



Challenges Experienced In The Implementation Of Special Needs Education Policy In Kenya And The Current Status In The Competence Based Curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

The Kenya Special Needs Education Policy Framework 2009 provided a legal framework that was relevant and guided the provision of Special Needs Education in Kenya. The implementation of the policy has seen Kenya achieve many milestones including increased enrolment, which rose from 22,000 learners in 1999 to 108,221 in 290 special primary institutions and 2057 Special units/integrated programmes (MOE 2018).

Training for SNE teachers, increased capitation to primary and secondary education and establishment of more special institutions are some among other achievements of the SNE policy. Important to note is that despite the existence of this policy, and subsequent provision of essential services, such as assessment and early intervention, awareness, advocacy, curriculum specialized learning resources, assistive devices and technology, learners and trainees with disability have not benefitted a lot from them. Among the reasons for this situation are significant challenges in its implementation.

CHALLENGES FACED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION

The Special Needs Education (SNE) Policy Framework Ministry of Education (MOE 2009) was difficult and ambiguous for teachers to implement. The policy failed to include salient definitions to facilitate a common way of addressing learners identified as those with SNE thus leading to labelling of learners. It is imperative that the learners' unique needs should be made transparent and addressed using individualized education plans to influence and maintain high expectations, positive and enriched ways of teaching in order to improve the children's learning opportunities as well as other extra-curricular activities.

Kenya offers special needs education to four basic categories of children with special Education Needs. These include those with hearing impairment, mental handicap, visual impairment and physical handicap. The Kenya SNE Policy 2009 (MOE 2009) has included other learners in the list. This list shows 22 categories of learners said to have SEN. The terms handicap, deaf, blind, retarded, disabled continue being used in different government and media communications (Njogu 2009). This represents a medical model which is explained under the labelling section below. Conversely the terms 'special needs' and "learning difficulty" are not defined. There is over generalization of the use of terminologies which urges on labelling with the usage of terms like; "child with disabilities" "disabled" "handicapped", "mentally retarded." In Kenya (Njogu ,2009, Kiarie, 2006; Kiptarus, 2005; Muuya 2002).

The Kenya Special Needs Education Policy framework 2009 was difficult to implement due to a glaring lack of clear policy implementation guidelines. Setting up a multi sectoral and interdisciplinary strategy was imperative for successful implementation of the policy. The Ministry of education should have collaborated closely with other stakeholders, development partners FBOs and parents for effective implementation of the SNE policy.

There was also great need to layout the implementation of the SNE policy in three key result areas: Management and Co-ordination quality assurance and monitoring and evaluation. Implementation guidelines should have been developed and would have been expected to provide details of implementation of the strategies.

The importance of developing implementing guidelines alongside the policy, to move the agenda of inclusive education forward cannot be over emphasized, since its inception in 2009 the SNE policy framework has been in existence without implementing guidelines which has been noted as an impediment to implementation. Stakeholders expressed how challenging it has been for them to implement the policy without guidelines and guidance (MOE 2018).

The lack of implementing guidelines, with no preferred coordinator of the 2009 SNE policy, left gaps in its successful implementation. This included poor dissemination of the policy. The Ministry of Education took over the full responsibility of implementation of the policy but fell short in its efforts to create an implementation directory which would have made its work easy. This created a lacuna in the implementation because of this lack of a co-ordination framework.

STATUS OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION POLICY IN COMPETENCE BASED CURRICULUM IN KENYA

Kenya introduced a new curriculum in January 2019, the Competency Based curriculum (CBC) and the Kenya institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) gave the assurance that Special Needs Education was well catered for in the new curriculum. In a press release on 13th January 2019, the KICD was quoted as follows;

Curriculum designs for Grade 4 are being adapted to the needs of learners with special needs ahead of roll out of the new curriculum. The designs referred to as syllabus under the 8-4-4 system of education will guide teachers and publishers when preparing lessons and textbooks for the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC).

Adaptation of the designs was spearheaded by curriculum experts drawn from various institutions that cater for various types of disability was a deliberate measure to ensure learners needs were well accommodated.

The KICD brought on board curriculum implementors who themselves were persons with disabilities.

According to Dr. Jwan, Competency Based Curriculum provides an opportunity for learners with special needs to excel in their areas of ability, and interest without feeling neglected.

The Special Needs Education in CBC is given special attention in the Basic Education Curriculum Framework by providing a differentiated curriculum for learners with special needs who may follow the regular curriculum with adaptations and those who may regularize a specialized curriculum. Provision of a differentiated curriculum is stipulated in the sector policy for learners and trainees with disabilities (2008). The CBC is geared towards nurturing every learner's potential by embracing all-inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

The Kenya Special Needs policy framework (2009) served Kenya's special needs Education until 2018 when the need to address its shortcomings were realized. The Sector policy for learners and Trainees with Disability (2018) was formulated. This sector policy had an implementation guideline to guide the implementers'. The policy had a theme on advocacy and awareness which envisaged an effective communication strategy for purposes of dissemination. The drafters of the policy were careful to avoid the pitfalls of the SNE 2009 implementers' by clearly stating a coordination framework from the National level all the way down.

The 2018 sector policy for learners with disability was enriched to include some critical shifts from the previous SNE policy framework in terms of structure and content. Inclusive education shall be the key strategy in achieving education and training for learners and trainees with disabilities. The policy review has developed the implementation guidelines as mentioned above. These will guide the policy implementation. Other shifts include; terminologies, coverage of needs, inclusive education and home based education.

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