

**EFFECTS OF TEACHERS ATTITUDE ON TRANSITION OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS FROM INCLUSIVE PRIMARY TO SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN CENTRAL DIVISION OF NAROK NORTH SUB-COUNTY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of teachers' attitude towards transition of learners with special needs from an inclusive primary school to secondary school in central sub county of Narok North. Transition from primary to secondary schools especially among the special needs learners is a matter of concern as majority of the learners seem to be disadvantaged and are unable to proceed on to secondary school. The main objective of this study was to establish the effect of teachers' attitude on transition of learners with special needs from inclusive primary to secondary schools in central sub-county of Narok North. The study used a descriptive survey design. The target population of the study constituted 9 public secondary schools and 52 primary schools with a teachers' population of 139 teachers in secondary and 288 teachers in primary. The study findings indicate that, there were cases of disability in both primary and secondary schools in the county. There were more cases reported in primary schools compared to secondary schools. Teachers' attitude in secondary school was cited to have a very big effect on learners with special needs compared with the learners in primary schools. The study concluded that transition of pupils from primary to secondary schools was affected by disability. There is need for further studies to establish factors to be considered in improving the learning environment in secondary schools to enhance effective transition process.*

*Key words: learners, transition, special needs*

## 1.1 Background of the study

The transition from primary to secondary school is an educational milestone in the lives of all children. Relative to the large body of research on learners in general, the transition experiences of learners with special educational needs (SEN) have received less attention at both international and national levels (UNESCO, 2008). The Government of Kenya in its effort to provide education for all, regardless of ethnicity, gender, family background or physical abilities, faces a challenge of transition of learners with special needs from primary to secondary (UNESCO, 2008). MoE (2004) indicated that the main challenges relating to access and equality in the provision of education and training of children with special needs include, among others, lack of clear guidelines and support to the implementation of an all inclusion policy, inappropriate infrastructure, inadequate facilities, lack of equipment which make it difficult to integrate Special Education in regular programs and incompetence among teachers in handling children with special needs.

Furthermore, it has been reported that in Kenya, lack of facilities, inadequate trained personnel, negative societal attitudes and lack of specific policy guidelines have contributed to poor delivery of special education and related services (GoK, 2001). With such insurmountable challenges facing special education provision, it is necessary to assess the special education program that may affect transition of learners with special needs from primary to secondary. To attain this, Kenya needs to ensure the realization of inclusive education and simultaneously develop and implement guidelines that mainstream special needs education at all levels of the education system (GOK, 2009). This study therefore seeks to look at the transition of these learners from primary to secondary with a view that there are very low numbers of learners with special needs who move on from primary to secondary.

UNESCO, (2005) indicated that transition has particular implications for children with special needs. The need for continuity in the provision of support services and the transfer of information is particularly acute in the cases of those children who require extra support. Some children with special needs may attend mainstream primary schools and progress to secondary education in special schools. Other children may spend some time in special education settings before transferring to mainstream schools. The transition experiences of these learners also require consideration in planning for educational provision. Farrell (2000) also reviewed the academic and social benefits of integration and found no clear-cut advantage for including learners with special

educational needs in mainstream education. This study seeks to find out how the selected factors affect the transition of learners with special needs from primary to secondary schools in Narok North sub County

### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Transition from primary to secondary school in Kenya remain low despite the government effort to offer tuition free secondary education. Previous studies have pointed out the absence of learner's voice in transition from primary to secondary schools. In Narok North sub- County, there are more cases of special needs pupils in primary schools compared to those in secondary schools. For instance data provided by the Narok Intergrated Program shows that on average the number of learners with special needs transiting from primary to secondary school in the county between 2009 and 2014 averaged only 2 out of class enrolment of an average of 20 learners. This study sought to examine teachers' attitudes towards special needs learners and the effect it has on transition process from primary to secondary schools.

### **1.3 Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to establish the effect of teachers' attitude on the transition of learners with special needs from the mainstream primary schools to secondary school. It looks at the issues involved in the process of transition from primary to secondary schools.

### **1.4 Objective of the study**

Objective of the study was to establish the effect of teachers' attitude on transition of learners to secondary school.

### **2.0 Methodology**

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. The design allows the researcher to collect data by interviewing or administering a questionnaire to a sample of individuals from a large population (Babble, 2001). The target population of the study constituted teachers, head teachers, class eight learners and form two students from the public secondary school and primary schools in all the four zones of Narok central sub county. The total number of primary school teachers was 453. The target

population for secondary school students in form two was 205 while the teacher's population was 48 teachers.

### **2.1 Sample Size and Sampling procedure**

Purposive sampling was used to select all the head teachers from the 16 primary schools and 3 head teachers from the 3 selected public secondary schools who were used in the study. Out of the 52 schools only 16(30%) schools were selected using the simple random sampling method, a total of 66 learners and 56 teachers were selected. The study selected 50 percent of the sampled learners who participated in the study. A total sample of 9 schools in the four zones was selected, from which 65 students and 28 teachers were selected. This gave a total of 126 respondents of the total sample.

Questionnaires were used to collect data from the teachers, head teachers, students and the learners because they could be dropped and filled later. Scaled items on a 5-point Likert scale was used to elicit the required information. The questionnaires for learners seek to elicit feedback on the respondent's age, sex and home background information. After getting an introductory letter from the university and research permit from the National Commission of Science and Technology authorizing the researcher to carry out the study, the researcher visited the schools and briefs the head teacher on the purpose and objective of the study. With the head teacher's permission, questionnaires were administered to him/her, the teachers and to the class learners.

Qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions was analyzed qualitatively through content analysis and organized into themes and patterns corresponding to the research questions. Quantitative data such as statistical information examination performance and retention was analyzed by the aid of Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS).

### **3.0 Findings**

The researcher was able to collect back 114 (87.0%) questionnaires from the students and pupils and 54 (64.2%) of the teachers' questionnaire from all the groups which were used for the data analysis. 81(71.1%) of male pupils and students participated in the study where 47(73.3 %) were in primary school while 34(63 %) were from secondary school. It was further established that a total of

33(28.9 %) female respondents participated in the study; 13(21.7 %) were from primary school and 20(37.0%) were from secondary school.

It was noted that there were more cases of pupils with disability in primary schools compared to those in secondary schools. A total of 69(60.5%) respondents said “Yes” there are pupils and students with disability in the schools of whom 56(93.3%) were in primary and 13(24.1%) were in secondary schools. The next question sought to establish the type of disability common in the schools. The results indicates that the disability that is very common both to primary and secondary schools is physical disability with a total of 65 indicating ‘Yes’ of which 33(55.0%) are in primary and 32(59.3%) are in secondary schools.

It is noted that 33.3% of the head teachers in primary school were female while 66.7% of the head teachers were male. Majority of the teacher (62.5%) who respondents to the questionnaire were female while 37.5% were male. On age bracket it was noted that majority of the teachers 41.7% were in the age bracket of 30 -40 years followed by those in the age bracket of 20-30years 35.4%. Only 20.8% were more than 41 years. For the head teachers in primary schools it was noted that majority 41.7% were in the age bracket 31-40 years, followed by 33.3% who were in the age bracket of 41-50 years. The results also show that majority of the respondents 47.5% from among the head teachers in primary schools were holders of P1 certificate, 45.8% were holders of diplomas and the rest 6.7% were holders of bachelor’s degree.

Among the teachers in both primary and secondary schools majority 47.9% were P1 certificate holders and all of them were from the primary school section. 28.8% were diploma holders and the rest 22.5 % were holders of bachelor’s degree. It was noted that majority of the secondary school teachers were holders of a bachelors with only a few from primary school

Majority of the head teachers and principals 75% were holders of bachelors degree with only a few 25% being holders of masters degree. This shows that the schools have teachers who are well trained in their profession; however it was not clear whether they had trained in handling special needs pupils. It is also clear that majority of the head teachers 58.4% had worked for between 11-20 years, among the teachers 40.8% had worked for a similar period of 11-20 years. Among the principals 50% had also worked for between 11-20 years. Only 8.3% had worked for between 6-10 years and also 0-5 years respectively. It was also noted that 25% of the head teachers, 10.4 % of the

teachers and 25% of the principals had worked for a period exceeding 20 years. For most of the schools only 1-10 % of the students admitted in secondary school had disability, this represented 49(90.7%) of the respondents, 5(9.03%) indicated that they admit 11-20 %. In primary school the admission rate was 24 (40%) indicated they admit 1-10 percent, 23(38.3%) admitted between 11-20% while 13(21.7%) indicated that they admit between 20-30 percents of disabled pupils.

### 3.1 Transition of Pupils with Special Needs from an Inclusive Primary School to Secondary School

#### 3.1.1 Teachers' attitude on transition of pupils with disability

The first objective of the study on the teachers' questionnaire was to establish the attitude of the teachers on transition of pupils with disability to secondary school. In order to measure the attitude of the teachers various statements on a likert scale were used. The respondents were presented in table 1.

**Table 1: Attitude of teachers on transition**

Statements		SD	D	NS	A	SA	TOTAL
The school teachers are very supportive for the pupils with special needs	Primary	0	6	3	16	35	60
	Secondary	0	15	4	16	19	54
Teachers need more time with these pupils with special needs	Primary	0	2	21	4	33	60
	Secondary	0	8	8	7	31	54
Teachers at secondary school have a lot of work and are unable to give attention to the pupils who transit from primary school	Primary	29	25	0	3	3	60
	Secondary	30	15	0	4	5	54
Teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them deal with pupils with special needs	Primary	16	24	0	0	20	60
	Secondary	18	13	0	0	23	54
Teachers in high school have limited time to assist the pupils	Primary	32	9	10	0	9	60
	Secondary	14	20	11	0	9	54

with disability							
The attitude of teachers is affected by the schools lack of facilities to assist the children with special needs	Primary	11	3	0	37	9	60
	Secondary	6	5	0	34	9	54

From the results presented in table 1, the respondents indicated that the majority of the primary school teachers 35 (64.8%) strongly agreed compared to only 6(28.6%) who disagreed with the statement that the school teachers are very supportive for the pupils with special needs. Similarly a total of 16(50%) of the primary school teachers agree while 3(42.3%) were not sure. The response from secondary school teachers on the same statement indicated that 19 (35.2%) strongly agreed while only 4 were not sure in primary school disagreed with the statement. This means that the transition of pupils with special needs to secondary schools is determined by the support the pupils receive from the teachers. On whether teachers need more time with these pupils with special needs majority of the respondents both from primary schools and secondary 33(50.8%) and 31(48.8%) respectively strongly agreed, 21(38.9%) and 7(13.0%) respectively agreed and only 2 and 8 respectively disagreed with the statement . This shows that there is need for the teachers to have more time with the special needs students so that many can be encouraged to transit.

On whether the teachers at secondary school have a lot of work and are unable to give attention to the pupils who transit from primary school hence affecting their transition. The study established that majority of the primary school teachers and secondary school teachers strongly disagreed at 29(45.3%) and 30(46.9%) respectively and 25(39.1%) and 15(23.4%) disagreed with the statement. This shows that most of the respondents disagreed that the transition of the special needs pupils can be attributed to the fact that the teachers in secondary schools have a lot of work to do and they don't have the time for the special needs pupils.

The findings of this study agree with Abagi and Odipo (1997) who noted that the learners are sometimes neglected, abused, mishandled and sent out of class during teaching-learning periods. Therefore teachers' attitudes towards their work and learners, their classroom management and the interaction with learners have great impacts on the academic achievement and the retention in

school. Meaning that if the attitude of teachers is bad towards the special needs pupils then it will scare them away and they will not transit. Similar findings were noted by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) who indicated that the attitudes of teachers towards learners with special educational needs is a key factor in determining the success or failure of transition of the pupils.

### 3.1.2 Response of teachers on their attitude towards inclusion

This study also sought the response of the teachers on their own attitude towards inclusion and whether it affects the transition from primary to secondary schools. The results were presented in table 2.

Table 2. Response of teachers on their attitude towards inclusion

Statements	Level	SD	D	NS	A	SA	TOTAL
The school teachers are very supportive for the pupils with special needs	Primary	1	3	6	15	13	38
	Secondary	0	6	1	7	2	16
Teachers need more time with these pupils with special needs	Primary	6	0	0	11	21	38
	Secondary	1	0	0	3	12	16
Teachers at secondary school have a lot of work and are unable to give attention to the pupils who transit from primary school.	Primary	14	11	2	8	3	38
	Secondary	3	9	0	1	3	16
Teachers lack the necessary skills and knowledge to assist them deal with pupils with special needs.	Primary	6	6	6	6	14	38
	Secondary	1	2	1	11	1	16
Teachers in high school have limited time to assist the pupils with disability.	Primary	11	9	3	13	2	38
	Secondary	1	1	2	12	0	16
The attitude of teachers is affected by the schools lack of facilities to assist the children with special needs	Primary	3	3		17	15	38
	Secondary	4	1	0	3	8	16

### 4.0 Findings' of the study

The response rate for the study established that all the categories of respondents had a response rate of more than 70% which was acceptable as representative of the actual sample according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003). The study considered the respondents' characteristics as they helped



to establish the differences in the responses. The results points to an important observation where the enrolment of the boys with disability seems to be higher than girls in both primary and secondary schools. It is also noted that many disabled pupils never proceed to secondary school after primary school. These findings agreed with those of Lambe and Bones (2006) who indicated that inclusion generally progresses well at the primary education level, but at secondary level serious problems emerge.

The results also indicated that physical disability cases were very common at both primary and secondary schools. There were also cases of visual disability particularly in primary schools compared to secondary school; same to hearing impairment. Generally there were more pupils with disability in primary school than in secondary school. This could be attributed to the accommodative environment in primary schools than in secondary schools. This agreed with Lindsay (2003) that more primary schools have teachers and pupils who are able to accommodate the disabled pupils than it is in secondary school. From the teachers perspective it was noted that primary school teachers were more aware of the disability case than secondary school teachers. This was because there were more cases in primary schools than secondary schools due to the fact that it was easier to have children with disability integrated in primary schools than in secondary school. It was noted that majority of the secondary school teachers were holders of a bachelors' degree with only a few from primary schools.

It was also noted that the schools have teachers who are well trained in their profession; however it was not clear whether they had trained in handling special needs pupils. From the results it is noted that majority of the respondents have worked for along time both in their profession and in their current station, this means that the respondents were well versed with the operations of the schools and they have information on transition of pupils from primary to secondary school. On the level of percentage of special needs students who report in the school. This was important in establishing whether the schools give the special needs education pupils from primary schools a chance to learn with the other students. It was noted that the level of admission of pupils with special needs in secondary school was very low in most of the schools compared to those who get enrolled in primary schools.

#### **4.1 Teachers' attitude on transition of pupils with disability**

This study sought to establish the attitude of the teachers on transition of pupils with disability to secondary school. In order to measure the attitude of the teachers various statements on a likert scale were used. The results indicated that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the school teachers are very supportive for the pupils with special needs. This means that the transition of pupils with special needs to secondary schools is determined by the support the pupils receive from their teachers. On whether teachers need more time with these pupils with special needs majority of the respondents both from primary schools and secondary strongly agreed. This shows that there is need for the teachers to have more time with the special needs students so that many can be encouraged to transit.

The study established that majority of the primary school teachers and secondary school teachers strongly disagreed with the fact that secondary school teachers have no time to attend to issue of children with disability. This study agree with Abagi and Odipo (1997) who noted that the learners are sometimes neglected, abused, mishandled and sent out of class during teaching-learning periods. Therefore teachers' attitudes towards their work and learners, their classroom management and the interaction with learners have great impacts on the academic achievement and the retention in school. Meaning that if the attitude of teachers is bad towards the special needs pupils then it will scare them away and they will not transit. Similar findings were noted by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) who indicated that the attitudes of teachers towards learners with special educational needs is a key factor in determining the success or failure of transition of the pupils.

It was also established that the disabled pupils received a lot of support from their fellow pupils in primary schools compared to secondary schools. Meaning that there was little support given to the disabled students and this could be a factor that discourages a lot of the disabled pupils from primary school joining secondary school. This study agrees with the findings of Benz (1998), Yelin and Katz (1994) on the low number of learners with disability joining post primary education and seeks to find out what is the transition of learners with special needs from primary to secondary and what factors affect the transition, which has the future effect to post secondary and even in the work place.

## **5.0 Conclusions**

From the findings of the study it can be concluded that transition of pupils with disability from primary to secondary schools is influenced by various factors including the teachers' attitude, school environment, social cultural factors and the pupil's attitude. It was noted that in secondary schools the attitude of the teachers was not favorable for the transition process of the disabled pupils and that is why many of them dropped off at standard eight. Most of the disabled pupils preferred not to join secondary schools for fear of the unknown. It is therefore noted that most of the pupils received a lot of support at primary schools which was not evident at secondary schools and this was a challenge to the transition process.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, this study recommends that;

The teachers in secondary schools should have training on management of inclusive classrooms. It was noted from the findings that the primary school teachers were able to cope with the cases of disability and they gave the necessary support to the pupils because they have knowledge and skills on special needs education. This study therefore recommends that the secondary school teachers should also be taught on the same.

It also recommended that parents of pupils with disability should be sensitized to accept the reality with the pupils and encourage them to move to the next level just like the other children. This will help the pupils to accept themselves and compete effectively with the others. Therefore there should be a joined initiative from the teachers, the government and other parents to encourage those with disabled children to take them to school.

Lastly, it is important to have a policy addressing the plight of the disabled pupils and the transition process. Since there seems to be a gap in the policy.

## **7.0 Areas for further study**

Based on the conclusions and the recommendations of the study, it is important to note that not all issues have been exhausted in this study, there is therefore need to have a further study to consider

the skills of the secondary school teachers who seemed not to have any training on handling the cases of disabilities in their schools.

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