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## **E2012-17: Education as a Tool for Enhancing Social Adjustment for Students with Mental Retardation**

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### **Abstract**

Mental retardation is a condition characterized by a combination of deficits in both cognitive functioning and adaptive behavior. The severity of mental retardation is determined by the discrepancy between the individual's capabilities in learning and the expectations of the social environment. While the term mental retardation is widely used in special education, many advocacy groups feel that this label has a negative connotation. The newer label of intellectual disability is becoming more accepted and prevalent within the field of Special education. Special education for learners with mental retardation is an educational program designed to meet the unique needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Traditionally there has been an overemphasis in providing support for learners with mental retardation at the expense of providing individualized instruction to help the students access a challenging and interesting general curriculum. Holding students with disabilities, including those with Mental retardation to the same high expectations as all students, leads to an improvement in the learning and educational outcomes of these students (McGrew & Evans, 2004). This study was designed to investigate how the educational needs for students with mental retardation were met at the Meru school for the Mentally challenged and in particular paid attention to factors other than direct instruction that influenced the education of learners with Mental retardation, teacher's role as a promoter of advocacy and the instructional resources available in the school. The study used a descriptive survey design. Data was collected from 17 teachers and 20 parents were interviewed over the telephone. 80% of the teachers reported that there is a tendency to emphasize traditional instruction and cited challenges such as lack of instructional materials and the severity of mental retardation as the major contributors. The findings may be useful to the planners, policy makers and teacher educators of learners with mental retardation. The study recommends a paradigm shift from education for support to education for development and social adjustment. Exposure to a challenging curriculum will lead to improved learning and educational outcomes for these learners.

### **Introduction**

Mental retardation is a condition of substantial limitations in intellectual functioning that impact on performance in school and daily life. Learners with mental retardation vary depending on the degree of limitations and also on the services and support received. Most people with mental retardation are capable of achieving self sufficiency with proper instruction. Initially, learners with mental retardation suffered greatly prior to the introduction of special education. In the 1800s to the 1960s there was widespread building of institutions to house individuals with mental retardation. During this period individuals with low intelligence were sterilized under the assumption that the population would be improved (Luckasson, 1992). When education for all the handicapped children

act was passed by 1975, and special education was required some students with mild mental retardation attended school. Those with severe mental retardation remained at home. The numbers of students with mental retardation however declined substantially because of the stigma in the label mental retardation. The primary goal of education for this group is to increase self sufficiency by teaching functional academics and other skills needed in everyday life in the community ,workplace and in leisure.

Although the label mental retardation brings services, it also brings stigma and low expectations. This was evidenced by a reduction in students labeled as mentally retarded with a corresponding increase in those with learning disabilities from the 1970s to the 1990s(Kirk,2003).Special Needs Education advocates for learning in the least restrictive environment with appropriate services and support. Educators need to understand better how to teach these students and equip them for transition to adult life.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Special education for learners with mental retardation is an educational programme designed to meet the unique needs of learners with intellectual disabilities. Traditionally however there has been an overemphasis in providing support for learners with mental retardation at the expense of providing individualized instruction to help the students access a challenging and interesting general curriculum which may lead to an improvement in their learning and educational outcomes .The study was therefore carried out to investigate how the educational needs of these students were met.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to investigate how the educational needs for students with mental retardation are met. It was aimed at establishing factors other than direct instruction that influenced the education of learners with mental retardation, the role of the teacher and the instructional resources available.

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To determine other factors other than direct instruction that influence education for learners with mental retardation
2. To establish the role of the teacher as a promoter of advocacy for learners with mental retardation
3. To find out the instructional resources available for learners with mental retardation.
4. To recommend teaching strategies for learners with mental retardation

### **Methodology**

The study used a descriptive survey method. Notably surveys are the most common forms of research involving asking large numbers of people questions about particular issues; and are useful in describing exactly what the situation is (parkash, 2009).

The survey design was preferred for this study as it enabled the researcher to reach all the teachers within a very short time using the same questionnaire. Telephone interview was used for the parents since it was the most convenient way that enabled the researcher to get important information. The target population was all the mentally retarded learners in Meru School for the mentally challenged.

### **Data collection instruments**

Questionnaires are the heart of survey researches (orodho, 2005).a researcher designed questionnaire was used to collect information from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two sections A and B sections elicited background information while section B of the questionnaire mainly focused on questions that elicited information on factors other than direct instruction such as memory,generalization,interpersonal skills, personal life skills, sexuality among others that affected learning, availability of instructional resources like assistive technology and the role of the teacher in promoting advocacy and establishment of a positive and productive learning environment.

**Procedure for data collection and analysis**

The questionnaires were distributed to the teachers and seventeen (17) teachers responded. Learners could not participate in the study due to such problems as incoherent speech among others. The parents who were purposively sampled were interviewed over the telephone. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data. Frequency counts and a percentage were used and the results of the findings discussed.

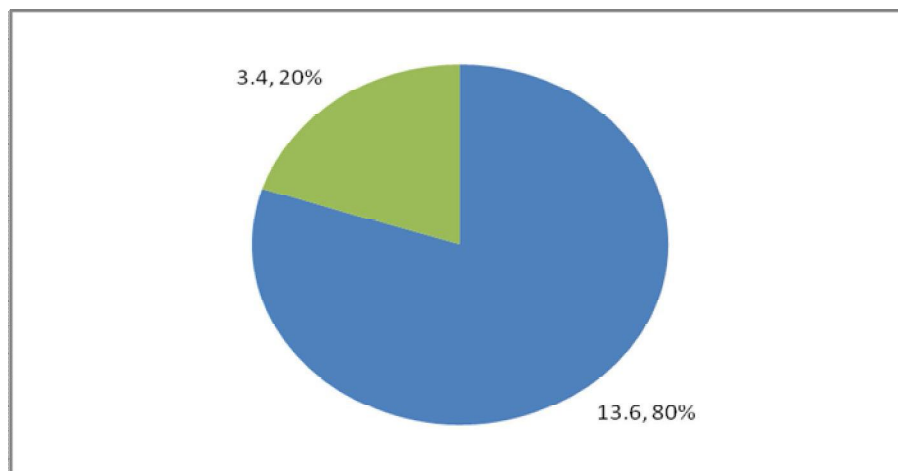
**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The following table shows the level of qualification of the teachers handling learners with mental retardation in the school.

**Table 1: Level of qualification of the teachers**

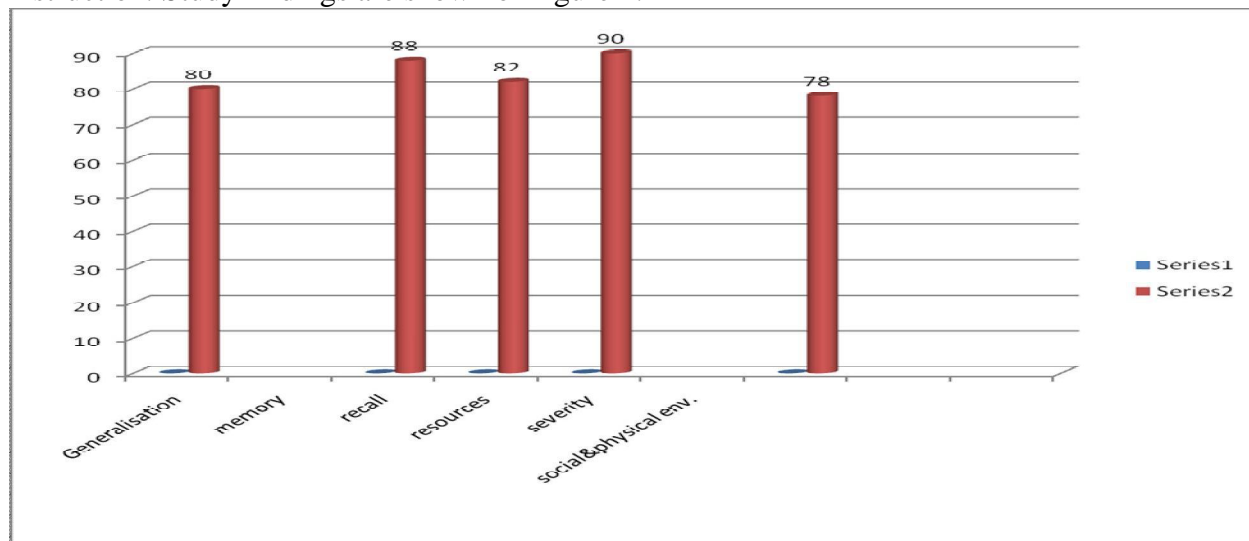
<b>LEVEL OF TRAINING</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
<b>Diploma in SNE</b>	17	100
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>100</b>

Study findings revealed that all the teachers (100%) had training in Special Needs Education. The teachers had the skills and knowledge on how to teach these learners and equip them with skills for social adjustment in order to be useful members of the society. Regarding education for support and education for social adjustment and development the teachers gave the following responses. Figure 1 shows the teachers’ responses.



**Figure 1: Teachers' response on education for support or education for development**

80% of the teachers reported that education for learners with mental retardation is mainly for support while 20% reported that education was for social adjustment and development. According to the teachers, learning for children with mental retardation is hampered by other factors other than direct instruction .the study sought to find out how the teachers rated these factors that hamper instruction. Study findings are shown on figure 2.



**Figure2: Factors other than direct instruction affecting learning for the MR**

Figure 2 shows the rating of the teachers of the other factors affecting the education for learners with mental retardation.90% Of the teachers said that the severity of the mental retardation greatly affected the rate at which the learner learnt. Individuals with mental retardation differed in the range of severity of the mental handicap. The educable mentally retarded have an ability to master numeracy and literacy skills as well as adjust well to the community setting and become economically useful. The moderately mentally retarded have the ability to acquire some literacy and numeracy skills as well as adjust to the home. They can also muster some economic usefulness. However the severely mentally retarded are only able to master activities of daily living like eating, toileting and dressing. In cases where the mental retardation is so severe, the child requires twenty-four hour surveillance as they may not be able to master activities of daily living.

88% of the teachers reported that most of the learners had problems with memory while 82% reported that the learners had problems with recalling. Recall is when a learner is required to reproduce material learnt earlier. Learners with mental retardation are unable to reproduce learnt material even with external cues. According to Thungu(2008) Memory is the mental capacity to store and later recall or recognize events that were earlier experienced. Teachers reported that learners had problems remembering earlier events.

82% of the teachers reported that learning resources were available and that they were mostly provided through donations. These included toys, balloons to enhance speech, blocks for pre-number activities, beads to make necklace for eye-hand coordination, skipping ropes for eye-hand coordination and books .play is very important for this category of learners. The study established that there were swings, slides and balances to stimulate physical growth. The study further established that there were chairs for toilet training provided in the classrooms.

78% of the teachers reported that the physical and social environment was conducive for the learners. There was in place a perimeter wall and security in and out of school was tight with a

watchman at the gate throughout. There were cleaners to keep the environment clean and in the classes to support learners who had not mastered toileting.

### **Role of the teachers in advocacy**

Teachers promoted advocacy by offering guidance and counseling to parents in order to empower them to become advocates for their children. Counseling was done both for adjustment and for information. Adjustment counseling helped the parents to accept the child with the mental retardation while information counseling helped the parents to access any information that could be helpful to their children. Teachers also promoted advocacy through advocating for the children's families and for educational change. Teachers responded promptly in cases of neglect, physical and or sexual abuse. Although the school environment was safe, teachers reported that some children were sexually or physically abused during school holidays in which case they called parents and talked to them.

### **Recommendations**

Arising from the discussions above, this study recommends a shift from the traditional education for the mentally retarded for support to education for social adjustment and development by ensuring the following:

Learners with disabilities have a variety of different needs. The instructions of children with mental retardation require certain enhancement strategies. The severity of the mental retardation, and the individual personality traits come into play when discovering the best way to teach a child.

Learners with mental retardation need content that is broken down into simple and easier to manage steps. This serves to keep the frustration levels down as well as enabling learning to take place. Providing concrete learning experiences for these learners helps them to understand new ideas in a physical hands-on approach. The hands-on experience may include such aspects like providing manipulative when teaching maths, taking field trips for instance to the grocery store or to the post office for a meaningful experience for the mentally retarded learners. Immediate and positive feedback encourages the learner to keep on trying. Teachers need to constantly reward or applaud a learner immediately if he/she masters a concept or meets a goal.

Music for learners with mental retardation is a wonderful motivator. Teaching a simple catchy song to go along with a concept is a fun way to engage the learners and to help them remember the information.

### **Conclusions**

Education for learners with special needs is an important programme that ensures children with special needs exploit their potential to the fullest. Every possible mechanism should be put in place to ensure that these learners are not just kept in schools for support services but rather adaptations should be put in place to ensure that they learn and become useful members of the society.

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### **E2012-18: Cross-Border Cooperation in East Africa: Building Capacity among University Academic Staff**

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#### **Abstract**

Cross-border cooperation in East Africa dates back during colonial time and soon after member countries attain its independence in 1960's, new Permanent Tripartite Commission formed in 1967 but collapsed in 1977, due to political differences, consequently, East Africa Community (EAC) revived in 1999, currently, with five member states and possibility of new members to come on board, despite the bloc's members educational opportunities, intra-regional staff/research exchange in East Africa still reflects a dominant North-South global staff/research exchange. The creation of EAC renewed interest and possibility of regional capacity building cooperation, as a tool to its economic development. This paper investigates on how EAC's universities can utilize training and research opportunities available within the region to build their universities academic staff capacities. Enhanced academic staff capacity will provide the region and universities in particular with a pool of well trained experts for effective participation in teaching, research and community services which will enable universities to meaningfully achieve its core functions and regional economic development as a whole. This study recommends creation of centres of excellence within the region to enable academic staff and students to share research findings and best practices in different academic disciplines.

Key words: *Cross border, higher education, academic staff, universities, capacity building*

### **E2012-19: Barriers to Sexual and Reproductive Health Education on Students Sexual Behaviour in Secondary Schools in Lugari District Kenya**