

Factors Influencing Guidance And Counseling Programme in The Integration of Learners with Visual Impairments in Public Primary Schools in Turkana South Sub-County, Turkana County, Kenya

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Abstract: *With the introduction of free primary education (FPE) in Kenya, there has been concern about the quality of instruction offered, due to the large class sizes. This has become more difficult for learners with disabilities. In order to address this challenge the government has encouraged the establishment of guidance and counseling services in schools among other roles to facilitate integration of children with visual impairments. This study sought to establish factors influencing guidance and counseling programme in the integration of learners with visual impairments in public primary schools in Turkana South Sub-County, Turkana County, Kenya. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The sample size consisted of 59 teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used to select teachers included in the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics. This study concluded that lack of finance, harsh physical environment, shortage of trained personnel on special needs, lack of support from school administration, lack of teaching and learning resources influence integration of learners with visual impairments. This study recommends that the school administration should modify the schools' physical environment in order to foster integration in school. They should also ensure that learning materials are available for visually impaired learners.*

Keywords: *Guidance and counselling, integration, learners, visual impairment*

I. Introduction

Visual impairments, also known as vision loss, is a decreased ability to see to a degree that causes problems not fixable by usual means, such as glasses, Some also include those who have a decreased ability to see because they do not have access to glasses or contact lenses, Visual impairments is often defined as a best corrected visual acuity, of worse than either 20/40 or 20/60 (WHO, 2012). The basic concept of inclusion and integration states that principles of equity, discrimination, social justice and human rights make it compulsory that pupils with special needs and disabilities should enjoy the same privileges as all other pupils in a public primary school environment and to a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum (Jeffs, Behrmann and Bannan-Ritland (2006). It is believed that integration in the mainstream school enables pupils with disabilities to benefit from the stimulation of mixing with relatively more able pupils and having the opportunity to observe higher models of social and academic behavior.

Education provisions for blind and visually handicapped children, the administration of these educational provisions and teacher preparations, all moved from special or separated arrangements to integrated ones. This move has been consistently spearheaded and supported by legislation (Lowenfeld, 1981). It was Lowenfeld's belief that the American creed has resulted in educational integration for the blind and visually handicapped and visually impaired students.

Euro Blind and visually handicapped Organization reported that In Ireland, the Act acknowledges that pupils with special educational needs have the same right to education as their peers. The legislation aims to ensure that children with special educational needs will leave school with the skills necessary to participate in society and to live independent lives. In United Kingdom, changes were made to the previous code that introduced a stronger right for children with special needs education to be educated at a mainstream school, (Rogers, Gilbert & Foster, 1999).

Euro Blind Organization showed that in Germany, the main form of provision of equal access to Education by the Blind and visually handicapped is in special schools but programmes have been introduced to encourage the integration of pupils and pupils with special needs into mainstream education (Okasha, 2002). In Norway, pupils with special educational needs are generally integrated into mainstream early childhood education and schooling with provision for extra help in class where required. In Netherlands, since 2001 policy has been geared to integrating children with special needs in mainstream primary schools, under the motto "Going to school together". The aim of this policy is to enable pupils with special needs to attend mainstream

primary schools showed that career guidance services in Finland had influenced people in all sectors of education and the public primary employment office after evaluations made between 2000-2003 (Lufi, Okasha, & Cohen, 2004).

Independent Living Institute in South Africa reported that personal assistance services had influenced people with disabilities to direct their own lives and to exercise their rights to choice and dignity within their own homes (Lufi, Okasha, & Cohen, 2004). The 2006 Children's Statute in Uganda provides for equal opportunities to education for children with disabilities. Special programmes for children with disabilities were initiated, without a corollary effort to introduce into educational curricula for non-disabled children contents that would tackle and strive to eliminate the inherited stigmatization. The planned inclusive schooling and teacher training aimed at their adaptation to diverse-ability learners will hopefully contribute to reducing such stigmatization (Hegarty & Alur, 2002).

Gabbert (2012) argued that visually impaired pupils should be placed in the best possible learning environment and support should be put in place for them to learn. Gabbert also added that many children with visual impairments have significant problems adapting socially in the public primary classroom. The children may not easily accept a blind and visually handicapped or low vision child without some direct support from teachers.

The increased urbanization of the society has slowly resulted in the growth of integrated schools taking care of the both the normally and the physically impaired learners and a need for an organized support system to meet the needs traditionally met through the special schools (Okasha, 2002). Thus schools have become important centers to provide guidance to students (Gabbert, 2012). The study was therefore done in Turkana since most pupils in schools lack proper guidance and counseling and have blinding trachoma.

With the introduction of free primary education (FPE) in Kenya, research evidence shows that there has been concern with quality of instruction offered (Deininger, 2003; Oketch & Somerset, 2010), due to the large class sizes. This has become more difficult for learners with visual impairments. In order to ensure to address this challenge the government has encouraged the establishment of the guidance and counseling services in schools among other roles to assist in integration of children with visual impairments. However, there has been an outcry during the parents meetings and education days in Turkana South Sub County that learners with visual impairments have been performing poorly in academic work as compared to their counterparts enrolled in the same institutions of learning; an indication that they may not be well integrated in the school system (Hegarty & Alur, 2002). This raises the concern as to whether guidance and counseling programme has played its role in influencing the integration of learners with visual impairments in public primary schools. It was on this breadth that the study sought to establish the factors influencing guidance and counseling programme in the integration of learners with visual impairments and strategies for enhancing integration in public primary schools in Turkana South sub-county, Turkana County, Kenya. The purpose of the study was to establish factors influencing guidance and counseling programme in the integration of learners with visual impairments in Turkana South sub-county, Turkana County, Kenya.

II. Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This is a method of data collection which involves identifying the characteristics of an observed phenomenon or exploring possible correlations among two or more phenomena (Kothari, 2008). Descriptive survey research designs are used in preliminary and exploratory studies to allow researchers to gather information, summarize, present and interpret for the purpose of clarification (Orodho, 2005). The study fitted within the provisions of descriptive research design because the researcher collected data and reported the way things are without manipulating any variables. This enabled the researcher to collect data from the public primary schools in the three zones.

This study was conducted in Turkana South Sub County district, Turkana County, Kenya. It borders West Pokot Sub County, Central Pokot Sub County and East Pokot Sub County. The Sub County is divided into three zones: Katilu zone, Lokichar zone and Kainuk zone. The researcher chose Turkana South Sub County due to accessibility of the schools in the three zones. The Sub County is hot and dry for most part of the year. Rainfall is erratic and unreliable and famine is a constant threat. Turkana has very low agricultural potential and is only suitable for extensive rearing of indigenous livestock. According to the survey carried out by Kenya Society for the Blind and visually handicapped in conjunction with the Ministry of Health (2011), it was revealed that blind and visually handicappedness was rampant in Turkana South Sub County.

The target population of study comprised of 301 teachers in 46 public primary schools in Turkana south Sub County, Turkana County, Kenya.

Table1

Population of teachers

Zone	Target population	Accessible population
Katilu	85	62
Lokichar	119	89
Kainuk	97	85
TOTAL	301	236

Source: D.E.O's office- Turkana South Sub County, 2013

Schools were stratified into zones and thereafter the researcher purposefully selected schools that were practicing integration of visually impaired learners to be included in the sample. Simple random sampling technique was used to select teachers in the zones. Some pieces of papers were prepared to have 'yes' or 'no'. The respondents who picked 'yes' were included in the sample. This ensured that all the teachers had equal chances to be picked for the study.

Kothari (2008) defined sample design as definite design for obtaining sample frame to the technique the researcher adopted in selecting sampling unit from which inferences about population is drawn. Gay (2002) recommends that when the target population is small (less than 1000 members), a minimum sample of 20% is adequate for educational research. From the 236 of the accessible population, the researcher selected 25% (59 participants) as a sample.

Table 2

Sample size

Zone	Accessible population	Sample size
Katilu	62	16
Lokichar	89	22
Kainuk	85	21
TOTAL	236	59

The study used questionnaires to collect data. The questionnaires were the preferred tools for this study because they enabled the researcher get views from a large number of respondents within a short time, thus making it easier to collect relevant information. The questionnaires were developed based on objectives of the study and the research questions. They contained closed ended questions. They were administered to teachers. Questionnaires were divided into four sections. The four sections contained the following information: Demographic information, extent of guidance and counseling in integration, factors that affect integration of learners and strategies to enhance integration of learners with visual impairments.

To validate the instrument, several items have been included in the questionnaire to cover the three objectives of the study. The researcher also consulted two education experts to get their views about the instrument. Their recommendations were considered when modifying the final instrument. To ensure that the instruments could generate similar data if used by different researchers, a pilot study was done in two schools in the neighbouring Turkana central Sub County. The pilot study ensured suitability and clarity of questions on the instruments designed, relevance of the information being sought and the language from responses given. Cronbach's formula was used and the reliability coefficient was 0.75 above 0.7 which was acceptable. This method is convenient according to Fraenkel and Wallen (2003) and requires one administration of questionnaires and can be used to examine the consistency of all items measuring variables.

After data collection, all completed questionnaires were thoroughly examined by the researcher, coded and organized for analysis. Data was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.0. Some of the descriptive statistics generated were means, frequencies and percentages. Descriptive statistics were used since they allowed for systematic observations of central tendency and aims to describe subject data information in a manner that can be less subjectively evaluated by others.

III. Results And Discussion

Demographic Information Of The Respondents

The demographic information collected for this study included the level of education and work experience. Since only teachers took part in this study, this was deemed good enough to measure their capability to provide information on the research topic.

The study sought to determine the level of education of the respondent. The findings are as presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Level of Education of the Respondents

Educational Level	Frequency	Percentage
Masters Degree	6	10.2
Bachelors Degree	4	6.8
Diploma	3	5.1
Certificate	46	78.0
Total	59	100

According to the study, 10.2% of the respondents had Masters, 6.8% had Bachelors degree 5.1%, had Diploma and 78% had certificate level education. It was necessary to establish the education level of the respondents because getting information from diverse knowledge in education was very vital for the study. The study found out that majority of the respondents had certificate level of education. Based on the findings, it is important to employ more teachers with a higher level of education to mingle with those with lower level and assist them in building an integrated relationship with the learners with visual impairments. This will ensure a sustainable integrated environment between the teachers and the learners with visual impairments (Spungin & Ferrell, (2007).

The study also sought to determine the work experience of the respondents. The findings were as presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Work Experience of the Respondents

Experience	Frequencies (f)	Percentages (%)
0-3 Years	50	84.7
4-7 Years	7	11.9
Above 7 Years	2	3.4
TOTAL	59	100

According to the study, it is evident that 84.7% of the respondents had work experience of between 0-3 years, 11.9% had work experience of between 4-7 years and 3.4% had work experience of above 7 years. Majority of the respondents had work experience of between 0-3 years. It was also important to determine the work experience of the respondents to avoid experience biasness. Based on the findings, the experience of the respondents in the integrating schools still fall below 3 years. It is therefore necessary to balance the experience of the respondents to ensure they learn more about integration from their peers who have long term experience in integrated schools. This will ensure those with less experience are able to be efficient in handling learners with visual impairments.

The study sought to investigate the factors influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments. The findings are as presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Factors influencing guidance and counseling programme in the integration of learners with visual impairments

Factors		Yes	No
Lack of finance to support integration	f	47	12
	%	79.7	20.3
Harsh environment for learners with impairments in the school	f	32	27
	%	54.2	45.8
Lack of trained personnel on special needs	f	49	10
	%	83.1	16.9
Negative attitude of learners towards learners with visual impairments	f	35	24
	%	59.3	40.7
Lack of support from school administration	f	23	36
	%	39	61
Lack of teaching and learning resources for learners with visual impairments	f	51	8
	%	86.4	13.6
Ignorance of parents of learners with visual impairments	f	44	15
	%	74.6	25.4
Lack of adapted syllabus for the blind and visually handicapped children	f	45	14
	%	76.3	23.7

Key: f-frequency, % -percentage

According to the study, it is evident that a majority (79.9%) agreed that lack of finance to support integration is a major factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual

impairments while (20.3%) disagreed. (54.2%) agreed that harsh physical environment for learners with impairments in the school is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while (45.8%) disagreed. (83.1%) agreed that lack of trained personnel on special needs is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while 16.9% disagreed. (59.3%) agreed that negative attitude of sighted learners towards visually impaired learners is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while 40.7% were against the opinion. (39%) agreed that lack of support from school administration is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while (61%) disagreed. 86.4% agreed that lack of teaching and learning resources for learners with visual impairments is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while(13.6%) disagreed. 74.6% agreed that ignorance of parents of learners with visual impairments is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while (25.4%) disagreed. (76.3%) agreed that lack of adapted syllabus for the blind and visually handicapped children is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments while (23.7%) were against the opinion.

The findings showed that majority of the respondents (79.7%) were of the opinion that lack of finance to support the integration of visual impairments in school is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments. This could be because the learners with visual impairments require some special treatment from those of learners starting from the learning materials to the environment they need to feel not secluded. The above requires money in order to ensure that the learners with visual impairments feel like any other pupil in school. This has resulted to the purchase of inadequate materials required for integration of learners with visual impairments.

Rude, Jackson, Correa, Luckner, Muir & Ferrell (2005) agrees with the findings that lack of finance hampers the integration of visual impairments in school. He attributes it to the fact that learners with visual impairments require some special treatment from those of learners starting from the learning materials to the environment they need to feel not secluded. The study further suggested that all of it requires a lot of money in order to ensure that the learners with visual impairments feel like any other ordinary human beings. This has resulted to purchase of lesser materials needed for the integration of learners with visual impairments.

Njoroge (1991) supports these findings that harsh environment for learners with impairments in the school affects their integration in school. This he says is because learners with visual impairments require a special environment that they thrive to make them look as ordinary people regardless of their visual impairments issues. However, due to lack of finance or the climatic conditions of an area some schools have not been able to sustain or give out such an environment or have made the environment worse for them as a result, it has affected their integration in the school.

The study findings indicated that 83.1% of the respondents were of the opinion that lack of trained personnel on special needs affects the integration of learners with visual impairments. This could be attributed to the fact that the school lacks trained personnel on special needs which affects the integration of learners with visual impairments for example those who teach on the use of Braille. This could have resulted to the visually impaired learners becoming slow in learning due to the lack of trained personnel. As a result; lack of trained personnel on special needs affect the integration of learners with visual impairments.

Bolt and Thurlow (2004) agree with the findings that lack of trained personnel on special needs affects the integration of learners with visual impairments. They further attributed it to the fact that the school may be rich of guidance and counseling personnel who understand the welfare of the visually impaired learners but in most instances lack trained personnel, on special needs for example those who teach on the use of braille. This could have resulted in visually impaired learners becoming slow in learning due to lack of trained personnel. As a result; lack of trained personnel on special needs affect the integration of learners with visual impairments.

Negative attitude of sighted learners towards learners with visual impairments affects the integration of the learners with visual impairments in school. These findings are in agreement with findings by Bolt and Thurlow (2004) who noted that constant contact of the visually impaired learners with the non impaired learners may create a conflict as a result of the way they perceive things. As a result some of the learners might show a negative attitude towards their visually impaired counterparts.

The learners with visual impairments lack support from school administration. This is in disagreement with (Wormnaes, 2005) who states that the administration of the school only open their school to the visually impaired would wish to support them and make them feel part of the society. Thus special attention is emphasized by the administration of the school to ensure that the visually impaired learners are treated with respect.

The respondents agreed in majority that lack of teaching and learning resources for learners with visual impairments is a factor influencing guidance and counseling in integration of learners with visual impairments. This could be because of lack of enough finance to purchase the teaching and learning materials as well as the expensive nature of the teaching and learning materials which has made it difficult for the school to acquire or

purchase the materials resulting to fewer materials being used by more learners with visual impairment. Such shortage affects the integration of the learners with visual impairments in school.

Study findings by Calhoon, Fuchs and Hamlett (2000) are in agreement with the findings that lack of teaching and learning resources for learners with visual impairments affects the integration of learners with visual impairments. They say that lack of sufficient finance to purchase the teaching and learning materials as well as the expensive nature of the teaching and learning materials which has made it difficult for the school to acquire or purchase the materials resulting to fewer materials being used by more learners with visual impairment. Such shortage affects the integration of the learners with visual impairments in school.

Study findings by Jeffs, et al., (2006) agree with the above findings that ignorance of parents of learners with visual impairments affects the integration of the learners with visual impairments. They further state that some parents of learners with visual impairments may find the school a better place to dump their visually impaired children who they may feel are a burden at home or useless as they cannot do anything because of their visual problems. This may in turn demoralize the visually impaired learners making them perform poorly or reject classes thus ignorance of parents of learners with visual impairments affects the integration of the visually impaired learners in school.

Lack of adapted syllabus for the blind and visually handicapped children affects the integration of visually impaired learners in school. This is in agreement with (Jeffs, Behrman & Bannan-Ritland, 2006) who further assert that Kenya does not currently have a comprehensive and exclusive syllabus for the visually impaired and still rely on the past outdated syllabus for the impaired. This has failed to incorporate current affairs of the world to the syllabus of the impaired learners causing them to learn outdated syllabus thus, lack of adapted syllabus for the blind and visually handicapped children affects the integration of visually impaired learners in school.

IV. Conclusions And Recommendations

The study concluded that some of the factors that affect integration of learners with visual impairments include; lack of finance to support the integration of visually impaired learners in school, harsh environment for learners with impairments in the school and shortage of trained personnel on special needs. Since environment and the availability of learning materials have been identified as some of the factors influencing Guidance and Counseling in the integration of learners with visual impairments in public primary schools in Turkana south Sub County, Turkana County, Kenya, the school administration should modify the schools' physical environment in order to foster integration in school. They should also ensure that learning materials are available for visually impaired learners.

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