



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CURRICULUM CONTENT MANAGEMENT AND TRANSITION OF PUBLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES TO SECONDARY SCHOOL IN KENYA

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Abstract:

Access to quality education and transition from one level to another has been a major focus of the Kenya Government to speed up individual and national development. While the rate of learners transiting from primary to secondary school has been on an upward trend, transition of learners with disabilities has remained low over the years. The Government has established several legal initiatives and mobilized resources to address this challenge. Most recent of these initiatives is introduction of special needs education policy framework of 2009 which among other provisions emphasized review and adaptation of curriculum to suit the disability limitations of learners. Despite the legal mitigations and resource mobilization by the Government, transition to secondary school for learners with disabilities has remained below 30% compared to the typical peers whose transition has been increasing to above 92% currently. This study sought to address the gap by determining the relationship between curriculum content management and transition to secondary school for public primary school learners with disabilities in Kenya. The research employed descriptive research design and a sample of 340 respondents to represent a population of 3210 subjects. The data obtained in the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation with the aid of a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 21. Findings to the study revealed that curriculum content management had significant impact on

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transition to secondary school for public primary school learners with disabilities. Special needs education teachers were expected to implement the mainstream primary school curriculum in the special needs classrooms. The lessons time allowed by the Ministry of education was too short to implement the planned lesson content on learners with learning disabilities. The time allocated for exams and language used was unsuitable to the learners. As a result, the learners' outcomes and transition to secondary school was inhibited. Based on the findings, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should establish a curriculum that is adaptable to the disabled learners which will enhance effective planning of teaching-learning activities and addressing learning needs of every disabled learner by the teacher.

Keywords: learners with disabilities, transition, curriculum content management, public primary school

1. Introduction

Education is an important foundation for economic, social and political development of any nation because it enhances productivity and reduces social inequality. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) indicates that the level of a country's education is a key indicator of its level of development. In this regard, the United Nations through the UNESCO has targeted achievement of Education for All (EFA) by 2015 irrespective of race, religion or disability in all nations globally. Pursuit of EFA goals has been instrumental to broadening education policies and eradication of barriers to participation and transition in basic education for marginalized groups particularly persons with disabilities (UNESCO, 2011). The World Health Organization (WHO, 2011) estimates 10% of the world population to suffer one or more disabilities, majority of whom live in developing countries. These persons live in hostile conditions that compromise their security and opportunities to quality education.

In Kenya, the Government has established legal initiatives to ensure EFA for 10% of the population that has disabilities. Among these are the National Special Needs Education Framework of 2009, Persons with Disabilities Act (2003) and Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005. This has led to exponential increase in enrollment of learners to special classes from 97,000 in 2002 to 202,000 in 2015 and an increase in the number of primary schools offering special education from 926 in 2002 to 1784 schools in 2015. Despite these legal mitigations and resource mobilization to ensure effective education for marginalized groups, statistical estimates indicate that access and transition rates for LWD has remained below 30% compared to the continuous increase in transition rate for learners without disabilities from 64.1 in 2008 to above 92% (Ministry of Education, 2017).

In view of the continuous low transition rate, this study sought to interrogate the extent of curriculum content management in special classes to establish its impact on transition to secondary school for LWD. Curriculum is an integral component of any teaching and learning process consisting of content and activities that are engaged, taught, learned and assessment done to establish outcome of the process (Fielke & Quinn, 2011). Curriculum and its assessment do not occur in a vacuum but it involves a learner who brings prior knowledge, interests and personal needs to class. It also involves a more knowledgeable person; the teacher who guides and supports the learner. In addition, a variety of pedagogical approaches is employed to disseminate the planned content to the learner. For successful curriculum implementation to take place, careful and prudent management of the process is critical.

2. Literature Review

A study by Riddel (2012) focused on special needs education (SNE) curriculum implementation in European Union with the aim of establishing the barriers faced by persons with disabilities to participate in education, training and employment. The study established that despite commitment by EU member states to inclusion, children with special education needs and disabled adults are often placed in segregated institutions or in mainstream settings with inadequate support. Secondly, children with special education needs frequently leave school with few or no qualifications, subsequently moving into specialist post school training from which they drop out due to lack of adequate basic preparation at school. The study recommended a systematic review of SNE policies by all member states. Effective monitoring of learning process for LWD and careful support of disabled learners in mainstream schools is vital since it reduces segregation and discrimination. In addition, skill development can only be realized when appropriate curriculum content is used on the LWD.

Ojara (2004) carried out a study in Lusaka, Zambia aimed at establishing the competence of teachers in implementing SNE curriculum. The study revealed that the SNE curriculum was not matched to the practical skills to be learnt by the LWD. Instead there was too much inclination to theoretical pedagogy and the learning programme did not consider the learners' disability limitation. Despite their training, SNE teachers were challenged in implementing the curriculum due to lack of teaching/learning resources. The study recommended review of SNE curriculum to provide adequate duration for every learning session to allow enough contact between learners and teachers. Special education teachers should be given in-service training on curriculum content and implementation approaches.

In Kenya, Akinyi, Nyangia and Orodho (2015) studied the challenges facing implementation of inclusive curriculum in public schools in Rongo sub-county, Migori County, Kenya with an aim of determining factors hindering implementation of inclusive process for all school-age LWD and examining the coping strategies for the challenges facing implementation of SNE curriculum. Research findings revealed that

important teaching-learning resources were either inadequate or were quite dilapidated. There was no curriculum specifically designed for SNE therefore teachers were required to use the curriculum for mainstream classes on the LWD. It was also observed that there were inadequate specialized teachers to handle the SNE curriculum. Socio-economic and cultural variables were noted to constrain effective learning in most sampled schools. Akinyi, *et al*, (2015) recommended adequate provision of teaching/learning resources to enhance effective curriculum content implementation and increase of trained teachers to handle this curriculum for improved transition of learners.

The reviewed studies have focused on the suitability of curriculum content taught in SNE classes and barriers faced by LWD in education, the quality of curriculum implementation approaches employed in SNE classrooms and adequacy of teaching/learning resources as a key challenge to implementation of special needs education. While improved implementation of SNE curriculum is expected to improved learner outcomes, the studies have not related curriculum implementation to transition of LWD from one level to another. This study therefore sought to address the gap by determining the relationship between curriculum content management in public primary schools and transition to secondary school for LWD.

3. Methodology

The study used descriptive research design. A population of 3210 subjects and a sample of 340 respondents were selected by simple random sampling for learners with disabilities. Purposive sampling was used to select teachers and Education Assessment Research Centers (EARC) officers. Primary data was collected using questionnaires for learners, teachers and interview schedule for EARC officers.

3.1 Data Analysis

After all data was collected, cleaning and editing of quantitative data was done, coded and fed into the computer programme for analysis using various descriptive statistics which include mean and standard deviation. A Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer programme version 21 was used to aid analysis. Martin & Acuna (2002) notes that SPSS is able to handle large amounts of data; it is time saving and also quite efficient. Frequency tables were used to present analysed quantitative data while qualitative data was presented in descriptive narratives.

4. Results and Discussions

The researcher requested teachers and head teachers to give their views on extent to which management of schooling curriculum content contributed to enhancing transition of LWD to secondary school. Responses were given based on a five level Likert scale where 1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree. 3= Uncertain, 4= Agree and 5= strongly agree.

Table 1: Views on Effect of Curriculum Content Management on Transition of LWDs

Respondent	f	mean	SD	Interpretation
Head teachers	18	3.78	0.83	A
Teachers	132	3.54	1.12	A

SD=1.0-1.79, D=1.8-2.59, U=2.6-3.39, A=3.4-4.19 and SA=4.2-5.0

The findings indicated a general agreement among teachers' (mean 3.54, SD= 1.12) and head teachers' (mean 3.75, SD=0.83) that management of curriculum content in the sampled public primary schools significantly impacted on transition of LWDs to secondary school.

The researcher sought to establish the contribution of various indicators of curriculum content management on transition to secondary school. Teachers, head teachers and LWD were asked to give their responses on a five level Likert scale where 1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Uncertain, 4= Agree and 5= strongly agree. The table below presents the findings

Table 2: Curriculum Content Management and Transition of LWDs

S/N	Head teachers			Teachers			Learner with Disabilities		
	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Mean	SD	Interpretation	Mean	SD	Interpretation
S1	4.83	0.41	SA	3.75	1.22	A	3.28	1.07	U
S2	2.30	1.10	D	2.42	1.38	D	3.17	1.20	U
S3	2.37	1.03	D	2.31	1.38	D	3.56	1.15	A
S4	1.33	0.82	SD	1.49	0.82	SD	1.82	1.30	D
S5	1.50	1.22	SD	1.32	0.83	SD	-	-	-
S6	4.83	0.41	SA	3.73	1.45	A	4.41	.89	SA
S7	2.00	0.89	D	2.54	1.64	D	-	-	-
S8	4.50	0.84	SA	4.31	0.68	SA	-	-	-
S9	4.67	0.82	SA	4.60	0.81	SA	4.58	0.88	SA
S10	1.50	0.84	SD	1.31	0.86	SD	2.58	1.81	D
MM	3.41	-		2.78	-		3.45	-	

MM= Mean of means SD=1.0-1.79, D=1.8-2.59, U=2.6-3.39, A=3.4-4.19 and SA=4.2-5.0

S1= Learners are arranged in classes according to type of disability.

S2= Lesson time allocation is in consideration of learners' disability limitations.

S3= Teachers allow extra teaching/learning time for weak LWD.

S4= Classes have special letter magnifiers and sound amplifying facilities for LWD.

S5= Teachers use an adapted SNE syllabus to prepare lessons for LWD.

S6= LWD are allowed longer time during exams compared to non- disabled learners

S7= Affirmative action is allowed for LWD during exam marking.

S8= Affirmative action is allowed to LWD for grade and level transition.

S9= Grade transition for LWD is based on learner's academic performance.

S10= Language used during exams is suitable for all LWD.

Results of data analysis revealed agreement by teachers and head teachers on contribution of most indicators to transition. The average means of 3.41 for head teachers and 3.45 for teachers indicated agreement that curriculum content management enhanced transition. The findings revealed some aspects of content management that had negative impact on transition. These include: timing of lessons

did not consider the disability limitation of learners, teachers did not allow extra time to teach weak learners, teachers did not have adaptable syllabus to teach LWD. Other issues that respondents disagreed on include: the language used in exams was suitable for LWD and affirmative action was given to LWD during exam marking. Results from LWD differed from teachers and head teachers in some ways. LWD were uncertain whether learners were arranged in classes according to disabilities as well as whether lesson timing considered level of disability. This different opinion may be due to the fact that learners with disabilities may not be keen on such details in class. They were therefore not able to make an informed opinion.

Using observation checklists, the researcher observed management of curriculum content in the SNE classrooms of the sampled public primary schools to determine the adequacy in enhancing transition of LWDs. The table below presents this information. A five level Likert scale was used to indicate the responses where 1= Very inadequate, 2= Inadequate, 3=Uncertain, 4= Adequate and 5= Very adequate.

Table 3: Researcher's Observation on Curriculum Content Management

S/No	Statement	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Lesson plans in SNE lessons	3.92	0.95	Adequate
2	T/L aiding materials	3.77	0.83	Adequate
3	Progressive evaluation records	4.15	0.38	Adequate
4	Teacher and class timetables	4.08	0.76	Adequate
5	Lessons timed according to disability	1.15	0.38	Very inadequate
6	Adaptable syllabus for SNE	0.78	0.28	Very inadequate
MM		3.41	-	

MM = Mean of means, SD=1.0-1.79, D=1.8-2.59, U=2.6-3.39, A=3.4-4.19 and SA=4.2-5.0

The findings gave an average mean of 3.41 which implies that curriculum content management in the sampled public primary schools was adequate to enhance learning and influence transition of learners. However, the researcher observed that timing of lessons to accommodate disability limitation of learners was very inadequate. The syllabus used to prepare SNE lessons was inadaptable to suit disability limitations of the learners. Teachers struggle to ensure the mainstream lessons programme is applied on SNE classes strictly according to Education Ministry requirement.

These results concur with findings of a study by Ojara (2004) that inquired on special needs education curriculum planning in Lusaka, Zambia. The study revealed that SNE curriculum was not matched to practical skills to be learnt by LWD in Zambia. There was too much inclination to theoretical than practical pedagogy due to pressure on teachers to keep the unrealistic lessons timing which was not responsive of learners' disability limitations. Ojara (2004) recommended that SNE programme should be reviewed to cater for disability limitations of learners and ensure adequate contact between learners and teachers.

5. Conclusions

Based on the study findings, it was concluded that teachers in public primary schools had the necessary skills to handle SNE classes and hence influence learners' outcomes. However, efficiency and effectiveness in managing curriculum content was impeded by the school programme that was not learner adaptable. Teachers were expected to implement the regular school programme which was unsuitable for LWDs who require a programme that allows the teacher to address individual learner's needs.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education through the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development should establish a curriculum and programme that is adaptable for special needs education to ensure effective access, participation and transition of learners with disabilities from one level of education to another. This will allow adequate learner-teacher contact which is vital for effective learning of challenged learners. This is expected to improve outcomes and transition of learners which in turn will motivate teachers in their work.

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