely imperative for the investigator to specify the type of special needs because teacher attitudes have been found to vary with the type of disability and the extent of instructional adaptations required in order accommodates such students.

Cava and Madison (1978) suggested that unfavorable teacher attitudes toward accepting handicapped children stem from insecurity and sometimes sentiment arising from ignorance and inexperienced of handicapped children. According to these writers what seems to be important in influencing teacher attitudes is their knowledge of the implications of handicap and the experience of children with a particular handicap .Any studies have revealed that a handicapped child position on the teachers desirability scale had a direct relationship to the teachers knowledge of the handicap.

That teachers need knowledge and understanding of handicap if they are to feel competent to teach a handicapped pupil and receive him/her willingly into their classes (lunas 1986). In addition to knowledge and experience, there ate two other major factors which have been demonstrated to be important in fostering positive attitudes among class teachers handicapped pupils .These are an ideological commitment to the principle of integrating handicapped children into normal society and the provision of adequate resources and support services to help the teacher cope with additional responsibility of handicapped children.

With regard to the issue of ideological commitment Schuitz (1982) suggest that a belief that handicapped children should be educated in ordinary schools is a significant independent factor in promoting positive attitudes in teachers towards handicapped pupils. Likewise the provision of special facilities and extra resources for class teachers receiving handicapped children into their classes has been shown to the important by several investigators, in grades until they are deemed

successful drop out, or are too old to stay in the same grade. One of the government objectives in educating students with disabilities is the acquisition of literacy and numeric skills. However, in the separate settings, other than very elementary basic skills, the curriculum is geared towards functional education and life skills training. (Mutua and Dimitrov, 2001), teachers for individual with mental retardation in separate facilities for students with mental retardation focus on teaching their students how to communicate their needs, employ care skills for basic hygiene, maintain appropriate behavior, employ functional academics, be safe and employ appropriate social skills (mwangi, wabuge & mugo,1989). To realize their objectives, teachers are required to use task analysis in which skills which they systematically teach to the students until they master. These are recommended in a guide book on handling students with special needs published by the Kenya, ministry of education (Republic of Kenya 1995)

Other instructional considerations recommended by the Kenya ministry of education for use with this population include: modeling, drills, and practice to promote over learning, attention to relevance and applicability to the students, lives short learning activities, generous use of prompts and rewards, use of concrete materials as much as possible, use of visuals to promote understanding of concepts and explicit teaching of such self-care skills as toileting, dressing and grooming. Teachers of students with mental retardation in Kenya can benefit from exposure to current literature on meeting the needs of these students. This literature emphasizes the need for teachers to plan their materials well, have clear goals and objectives, and teach to their objectives, and assess students directly and frequently .since individuals with mental retardation experience difficulty in maintaining the skills and knowledge they have acquired, they require frequent opportunities to practice new academic and functional skills. Not only must curriculum focus on skills that these individuals need to use frequently in school, at home, and in the community but teaching functional skills in the natural contexts in which they are performed is necessary.

It is important to note that the curriculum in units and separate schools and residential settings for students with mental iteration in Kenya does not seem to be consistent. Muya (2002) found that rather than the more appropriate curriculum combining literacy and numeracy with functional academics and life skills training discussed earlier, programs for these children focused more on behavioral control and containment and moral behavior. Due to certain factors, the curriculum

orientations of a certain program, although guided by the need for the children to acquire skills in self reliance among others, are largely dependent Schultz (1982).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the procedures that were used to conduct the study. It focuses on research design, Area and population of the study, sample selection, Data collection, sampling procedures, and research instruments and data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

The study employed survey design and quantitative method was also preferred because it uses standardized tools for example questionnaire which are directed to the selected sample. It would help the researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification to get some of the information on some of factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular classroom.

3.2 Area and population of study

The study was carried out within Olasi zone. The population comprised of teachers both from public and private schools and special units and one special school for the learners with mental deficit. The study comprised of thirty five (35) teachers from Muthambi Zone.

3.3 Sample selection

This section specifies all the participants and explains their categories. In this case the researcher at randomly selected thirty five (35) teachers within Muthambi zone and twenty five (25) teachers from regular schools, five(5) teachers from special units for the mentally handicapped and five (5) teachers from special school for the mentally handicapped learners.

3.4 Data collection

The researcher collected data and analyzed to arrive at results which are then interpreted to give meaning to the study. In the study the data will be collected from the sampled teachers after attaining a research permit from Kampala International University. A brief introduction was made to the respondent. The research instrument used was the questionnaire. The questionnaire was directed to

the selected sample. The researcher collected the questionnaires after two weeks for analysis. Confidentiality was assured to the respondents.

3.4.1 Research instruments.

The main instrument for data collection used in this study was the questionnaire. The questionnaires were used to obtain information from teachers in regular schools special units and special schools for the learners with mental retardation. Questionnaires were preferred in this study because all the respondents are literate. A different question was formulated but all have the same common element. The questionnaire contained questions that were answered in yes or no., Agree or disagree, giving own opinions and ticking the applicable answers about the factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular schools.

3.4.2 Procedure

The researcher looked for the topic to be studied and took it to the supervisor for the approval. Then got a letter from the institution in order to be granted permission to carry out the research.

The researcher used survey method to collect information where questionnaires were used for data collection. The researcher gave out the questionnaires to the respondents and collected them after one week for analysis. The researcher came up with possible solutions which were necessary for the problem. Conclusion and possible recommendations on the factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular schools were then given.

3.5 Reliability and validity of the research instruments

Mugenda and Mugenda (1999) define reliability as a measure of degree to which a research instrument yields consistent result or data after repeated trial. To enhance the reliability of the instrument a pilot study was conducted in a population similar to the target population but was not used in the final study. The reason behind pre-testing was to assess the clarity of the questionnaire items so that those items found to be inadequate or vague were either be discarded or modified in order to improve the quality of the research instrument. For the validity of the research instrument the researcher got assistance from the supervisor in order to improve the validity of the instrument.

3.6 Data analysis

Once the questionnaires were administered the mass of raw data was collected and systematically organized in a manner that facilitates analysis using quantitative method. A summary of the answers and comments from the questionnaires was received from the respondents and then tabulated to get the data.

3.7 Limitations of the study

One of the limitations of the study was that, there were limited literatures on research as some of them are not available in local libraries. The researcher also experienced some financial constraints since the study was self sponsored. He had to meet all the cost in traveling feeding and duplicating of the questionnaires. The other limitation was that the study covered a small area, therefore findings could not be generalized since the factors vary from one place to another. The time allocated to carry out the study was not limited but due to other activities both in schools and at home made the researcher not reach as many people as possible. Delay of the questionnaires by some of the respondents also made the researcher work difficult.

3.8 Delimitations of the study

The study only focused on teachers in special schools, special units and regular schools with learners who are mentally challenged within Muthambi zone, so the area where the research was carried out was not very big. There were no language barriers since the research was carried out within literate respondents who understood both English and Kiswahili. With the letter of authority the researcher did not need to explain the purpose of the visiting the selected schools. Due to financial constraints and time set to complete the study was carried out in Muthambi zone of Meru south district in Kenya only because of its easier access. In addition the researcher used questionnaire method of data collection and therefore the results were largely dependent on integrity of the participants to provide honest responses.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the study. The data was collected with an aim of establish factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficits in regular schools. The researcher used teachers to collect the required data for the study. The data was analyzed using frequencies and percentages.

4.1 Questionnaire return rate for respondents

The study involved six (6) schools. The researcher was interested with schools handling learners with mental retardation. Out of thirty five (35) questionnaires administered to teacher thirty (30) questionnaires were returned. This means that the questionnaires return rate was 85.9%. This did not negatively affect the findings of the study

Table1: Teachers responses on their training in special needs education.

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	10	33.3%
No	20	66.7%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

Most of the teachers in Olasi zone are not trained in special needs educated as shown in table 1 33.3% of the teachers are trained while 66.7% are not trained. Out of thirty respondents ten (10) are trained while twenty (20) are not trained. This shows that most of the teachers in regular schools have no skills to handle learners with mental retardation.

Table 2: Teachers responses on the level of their training in special needs education

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Certificate	3	30%
Diploma	5	50%
Degree	2	20%
Total	10	100%

Source: Primary data (2009)

Out of the ten (10) teachers trained in special needs education the table above shows that thirty (30) percent of the teachers are certificate holders and fifty (50) percent are degree holders. Despite the government effort to give primary school teachers chance to pursue courses in special needs education hence practice inclusive education. However the untrained teachers' special needs educations are considered qualified enough to handle learners with mental retardation in regular classrooms.

Table 3: Teachers responses on whether they have learners with special needs in education in their schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	28	93.3%
No	2	6.7%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2008

Table 3 indicates that 93.3% of the schools in Olasi zone have learners with special needs in education in their schools while 6.7% of the schools are not aware of the existence of learners with special needs in education in their schools.

Table 4: Categories of learners with special needs found in those schools.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Mentally handicapped	27	90%
Visually impaired	1	3.4%
Hearing Impaired	0	
Physically handicapped	2	6.6%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

From table 4, 90% of the schools handling learners with special needs in education are the mentally challenged. The table indicates that there 3.4% of the learners who are visually impaired and 6.6% who are physically with mental retardation 4.2:3 Finding out the attitude of teachers towards the inclusion of learners with mental retardation in regular schools was another objective of the study

Table: 5: Possible label names for the mentally challenged learners in regular schools

Label names	Frequencies	Percentage
Fools	23	76.6%
Imbeciles	2	6.7%
Idiots	2	6.7%
Non achievers	3	10%
Non of the above	0	0%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

The table 5 shows clearly that all school has label names for the learners with mental retardation. The most commonly used name is 'fools' which has 76.6% while Imbeciles and idiots has 6.7% each and non-achievers carries 10%. This shows that despite the fact that these children are mainstreamed they are still stigmatized

Table 6: Teachers responses on whether they would accept to teach learners with mental retardation if placed in their classrooms

Responses	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes	10	33.3%
No	20	66.6%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

According to table 6: 66.6% of the respondents were frank to tell that they would not accept they need special facilities and resource to teach learners with mental retardation.

Table 7: Reasons given by teachers unto why they would not accept to teach mentally challenged learners in their classrooms

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Negative effects on their mean score	7	23.3%
Cannot achieve academically	6	20%
No special training to handle them	6	20%
Inadequate facilities and resources in schools	6	20%
There is no time for them because of large classes	5	16%
Total	30	16.7%

Source: Primary data 2009

Table 8: Responses on the statement that for effective teaching and learning learners in special schools rather than regular schools.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	25	83.3%
Disagree	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

According to table 8 indicates 83.3% of the respondents who are the majority agreed with statement, that for effective teaching and learning learners with mental retardation should be placed in special schools rather than regular schools. 16.7% of the respondent disagreed with the statement meaning learners with mental retardation can also be placed in regular schools.

Table 9: Reasons given by the respondents who have agreed with the statement number eight.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Have other associated problems	9	30%
They cannot achieve academically	10	33.3%
Need specialized personnel and special facilities	7	23.3%
State of their disability	4	13.4%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

30% of the respondents test that besides mental retardation these learners have other associated problems, for examples given were undeveloped speech, epilepsy and Hyperactivity. 33.3% said that these learners cannot achieve academically and therefore there is no need of their education in regular schools, they need to be in special school where they can be taught other activities and the example given to the vocational skills. 23.3% of the respondents felt that these learners need to be segregated with specialized personnel and special facilities if they are to be helped in any way. 13.4

% felt that the state of their disability that is mental retardation does not allow them to learn together with their counterparts in regular schools arguing that these learners are not understood by those in regular schools and they get frustrated.

Table: 10: Responses of the teachers on how the mentally challenged learners affect their academic performance.

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Positively	0	0%
Negatively	30	100%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

Table 10 shows very clearly that all the respondents are for negative effect on their academic performance. 100% responded that mentally challenged learners affect their academic performance negatively. This means that pupils who are mentally challenged are being negatively affected by academic performance.

Table 11: Negative effects given by the teachers that are caused by the mentally handicapped in their academic performance by covering their mean score

Effects	Frequencies	Percentage
Lowering mean scores	30	100%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

Table 11 reveals that 100% of the respondents said that the mentally handicapped affects their academic performance by lowering their mean scores. This shows that every teacher aims at a high mean score and therefore their interest are the learners who scores high in academic they have no interest or room for the others.

4.2.4 the other objective of the study was to identify the factors that need to be considered before implementation of inclusive education programmes for learners with mental retardation in regular schools.

Table 12: Average number of pupils per class

Average	Frequency	Percentage
Above 60 pupils	4	13.3%
40-50 pupils	20	66.7%
30-39 pupils	3	10%
29-38 pupils	2	6.6%
Below 30 pupils	1	3.4%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

Table 12 reveals that 66.7% of classes in Olasi zone have an average of between 40-50 pupils, which shows that teachers are handling large classes. The table shows they are some classes with an average of 60 pupils which is indicated by 13.3%. An average of between 30-39 is indicated by 10% while an average of 29-38 is indicated by 6.6% and below 30 pupils is indicated by 3.4% which was found not in public schools but in private schools

This shows that public schools in Olasi zone are handling a large number of pupils per class.

Table 13: Responses given by the teachers on whether its difficult to obtain relevant resource for learners with mental retardation in regular schools.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	30	100%
No	0	0
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

100% of the respondents said it is difficult to obtain relevant resources for learners with mental retardation in regular schools. This implies that it is difficult for the teachers to handle learners with mental retardation in their regular schools.

Table 14: Reasons given by the respondents on why it is difficult to obtain relevant resources for learners with mental retardation.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
No curriculum	8	26.7%
Have no time	9	30%
Not trained	7	23.3%
No special resources for them in regular schools.	6	20%
Total	30	100%

Source: Primary data 2009

Table 14 shows that 26.7% of the respondents said that the curriculum in regular school is not modified to fit learners with mental retardation and there is no curriculum specified for the mentally handicapped children. Another group of the majority that is 30% said that they have no time for the learners with mental retardation since they are handling large classes. Another group of 20% respondents said that they are not trained in special needs education and therefore have no skills to handle learners with mental retardation and 20% said that there are no special resources and facilities in their schools for teaching learners with mental handicapped.

Table: 15; Suggestions as concerns the academic performance of learners with mental performance of learners with mental retardation in regular schools

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Current curriculum modified to fit the mentally challenged	5	16.7%
Need of special facilities in school	5	16.7%
Need trained personnel's	10	33.3%
Cannot perform academically, they should be in special schools for vocational	10	33.3%

Source: Primary data 2009

Majority of the respondents according to table 15 felt that mentally challenged learners cannot perform academically and therefore they should be placed in special schools for vocational training. This was represented by 33.3%. Another group of 33.3% also felt that for them to perform they should be handled by trained personnels. 16.7% said that there is need of special to assist the mentally handicapped children in their learning. Another group of 16.7% also felt that the current curriculum should be modified to fit learners with mental retardation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter attempts to give the highlights of the study in summary form. It also gives the conclusion of the study as well as the recommendations

5.1 Summary of the study

The study was aimed at finding out the factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular schools. The researcher used questionnaires to the sampled teachers. The questionnaires were designed to gather appropriate data on factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental retardation in regular schools.

The study outcome shows that there are several factors that cause to the problem. It was expressed by majority of teachers 73.3% that they have no special education training to enable them acquire skills to handle the mentally challenged learners.

Another large number of the respondents that's 100% said that it is difficult to obtain resources for the learners with mental retardation. The curriculum they use is not differentiated hence not suitable for the mentally handicapped learners. From the gathered and analyzed information, it showed clearly that most of schools handle large classes with an average of 40-50 pupils. They attributed the number with the introduction of free primary education in Kenya. This has made it difficult to cater for individual differences as they compare with the schools & classes mean scores.

5.2 Conclusion

This study identified that there are factors affecting academic performance of learners with mental deficit in regular schools. There are no enough trained personnels in regular schools to handle learners with mental retardation. 73.3% of the teachers have no skills needed to handle these children. Majority of the teachers 66.75 said that they are teaching large classes with an average number of between 40-50 pupils and therefore they cannot get enough time for the mentally challenged learners in their classroom,. The mean scores in schools is another factor. Most of the

respondents said that the mentally handicapped learners affect their class performance negatively by lowering their mean score and therefore they should be in special schools rather than regular schools. Attitude of teacher's towards learners with mental retardation is another factor. The study shows that all most all schools have label names for the learners with mental retardation. On the teachers' responses, on whether they would accept to teach a child with mental retardation in their classrooms. Majority that 66.7% said No, but a few felt that all children have a right to education with or with disability. It was also said by most of the respondent that there are no special facilities and resources to teach handicapped and the curriculum in regular schools is not modified to fit the mentally handicapped learners. If the cited problems and others can be carefully addressed we can have mentally challenged learners get their education in regular schools.

5.3 Recommendations

Some of the recommendations made out of the findings of the study include the following.

- a) Government policies on special needs education should be emphasized by the educational officers and provincial administration within Olasi zone. This will help to achieve declaration of education for all (EFA)
- b) A lot of awareness needs to be created to the whole community, that is the teachers parent and children on the importance of education for all regardless of individual differences. This will help learners with mental retardation get their homes, instead of traveling far to special schools and special units or some fail to achieve any collection service at all.
- c) Government should equip the schools with the facilities and resources needed to handle learners with mental retardation. This will make many learners with mental retardation join regular schools hence improve their academic performance.
- d) More teachers should be trained in special needs education. This will make our schools have more teachers equipped with skills of teaching learners with mental retardation. Currently the few trained teachers in the field should act as itinerant teachers so that they can assist regular school teachers cope with children who are mentally retarded.
- e) The Government to employ more teachers to assist in handling large classes. If possible the community may help to elevate this problem by employing teachers and support staff.

f) Employment opportunities should be opened for mentally challenged persons so that the community may see that these people can live independently. This may also motivate the parents and the teachers to give them the best education just like the “normal” children

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APPENDIX A

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction

The aim of this questionnaire is to get opinions concerning educating children with mental handicapped in regular schools.

Please complete the following item as honestly as possible

Back ground information

1. Gender

Male ☐

Female ☐

2. Marital status

Married ☐

Single ☐

3. Name of the school.....

4. Type of the school

Regular school ☐

Private school ☐

Special school ☐

Special unit ☐

5. Teaching experience

One to five years ☐

Six to ten years ☐

Eleven to fifteen years ☐

Sixteen years and above ☐

6. Professional qualification

Certificate holder ☐

Diploma holder ☐

Degree holder ☐

Q1 Have you acquired any training in special needs education?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q 2 If yes to question one (i) to what level have you acquired the training?

Certificate ☐

Diploma ☐

Degree ☐

Q3 Are there learners with special needs in education in your school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q4 if yes to question three (3) which categories

Mentally handicapped ☐

Visually impaired ☐

Hearing impaired ☐

Physically handicapped ☐

Q5 Do you have either of these label names for the learners with mental retardation in your schools?

Fools ☐

Imbeciles ☐

Idiots ☐

☐
Non-achievers

Non-of the above ☐

Q6 Would you accept to teach mentally handicapped learners if placed in your class?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Q7. If No to question six (6) give reasons.

Q8. How do the mentally challenged learners affect your class performance as a teacher?

Positively ☐

Negatively ☐

Q9. If negatively according to number eight (8).

Which are the negative effects?

Q10. For effective teaching and learning mentally handicapped learners should be placed in special