EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT SERVICE FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL

NEEDS IN REGULAR PRIMARY SCHOOLS; OPPORTUNITIES AND

CHALLENGES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS IN UGUNJA

SUB- COUNTY, SIAYA COUNTY, KENYA

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own original work and not a publication or a duplication of similarly published work of any scholar for academic purpose and has not been submitted to any other institution of higher learning for the award of certificate or degree in Special Needs Education.

I further declare that, all materials cited in this thesis which are not my own have been duly acknowledged.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my wife Agnes Adhiambo, my daughter Mrs. Prisca Atieno Shivina, my sons Victor, Brian and Rowel, my sister Millicent Achieng and my son in law Meshack Shivina. I really appreciate them for their love and support they gave me during the whole period that I had been writing this thesis.

ABSTRACT

Assessment in special education is an important ingredient in the entire process of education. Unfortunately, records in Ugunja Sub County education office indicated that from the year 2012-2014 there were 227 learners with special needs admitted in regular primary schools without receiving assessment. Records from Educational Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) showed that only 39 learners with special needs out of 227 had been assessed. While in the five neighbouring sub counties there were 719 out of 932 learners with special needs assessed before being admitted in schools. The purpose of the study was to establish opportunities and challenges of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in regular primary schools; opportunities and challenges in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub-county. Objectives of the study were to: ascertain availability of educational assessment for learners with special needs, determine challenges teachers face when teaching learners with special needs admitted in regular schools, determine parents' awareness about assessment services and determine teachers' awareness of policy guidelines on assessment. A conceptual framework showing availability of educational assessment as independent variable and opportunities and challenges as dependent variable guided the study. The research adopted descriptive survey design. The study population was 275 comprising 120 teachers, 1 Educational Assessment and Resource services officer and 154 parents. Purposive sampling technique was used to select 60 teachers and 46 parents, and saturated sampling technique was used to select 1 EARC officer. Data was collected using questionnaires and interview schedules. Face validity of the instruments was ascertained by experts. A pilot study using test re-test method was carried out in four schools which were not part of the sampled schools to establish the reliability of the research instruments. Reliability coefficient for teacher questionnaire was 0.86. This was above the accepted value of 0.7. Quantitative data was analyzed by use of frequency counts, percentages and means. Qualitative data was organized and analyzed by transcribing the interviews into themes and sub themes in line with the objectives. Findings of the study indicated that educational assessment service is rarely available as the overall mean was 2.18. This implied that learners with special needs in regular primary schools are rarely assessed before admission in school. The findings of the study revealed that teachers encounter challenges in teaching learners with special needs as the mean rating was 4.35. The interview schedule held with the parents revealed that parents were unaware of the educational assessment of learners with special as reported by 42 (91.30%) out of the 46 parents. The findings of the study revealed that teachers' awareness on policy guidelines was below average as the mean rating was 1.65. The study results may benefit: policy makers in improvement of educational assessment for learners with special needs; Board of Management for planning and decision making on admission of learners with special needs; Parents for identification, early intervention and importance of assessment before placement The study recommendations: the government through the ministry of education should ensure availability of qualified personnel for each disability; creating awareness on Inclusive Education. Strengthen policies on inclusive education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACRONYMS

ACARA — Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority

DASC — Diagnostic Assessment and Support Centre

EARC — Educational Assessment and Resource Centre

EARS — Educational Assessment and Resource Services

EFA — Education for All

ESEA — Elementary and Secondary Education Act

FDSE — Free Day Secondary Education

FPE — Free Primary Education

Gok —Government of Kenya

IAP — Individualized Assessment Plan

IEP — Individualized Education Plan

IDEA — Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

KIE —Kenya Institute of Education

LRE —Least Restrictive Environment

MINEDUC — Ministry of Education

MOE — Ministry of Education

MOEST — Ministry of Education Science and Technology

MUERC — Maseno University Ethics Review Committee

NCLB — No Child Left Behind

NESP — National Education Sector Plan

UNESCO — United Nations Educational Scientific & Cultural Organization

U.S — United States

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

Assessment in special education is an important ingredient in the entire process of education as it is the systematic process of gathering relevant educational information for legal and instructional purposes (McLoughlin & Lewis 2008). An appropriate assessment ensures that students with special needs are appropriately placed in programs that address their unique needs. Assessment is conducted when a student experiences difficulty in meeting the academic demands of the general education program and referred for consideration for special education services (Hernandez, 2013). While the Kenyan government has set up assessment centers in every county throughout the country, the question of opportunities and challenges of assessment of learners with special needs has not been addressed. The availability of outreach assessment does not sufficiently reach and assess the strengths and weakness of individuals, before being placed in an educational program (Mukuria & Korir, 2006). It is erroneous to assume that all children come from similar backgrounds without considering unique needs (Obiakor & Mukuria, 2006).

Accurate assessment is an important starting point for better understanding and anticipation of needs of children with disabilities and their families. Assessment goals are to obtain accurate information about a child in order to assist parents, health-care providers and teachers to better understand, plan for and support the development of the child. Assessment should be linked to intervention and should be an ongoing process of systematic observation and analysis (UNICEF, 2013). The Kenya government has established Educational

Assessment and Resource Services (EARS) whose primary objective is to assess and plan for early intervention services.

Proper assessment tools and trained personnel, early identification and placement are nonexistent in many countries. Consequently, many students with disabilities are misidentified, mis-categorized, misplaced and mis-educated (Obiakor & Mukuria, 2006). For a student's educational needs to be addressed, he/she must be placed in an educational program that would enable him or her maximize his or her potential. According to the Students With a Disability Meeting Their Educational Needs policy (ACT Education & Training, 2008), ACT schools are required to make reasonable adjustments for students with disability at the time of enrolment and during the course of their education, ensuring they have the support they need to successfully access and participate in the school curriculum, programs and activities in the company of their same-age peers". Students are provided for in a variety of settings, including regular classrooms, early intervention centres, learning support units, and specialist schools. All students are eligible to access their local school (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2013). The above studies and the current study are comparable as both focused on assessment procedures. They differ in that the previous study had not specified the level while the current study was in regular primary schools.

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Although it is difficult to locate specific information on students with disability in the senior secondary area, general information indicates there are opportunities for students to access a range of pathways including further education opportunities and vocational educational training (ACT Education & Training Directorate, 2010). The above study was carried out in

senior secondary school while the current was done in regular primary schools. Both studies were conducted on disability.

Procedural practices in the United States require that before a student is placed in any special education program, there are a series of salient steps that are followed. The first step is identification and referral. According to McLoughlin and Lewis (2009) referrals are initiated when the parent, the teacher or other professionals complete a referral form which describes the nature of the problems the child is having and the duration of the problem. In the U.S, this problem has not been without fault. Research has shown that when identification and referral are poorly and prejudicially administered, the other process of assessment, categorization and instruction usually yield poor or prejudicial results (Obiakor & Mukuria, 2006). The above studies and the current study both on prejudicial assessment. The difference was that the current study was on learners with disabilities admitted without being assessed.

Two U.S. Federal education laws, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) recently called the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA 2004), have had a major impact on instruction, as well as on the assessment, identification, and eligibility of students suspected of having learning disabilities. The main goal of IDEA 2004 was to align special education law more closely with ESEA, the general education law, so that the two could work together. ESEA provides for a group entitlement (i.e., providing programming regulations for all learners), while IDEA is an entitlement for states to provide individual students who are found eligible with special education and related services. ESEA recognizes the importance of aligning

curriculum and assessment at the state and school levels by requiring that all students, including those with learning disabilities, participate in both the general education curriculum and statewide achievement tests, although some flexibility is permitted through alternate and modified assessment procedures for students with disabilities. Because of this More students with learning disabilities are receiving their education in general education settings, a majority now participate in the standards-based curriculum and statewide achievement tests (U. S. Department of Education, 2009).

Teachers in regular primary schools do not feel that they are prepared or competent to teach both regular learners and learners with special educational needs. The main reason is that they did not have sufficient training to deal with these inclusive educational activities (Hargreaves & Fullan (2012). "While Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) and its amendments have enabled students with disabilities to be more included, general classroom teachers still sometimes feel inadequately prepared to successfully meet the needs of diverse students in the classroom" (Fuchs, 2010). There are many mainstream teachers who believe that children considered "different" are not their responsibility, idea which revealed the fact that there are many schools where the medical pathological model still dominates the educational activity (Angelides, Stylianou, Gibbs, 2006). Another factor which has a great influence on teachers' attitudes is the previous experience with children with special educational needs. A large number of teachers believe that the successful inclusion of learners with special needs in regular classes should be based on a review of the curriculum and of the teaching strategies used in classes with children with special educational needs (Wilkins, 2008). The above studies cited insufficient training and teachers attitudes towards

learners with special needs in regular classes whereas the current study focused on challenges teachers encounter when teaching learners who have not been assessed.

In China, a diagnostic team of doctors and school psychologists, special educators and school administrators do the assessment and placement, and make decisions for placement of learners with special needs. Family situations and parental opinions are also considered (Kavale & Carlberg, 2004). In the United Kingdom, the Education Act No 1981 stipulates that a parent or a guardian of the child who has a disability must give consent for a child to be referred for assessment (Moores, 2010). The permission is granted in writing and parents are involved in the assessment and placement process. The above studies' similarity to the current study was on multi-disciplinary team role on assessment. The current study differed with the previous study in that it addressed learners admitted in school without assessment.

In India, Seligman and Darling, (2007) observed that, parents play a dual role in the life of child with disability. One as duty bearers to make provisions for their child's growth and development and the other as advocates seeking from the rest of the duty bearers (i.e. institutions, NGOs and the government at the local, state and central level) services and provisions required by their children with disability, both as other children and the special requirements on account of their disabilities to bring them at par with children without disabilities. Families are empowered to participate in their children's education, and communities surrounding the school embrace the principles of inclusion among their citizens. This is apparent in the impetus of reinforcements of PTAs in basic education decision making committees, in which the local communities and families have a key role to play in increasing their local school capacities (MINEDUC, 2010). When parents are told about their child's disability or when they gain new and unexpected information at a later

time (for example a pre-scholar begins to experience mild seizures), they may want repeated opportunities to speak with a professional to discuss the meaning or implications of this information. The parent will find the services of a Counsellor very crucial at this time (Pierpangelo & Giuliiani, 2008). Thus the research intended to assess parents' awareness on assessment, entitlements of children with disabilities; the specific rights that children with disabilities have been able to access or not access; explore the initiatives that parents may have taken to secure some of these rights; and finally design strategies to promote human rights awareness among parents.

In South Africa, Simon (2010) confirmed that the education system today has not yet addressed the needs of learners who are exceptional due to the fact that educators are not trained to deal with them. Moreover, learners do not receive enough support to enable them access education. Many educators feel that these learners belong to special schools and feel helpless when dealing with children presenting such diversity. The educators reckon that staffing in Zambia is faced with lack of qualified teachers putting its basic education at risk. They also assert that of the total number of teachers in Zambia only 24% have proper pedagogical training. In the North Western province 39% of the totals of basic school teachers in 1996 were untrained. They revealed that the biggest proportion of teachers in Mufumbwe which was 33% of the sampled school teachers without qualification. Following the results of the survey carried out in 2010 by the MINEDUC it was evident that, teachers teaching in special and inclusive schools, had inadequate training in special needs education, most of the time they used trial and error method in trying to assist learners with special needs who are included in their schools. In some schools, some learning resources for learners with visual impairments were scarce. The above studies had similarities with the

current study as both focused on teachers not well equipped in handling learners with special needs. They differ with the current study on opportunities and challenges of educational assessment.

The Ministry of Education in Tanzania is sensitizing parents to send their children with disabilities to inclusive schools. The government is becoming more positive towards the rights of people with disabilities. Today, there are several primary schools in Tanzania that are involved in inclusive education programmes (Massenga & Mkandawire, 2007). However, all the teachers met testified that, because they were obliged to stick to the traditional program and methods of work, they had no room to attend to the needs of learners with severe SEN. This challenge is coupled with other challenges they shared with those in special schools and centres, which is inadequate skills, resources, budget, information and unsupportive infrastructure and culture (Ministry of Education Research 2010). Research done by Fraser and Magunda (2008) shows that the context in which the learning occurs; inflexible curriculum and inappropriate assessment procedures, are some of the factors leading to ineffective learning among students with visual impairment. Furthermore, having such learners requires that learning environment should be different from the ordinary learning environment, because the classroom contains students with different learning needs and abilities (Simon *et al,* 2010). The above studies and the current study encompassed teacher challenges in teaching learners with special needs. The current differed as included all learners with special needs without categorization. The study by (Fraser and Magunda, 2008) was specifically on visual impairment.

The current Kenyan economy limits the availability of funds for research and development of the assessment tools that are culturally-relevant which can be used to assess learners from diverse cultures (Mukuria & Korir, 2006). While Kenya has put in place institutions (such as schools, teacher training and special units) geared towards providing services to individuals with disabilities, it has not reached the point of utilizing the entire process of assessment that includes identification and referral, categorization, procedural safeguards and individualized plans (Algozzine, *et al*, 2010). The challenges that exist include but are not limited to the following, assessment, identification and referral process, categorization, placement of Individuals with disabilities.

Quite often, a child who is born with a disability or becomes disabled after birth is culturally or religiously assumed to be a result of a curse, 'bad blood', an incestuous relationship, a sin committed in an incarnation or a sin committed by the child's parents or other family members (UN, 2005). The families that hold such beliefs will most probably prefer spiritualism and witchcraft to resolve disability issues over presentation of the child to the EARC for assessment. At the same time, lack of immunization, poor nutrition and hiding of children with disabilities in many communities aggravates the situation.

In Kenya, the Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARC) were established in 1984 to ensure early identification, assessment, intervention and placement of learners and trainees with disabilities. Assessment and early intervention in Kenya are faced with constraints. Most of the EARCs are poorly resourced and lack the capacity to conduct functional assessment. The national survey conducted in 2017 (KISE, 2018) established that

nearly a third of the county EARCs have only one officer, making it impossible to carry out all the functions of the centre. Besides, the assessors posted to the EARCs are inadequately trained in functional assessment or lack necessary facilities and equipment to assess learners and trainees with disabilities. Lack of expertise and formal structures hamper performance of the multidisciplinary team. In some counties, the MoH and county government do not formally work with the EARCs. For instance, nutritionists and speech therapists are involved in only 15 per cent of the county EARCs (KISE, 2018). Though KICD reviewed the functional assessment tool and availed it to all EARCs in 2011, the EARCs were not trained on the use of the tool thus hindering its effective utilization

The Persons with Disability Act which was passed by Parliament in 2003 and came into force in 2004, is the national law relating to persons with disability in Kenya. It recognizes that persons with disability face discrimination in various forms and that the government shall take steps to the maximum of its resources to achieve the realization of the rights of persons with disability as set out in the Act. Persons with disabilities Act (2003) article 18 states that no person or a learning institution shall deny admission to a person with disability and learning institutions shall take into account special needs of PWDs.

Education Act (2013) Article 44 (4) states that the cabinet secretary will ensure that every special school or educational institution with learners with special needs is provided with appropriate trained teacher, non-teaching staff, infrastructure, learning materials and equipment suitable for learners with disability. Article 46 (1) cites the duty of county education Boards in consultation with relevant county government to provide for Education Assessment and Resource Centers (EARC's) including a special needs service clinics to:

study of children with special education needs, giving advice to parents and teachers on appropriate methods of education and giving advice to county education boards regarding assessment of the needs of any child.

County governments are tasked with providing for Education Assessment and Resource Centres (EARCs) according to Article 46 (1) of the Basic Education Act (2013). The role of EARCs is to offer early identification, assessment, intervention and placement in educational services of children with special needs. This is significant because identifying the special educational need of a child is critical to facilitating provision of relevant support to enable the child participate fully in quality learning in an inclusive setting.

Moreover, early identification of a disability is likely to arrest its deterioration. Retention and transition rates of learners with disabilities was a key concern among stakeholders. The overall goal of the SNE policy of 2009 is to enhance access, transition rates and retention of learners with special needs in formal learning institutions.

The National Education Sector Plan (NESP, 2013-2018) was developed in Kenya to address critical issues related to education for learners and trainees with Disabilities. The policy states that it will: develop and review the standard procedures and guidelines for functional assessment, strengthen identification, assessment and early intervention and placement of learners and trainees with disabilities, Establish and operationalize Education Assessment and Resource Centre (EARC) structures at the national, county and sub-county levels. Provide adequate human resource with requisite functional assessment skills. Develop and implement continuous professional development programmes for functional assessment staff. Provide adequate and relevant assessment equipment and facilities. Strengthen data

collection, documentation, monitoring and evaluation within EARC processes for both institution based and home-based education programmes, strengthen tracking and follow up modalities for learners and trainees with disabilities. Establish multidisciplinary assessment team for every EARC.

Parents and the community are primary in the process of identification. They have first contact with the child at birth and closely relate with the child during the early development processes. Development partners and other actors in the education sector play a major role in facilitating early identification, assessment and placement of learners and trainees with disabilities. The misconceptions about causes of disability hinder parents from taking their children for assessment. Most parents in Kenya lack the skills of early identification of disabilities for their children unless the disability is visible or when developmental milestones delay. The best practice to early identification is the use of a multidisciplinary team that comprises: Physiotherapists, Occupational therapists Psychologists, Nutritionists, Social workers, SNE educators with specializations to cater for various disabilities and Medical practitioners with specialization in different and relevant fields, (NESP, 2013-2018)

There is lack of an integrated data management system for early identification, assessment and placement. For instance, the slow relay of data on the assessed children and adults and where they are placed makes it impossible to align available resources. The school admission policies do not require assessment, and hence lack support for this process. For instance, around a half of the learners in integrated units and nearly a fifth of those in special schools in the country were not assessed prior to admission (KISE, 2018). The above report concurs with the current study as it looked it at admission policies of learners with special

needs in schools. The variance between the two is that the previous study looked at integrated units while the current focused on regular primary schools.

In 2003, it was reported by The Taskforce for Special Needs Education Appraisal Exercises that most of the EARCs" personnel were not adequately trained on assessment, and that most of the Educational Assessment Resource Centres lacked critical assessment equipment and tools. Additionally, the Ministry of Education (MoE) National Special Education Policy Framework Draft (2009) revealed that there was inadequate skilled labour for the assessment for placement decision of learners with special needs education (SNE). In Ugunja Sub-County where the research was carried out, unpublished report indicated that from the year 2012- 2014, 188 out of 227 learners with special needs were admitted in educational programmes without being assessed. In the neighbouring five sub counties of Bondo, Ugenya, Gem, Siaya and Rarieda, where assessment are available 719 out of 932 learners with special needs got placement in educational programme only after being assessed. The entire process of assessment is inadequate which limits the opportunities of learners with special needs in the whole process of participating in school activities. This necessitated the need to conduct the current study in the sub county.

Table 1: Statistics on Number Unassessed and Assessed Learners with Special Needs in Regular Primary Schools in Sub Counties in Siaya County between: 2012- 2014

Sub Counties	Total No of LWSN in regular pri. schools	Learners (%) Assessed	LWSN Not Assessed (%)
Alego Usonga	245	207(84.5)%	38(15.5)%
Bondo	226	172(76.1)	54(23.9)
Gem	162	102(63.0)	60(37.0)
Rarieda	184	122(66.3)	62(33.7)
Ugenya	186	116(62.4)	70(37.6)
Ugunja	227	39 (17.2)	188(82.8)
Total	**1230**	**758**	**472**

Source: **Ugunja Sub-County Education office and EARC Office**

1.2 Statement of the problem

Educational Assessment procedures and services are the cornerstones of successful classroom instructions for learners with special needs and disabilities. Lack of assessment procedures denies the child the right to benefit from the appropriate special program and also denies the teachers and parents' opportunity to address individual educational needs. The Persons with Disabilities Act states that special needs of persons with disabilities shall be put into consideration in all learning institutions and also be given provision of auxiliary services to facilitate learning process for these persons. Inadequacy of assessment procedures makes the child with special needs and disability to struggle with curriculum hence leading to academic frustration. However in Ugunja Sub- County educational assessment procedures and services for learner with special needs are inadequate as there are 188 out of 227 learners with special needs admitted in regular primary between 2012-2014

without receiving assessment as compared to 719 learners out of 932 in the neighbouring five sub counties of Bondo, Ugenya, Gem, Siaya and Rarieda who were admitted in educational programmes only after being assessed. Hence, the inadequacy impedes opportunities for learning of learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub- County. It is therefore important to address assessment procedures and service that highlight a child's potential in order to design intervention and make recommendations that guide teachers and parents on how to make a child learn and how to make a child participate in a diverse group. Therefore, the study intended to establish availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in regular primary schools; opportunities and challenges for teachers and parents in Ugunja Sub- County, Kenya

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The Purpose of the study was to establish opportunities and challenges of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub-County.

1.3.1 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

i. To determine the availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub- county

ii. To determine challenges teachers encounter when teaching unassessed learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub County.

iii. To determine parents' awareness on assessment services of learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub - County.

iv. To determine teachers' awareness of policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub- County.

1.3.2 Research Questions

The following were the questions to the research study:

i. What is the availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in regular primary schools?

ii. What challenges do teachers encounter when teaching unassessed learners with special needs in regular primary schools?

iii. What is the parents' awareness about assessment of learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub-County?

iv. What is the teachers' awareness of policy guidelines on assessment for learners with special needs?

1.4 Scope of the Study

The study focused on regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub- County, Siaya County, Kenya. It addressed availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in lower and upper primary standard three to seven, teachers, parents and educational assessment staff and this enabled the researcher to establish availability of assessment service for learners with special needs; opportunities and challenges for teachers and parents in Ugunja Sub-County.

1.5 Limitations of the Study

 Limitations of a study are hurdles a researcher encounters and which he has no control over Kombo (2006). The questionnaires had floor and ceiling effects, however this limitation was managed by using interview schedule for the respondents.

Phenomenological studies are highly dependent on the goodwill of the participants as to how much information they are prepared to share. Due to sensitivity of the educational assessment of learners with special needs it was difficult for some participants to be open and honest to share the challenges they face with learners with special needs, however due to this limitation the researcher assured the respondents of confidentiality and that their identity will not appear anywhere and information provided would be purely used for the current research.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The study was based on the following assumptions:

Learners with special needs were placed in an educational programme after educational assessment services done.

There is assessment service for learners with special needs in each sub- county.

Teachers have the knowledge of identifying learners with special needs even without assessment record from EARC.

Teachers in schools make parents aware of assessment procedures for learners with special needs

Teachers in schools face challenges when teaching learners special needs

1.7 Significance   of   the Study

The findings of the study may be used by Board of Management for proper planning and decision making regarding admission of learners with special needs.

The ministry of education, planning section may use the findings of the study in improvement of policy making.

The findings will provide data on learners admitted in regular primary schools without assessment and form basis for further research in a similar area.

The information gathered from this study may provide a basis for making recommendations on staffing of EARC with qualified personnel able to assess each category of disability.

The findings of the study may create awareness on parents to identification of disability and early intervention

1.8 Conceptual Framework

Educational assessment service for learners with special needs

Independent Variable (IV)

Dependent Variable (DV)

Opportunities
- Access to school
- Inclusive education
- Policy
- Parental involvement

Challenges
- Insufficient Educational Assessment Programme
- Inadequate trained personnel
- Unsupportive environment & curriculum
- Inadequate networking

Availability of Educational assessment services

- Negative attitudes & stereotypes
- Inadequate funding
- Inaccessible services
- Physical inaccessibility
- Accommodation process
- Cultural beliefs

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework adopted from O'Connor et al.

O'Connor et al. have developed a framework that provides an approach for considering the needs of children and young people with disability at school, and purposefully considers functional abilities over diagnostic categories. This framework was informed by the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). The ICF was adopted by the World Health Organisation as a means of assessing health and health-related states, and was considered a landmark in acknowledging that disability is multidimensional and manifests in different levels of human functioning, including impairments, performance limitations, and the experience of disadvantage. The framework also distinguishes between the nature of the conditions and the impacts of the presence of the condition for an individual and family. In doing so, it acknowledges the role of the environment in defining human functioning.

This conceptual framework is illustrated in Figure 1 and highlights the complexity of the relationship between AHDN and school functioning, suggesting that there may be multiple opportunities for positive interventions to support these students. AHDN can impact on four interrelated domains of a child or young person's functioning at school body functions and structures (e.g. intellectual capacities), activities of daily living (e.g. ability to manage self-care skills such as toileting independently), social participation (e.g. interactions between the child or young person and their peers), and educational participation (e.g. school attendance). These domains are overlapping and interrelated. For example, factors that arise in relation to bodily function, such as neurological changes impacting cognitive functioning, will be closely related to a child or young person's educational participation, such as their capacity to access the mainstream curriculum.

The framework further proposes that these dimensions of children and young people's functioning are influenced by risk and protective factors at the personal and environmental level, aligning with current understandings of disability and supported by the empirical literature. This includes factors at the individual level (e.g. perceptions of self as a poor learner may operate as a risk factor, whereas positive attitudes towards school can be protective), at the family level (e.g. socioeconomic disadvantage is a significant risk, whereas a strong family-school relationship operates as a buffer), and service systems level (e.g. lack of communication between the school and relevant health professionals operates as a risk, whereas education policies promoting inclusiveness are protective). These risk and protective factors can operate both concurrently and over time; for example, the provision of early intervention services before beginning school could act as a protective factor.

The O'Connor's model guided the researcher in explaining the availability of assessment service as an important aspect in assessment for learners with special needs as they reveal opportunities and challenges of an individual learner. This study maintains that whereas there are opportunities such access to school by learners, inclusive education, and parental involvement in the child's learning, assessment of learners with special needs will only be effective if challenges (insufficient educational assessment, inadequate trained personnel and inadequate networking) are managed. On the other hand placement is ineffective if results are inappropriate such as wrong institutional placement, assessment bias, failure to receive assessment and inadequate teaching and learning strategies. Institutional support in post-assessment situation may support a great deal in creating opportunities for the learner. However, where such support is very minimal or absent as is the case in Ugunja Sub County, a leaner may find it difficult to adapt leading to challenges and lack of learning opportunities for the learner. The kind of educational assessment that a learner with special needs receives will determine the necessary placement, accommodations and institutional adaptations.

1.9 Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Assessment - Systematic process of gathering educationally relevant information to make legal and instructional decisions about the provision of special education services to learners with disability.

Awareness – clear indication of an action revolving around an individual

Challenges: factors that impede learning outcomes of learners with special needs

Opportunities - equal provision of available services and resources for learners' participation in an educational programme

Outreach programmes – Efforts to increase the availability and utilization of services especially through direct intervention and interaction with the target population

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the published literature related to the objectives of the study. The literature was discussed in the sub-themes of the study objectives reflecting the major ideas raised to the problems.

2.2 Availability of Educational Assessment in Meeting the Needs of Learners who Require Assessment

McLoughlin & Lewis, (2005), assert that assessment of children with disabilities start with identification. According to federal special education laws, the education agencies are responsible for identification of learners with disabilities and this is done through screening (Zirkel & Thomas, 2010).Screening is a form of assessment where a general assessment tool is being used to identify children with special needs and disabilities. Machek & Nelson,(2010) state that when teachers identify learners with disabilities in school, pre-referral activities are applied in an attempt to amend the problem. When pre-referral interventions do not bring about desired changes, the learner is referred for special education assessment (Gargiulo, 2009). The parents of the child are notified concerning the assessment of their child and are required to give their consent in writing (Roger & George, 2006). The above studies discussed the assessment procedures which were in line with the current study. The current study intended to assess the availability of assessment services.

The identification is followed by the determination of eligibility for special education (Gargiulo, 2009). When the assessment procedures have been carried out, results are reported by the multidisciplinary team members including the child's parents. They make legal decisions about eligibility for special education services (Gargiulo, 2009). He further explains that if the learner is eligible for special education services, Individualized Assessment Plan (IAP) is designed. An IAP describes the steps in assessment and the procedures used in each step. Both the above study and the current study discussed the role of multidisciplinary team. The difference with above study was that the current determined the availability of assessment services for learners with special needs admitted without being assessed.

The third step in assessment is programme planning which involves development of individualized educational programme (IEP) which must take place within 30 days of the determination that the student has a disability and is in need of special education services (Ford, 2008), Placement of students with disabilities is governed by the principle of Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). The last step of assessment is programme implementation and evaluation of the IEP.

It is important that pupils with special needs derive maximum benefit from assessment to ensure maximum participation in school, and eventually society. In the situation of Botswana, some researchers (Okumbe & Malatsi, 2005) have observed that most students with special needs are progressing through school without proper assessment. Students who miss out on assessment are unable to access specific educational programs including

modified classroom instruction, curriculum, tests and examinations. Learners with special needs can access these benefits only if they have been diagnostically assessed. Given the limited number of students who are assessed many students with special needs in Botswana struggle to succeed with specialized programs in schools (Okumbe & Malatsi, 2005).

In Saudi Arabia diagnosis and assessment processes to determine the eligibility of students for special education and related services are still not free of shortcomings. The assessment process for children does not begin early enough to successfully determine disabilities. This process usually starts when the child goes to school, so the schools and other agencies cannot provide early intervention for children with disabilities and their families. Additionally, most of the special education institutes as well as public schools lack a multidisciplinary team, IQ tests, adaptive behavior scales, and academic scales that appropriate to cultural standards of Saudi Arabia (Al-Nahdi, 2007).

Therefore, in most cases, the schools' psychologists define the student's eligibility for special education service based on the student's IQ score and observations from their teachers. Assessment procedures for children with disabilities in Saudi Arabia are not team-based. Overall, the assessment and diagnostic procedures should be reassessed and recognized to achieve best practice.

Dart (2007), observed that in Botswana, it is not clear who should be assessed and when the assessment should take place. In most cases, assessment happens by accident or does not happen at all. Despite the fact that the RNPE (1994) positions assessment as one of the cornerstones of the successful inclusion of students with special needs into regular

classrooms, a significant number of students with special needs are attending schools but are not being formally assessed. As a result, such students are denied the right to benefit from the available accommodations including specialized teaching and modified examinations (Dart, 2007). These students then tend to struggle with traditional curriculum and examinations. Often, this in turn leads to such students exhibiting low achievement in education and dropping out of school due to frustration, failure and lack of clear career paths (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011).

In Kenya, various factors affect placement. MoE Taskforce of Special Education in Kenya (2009) found that there was unqualified EARC personnel, and lack of facilities. It concluded that the assessment was inappropriately done, leading to labeling and misplacement of learners with disabilities. Special needs teachers who are not trained in assessment performed the Assessment for placement decisions of learners with disabilities in the EARCs. The teachers conducted their services with the knowledge acquired when they trained as special needs education teachers. This prompted the researcher to establish availability of educational assessment services for learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub- County.

Kihoro (2010) did a study on factors affecting assessment for placement decisions of children with mental retardation (MR). His target population comprised of 19 respondents in Nyeri EARC, Central Province, Kenya using a descriptive research design. The study revealed that there was misplacement of few learners with mental retardation, the assessment lacked basic assessment tools, multidisciplinary team, and qualified personnel.

The study, however, was carried out on a placement decisions. It did not mention opportunities and challenges for learners with other special needs and disabilities who have not been assessed but are attending school. The present research covered all categories of learners with special needs in Ugunja County, Siaya County, Kenya. Therefore, it sought to explore and fill the knowledge gap where information remains scanty.

Muriithi (2012), did a case study on challenges facing educational assessment in Kenya. The findings of Muriithi's study (2012) revealed that, there was inadequacy of professionals in assessment, lack of facilities and equipment that limited the procedures and services provided in the hospital for people with disabilities especially on hearing impairment. Muriithi's study was a case study specifically on challenges facing educational assessment in Kenya while current was an empirical study.

2.3 Challenges Teachers encounter when Teaching unassessed Learners with Special Needs

Given the apparent increase in the number of learners with special needs due to free primary education introduced in 2003, primary school teachers are now more likely to encounter children with disabilities in their classrooms. The assessment of learners with special needs presents these teachers with opportunities to provide better classroom support and yet teachers face a huge challenge in getting such assessment information for a substantial number of their students. Special education is a multifaceted discipline that calls for professionals from all disciplines to work together. Many special education teachers in Kenya feel that they are ill-equipped to simultaneously handle the multiplicity of academic and behavoural challenges presented by individuals with disabilities who have not been assessed (Korir & Mukuria, 2007). Additional challenges stem from lack of parental

involvement, prevalent negative attitudes towards individuals with disabilities and inadequate number of competent multi-disciplinary team. Lack of special training and large class size are the other challenges teachers encounter (Gezehegne & Yinebeb, 2011). In addition, time is still a key factor in successful inclusion of students and is a significant area of concern for teachers. They need time to collaborate, time to attend meetings that include all stakeholders, to attend trainings that could provide them with the strategies needed to educate all students including those students who have diverse needs (Santoli, & McClurg, 2008).

Due to the technical nature of inclusion and the various special skills, competences and, resources required and expertise of personnel, in the assessment of learners with special needs a number of problems have to be encountered within schools. Every learner is unique and should be assessed in his/her own right with special consideration to their circumstances. Current research states that many teachers are not receptive to the inclusion because of their lack of understanding how to provide the appropriate supports for students with disabilities (Cassady, 2011). Challenges faced by teachers in classroom situations include among many other needs, hearing impairment and deafness, visual impairment and blindness, dyslexia, mental retardation and gifted learners. Bahr *et al.* (2011), postulates that inclusive education is founded on the belief that the right to education is a basic right and the foundation for a just society. This notion rejects exclusion, segregation or discrimination of learners for whatever reason from admission into public mainstream schools.

The problems that arise due to the adoption of these noble positions are diverse in schools regardless of the intent, the ultimate goal of educational assessment is to provide an appropriate instructional program for the student to enable them to develop and reach individual maximum potential. In Swaziland, Goodwing (2007) asserts that assessment and inclusion are naturally connected, and that equity in schooling relies on both. Therefore, assessment is critical to the achievement of such inclusion. It is acknowledged generally that assessment has a direct influence on teaching and learning, and that its power can be harnessed and directed towards positive outcomes. It is important that pupils with special needs derive maximum benefit from assessment to ensure maximum participation in school, and eventually society Goodwing (2007). In the situation of Swaziland, the writer has observed that most students with special needs are progressing through schools without proper assessment, (Goodwing2007).

Students who miss assessment are unable to access specific educational programs including modified classroom instruction, curriculum, tests and examinations. Learners with special needs can access these benefits only if they have been diagnostically assessed. Given the limited number of students who are assessed many students with special needs in Swaziland struggle to succeed with specialized programs in schools. The lack of school level intervention teams with sufficient skills to assess the learner different special learning needs at the onset means that some learners are left unassisted, (Goodwing, 2007).

In Zimbabwe, it is not clear who should be assessed and when the assessment should take place. In most cases, assessment happens by accident or does not happen at all. It is an

accepted fact that assessment is one of the cornerstones of the successful inclusion of students with special needs into regular classrooms, a significant number of students with special needs are attending schools but are not being formally assessed. As a result, such students are denied the right to benefit from the available accommodations including specialized teaching and modified examinations, (Kuyini & Mangope, 2011).

Educating all learners in regular schools continues to face challenges related to learners' developmental problems. Some developmental problems among children have been acting as challenges in teaching these children in inclusive settings. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) simply called Autism is one of such problems which have left some children out of regular classes. A number of teachers have failed sometimes to recognize and accommodate children with autism (CWA) in their regular classes, (Bowron, Jan, & Lyons, 2012).

In Tanzania, Sukbunpant *et al.,* (2013) revealed that teachers' own abilities were perceived as barriers relating to inclusion in the sample. Also, some respondents revealed that the training that they received was too theoretical instead of being practical. Regardless of such perceptions, some interviewed teachers being helpers, taught children with disabilities in regular classes with their normal peers but with some modified classroom activities to suit the children's own abilities. The suggestion is that, in spite of the difficulties that might be perceived by teachers when it comes to teaching children with disabilities particularly those with autism, teacher if knowledgeable enough can easily reorganize existing variations in the class and handle every student appropriately regardless of the differences.

In addition, modifications can consist of changes in curriculum, supplementary aides or equipment, and the provision of specialized facilities that allow students to participate in the educational environment to the fullest extent possible. Students may need this help to access subject matter, to physically gain access to the school, or to meet their emotional needs (Bukhala, 2006). More or less, support is targeted to the needs of the individual student and can be short or long-term.

Resnikoff (2009) describe placement for some children in totally inappropriate schools where they inevitably failed and describe the placement as a form of abuse. Teachers were being given responsibility for tasks such as clearing out tracheotomy tubes, changing nappies and managing children prone to harming themselves in outbursts of extreme violence. Many students witnessed highly disturbing behaviour as pupils with special needs reacted in frustration and anger to their surroundings. In addition, parents felt betrayed as their children's educational needs went unmet and the children sunk into a spiral of misbehavior that often ended in expulsion.

In Kenya, regular and special needs education is disseminated through a central curriculum. That is, all learners go through the same learning experiences without putting into account their deferring conditions. Learners with such needs are discouraged because of such curriculum provisions. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) is mandated to develop relevant curriculum, support materials for use in all levels of education and training except universities. To cater for diverse conditions of the learners with special needs, the curriculum is adopted and adapted when necessary. Currently Kenya Institute of

Curriculum Development (KICD) has completed adapting the syllabus for learners with visual impairment Bulletin, (2007). The education policy allows the modifications by empowering schools to make decisions governing learning of students with visual impairment (KISE 2002). With all the recommendations on adaptation of the syllabus nothing has been mentioned about overcoming challenges teachers face in teaching learners with special needs who have not been assessed and are in regular primary schools.

2.4 Parents' Awareness about Assessment of Learners with Special Needs

Parents and community are important partners in the whole education process of SNE. Parents ensure birth registration, safeguard children's rights and link the child to primary services. Critically, parents and community are primarily responsible for early identification of disabilities, assessment and intervention (New Constitution of Kenya, 2010). The tenets of family-centered philosophy include focusing on entire family unit, as opposed to solely on the child; addressing families' needs, goals, and priorities; developing individualized intervention plans; and respecting families' unique strengths and capabilities (Trivette & Dunst, 2005).

The parents often feel totally unprepared and overwhelmed by the responsibility and needs of caring for a disabled child (Mcwilliam, 2010) They experience a multitude of emotions and must eventually learn to accept the fact that their lives have changed profoundly and permanently. Since attitudes towards people with disabilities continue to be influenced by negative stereotypes confronting the birth of a child with disability challenges most parents' belief systems. As parents confront disability in their child, they must also cope with their

beliefs about what and who can influence the course of events. Their views will influence their interpretation of events related to the disability, their help seeking behaviour, and their approach to care giving, (Seligman, & Darling, 2007).

The research has indicated that families who are successful in coping with a disabled child are able to mobilize their internal and external means of support to deal effectively with the special needs of their child (Kumar, 2008). A study by Taanila *et al* [2013] found that a child with disability affects the everyday life of the family in terms of change in parents' social relationships, work, career or leisure-time activities, while simultaneously such families are subject to the same pressures and tensions that every family faces in the modern society. McLoughlin & Lewis, (2005), assert that assessment of children with disabilities start with identification. According to federal special education laws, the education agencies are responsible for identification of learners with disabilities and this is done through screening Screening is a form of assessment where a general assessment tool is being used to identify children with special needs and disabilities. McLoughlin & Lewis, (2005), states that when teachers identify learners with disabilities in school, pre-referral activities are applied in an attempt to amend the problem. When pre-referral interventions do not bring about desired changes, the learner is referred for special education assessment (Gargiulo, 2009). The parents of the child are notified concerning the assessment of their child and are required to give their consent in writing (Roger & George, 2006). However, it is imperative to establish the parents' awareness about assessment of learners with special needs and disabilities. Hence, the current study intends to bridge the gap of the previous studies.

Parents of students with disabilities often participate in assessment process. They provide information about the students' correct performance, past educational informal data on academic skills and performance in areas such as experience, health, history and progress through the stages of development. Gargiulo (2009) further posits that in assessment, parents and professional roles are intertwined by supporting and enriching each other. However, Mukuria & Korir (2006), assert that in Kenya, parents are rarely involved in the assessment for placement decision process of their children with disability.

2.5 Teachers' Awareness on Policy Guidelines on Educational Assessment for Learners with Special Needs

Equal access for all children became national policy in the 21st century (Hardman & Dawson, 2008). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) became law in 2002. NCLB was a reauthorization of ESEA from 1965. Under NCLB, student achievement became the responsibility of the United States Department of Education (Bowen & Rude, 2006). Under NCLB, each state was required to have reading/language arts, mathematics, and science content and achievement standards that were challenging (McLaughlin et al., 2005). Under NCLB, schools were held accountable for student achievement in various subgroups, including students with disabilities. Assessment results for districts and states must then be made public by the beginning of each school year (Thurlow & Wiley, 2006).

Through a rights-based approach, UNESCO, the United Nations agency for education, promotes inclusive education policies, programmes and practices in order to ensure equal education opportunities for persons with disabilities (UNESCO 2014). In June 1994 representatives of 92 governments and 25 international organisations formed the World Conference on Special Needs Education, held in Salamanca, Spain, where a new Statement

on education of all children with disabilities was agreed on. Ainscow (2013) cites UNESCO's Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education (1994) as a highly significant international document in the field of special needs. The key principle of the Statement's 'Framework for Action' is that ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions, and it proposes that "all educational policies should require disabled children to attend the neighbourhood school that would be attended if the child did not have a disability" (UNESCO 2014).

Human right to inclusive education was eventually supported by international law with the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (Gordon 2013). Gordon highlights that, although it is a human rights model, the CRPD does value the social model of disability by acknowledging that disability is socially constructed and not simply a matter of one's individual medical condition. Article 24 of the Convention, entitled 'Education', emphasises the roles and responsibility of state governments in providing an "inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning directed to…full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth" (UN 2006).

This Article includes that persons with disabilities should be able to access education on the same basis as their peers and not be excluded from the mainstream of education due to their disability. Individualised support should be available to maximise social, emotional and academic progress which is consistent with the goal of full inclusion (NCSE 2010; UN 2006). According to Gordon, the human rights model of the CRPD goes beyond the social model approach by proclaiming that people with impairments do have enforceable human

rights. They no longer rely on "discriminating alms, instead they have legal rights to things like appropriate welfare service and inclusive education" (Gordon 2013).

In 2004, IDEA was reauthorized in order to improve existing legislation and to align Individuals with Disabilities Education (IDEA) with NCLB (Bowen & Rude, 2006). This is Public Law 108-446. This reauthorization is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act. One amendment in IDEIA included increased accountability for test results. The IDEA of 2004 also allowed response to intervention (RTI) to be used as a method of identification (Loprest, 2012). Another part of the amendment involved increased parent participation. The amendment also included the requirement to use research based practices. The amendments helped to reduce the paperwork burden on educators. Collectively, the laws and amendments have helped to pave the way towards full inclusion for students with disabilities. Rosa's Law was signed into law in October 2010 by President Obama. It is Public Law 111-256. This law changed references of mental retardation to intellectual disability. It also changed references of a mentally retarded person to a person with an intellectual disability. This law changed the wording in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, IDEA, and ESEA.

In Greece, for example, the 'Education of Individuals with Special Educational Needs' (SEN) law (Law 2817/2000) provides that the identification of students with special educational needs be realized during the first year of primary school. This law also specifies the use of a special screen-test system at the start of every school year by the local Diagnostic Assessment and Support Centres (DASC) for the entire Greek student population. It is hoped that these measures will lead to an integrated Individualized

Educational Programme (IEP) for every student identified as having special needs. Once the IEP has been developed, students with special needs are placed in the regular school setting, which is considered by DASC specialists as most appropriate for the education of all students. Access to the general curriculum is interpreted in many school districts as simply a student with disabilities being placed in a general education classroom" (Moores-Abdool, 2010).

It is also important that inclusive education policies and guidance be made in collaboration and consultation with disabled persons organisations (DPOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), parents of children with disabilities, children with disabilities themselves, and other community stakeholders (Rieser, 2012). Unfortunately, all too often national inclusive education policy is aspirational, vague, and non-committal (Schuelka, 2017; Singal, 2006). Inclusive education policy needs to clearly articulate the values of inclusive education

In Kenya, most of the EARCs are poorly resourced and lack the capacity to conduct functional assessment. The national survey conducted in 2017 (KISE, 2018) established that nearly a third of the county EARCs have only one officer, making it impossible to carry out all the functions of the centre. Besides, the assessors posted to the EARCs are inadequately trained in functional assessment or lack necessary facilities and equipment to assess learners and trainees with disabilities.

Lack of expertise and formal structures hamper performance of the multidisciplinary team. In some counties, the MoH and county government do not formally work with the EARCs.

For instance, nutritionists and speech therapists are involved in only 15 per cent of the county EARCs (KISE, 2018). Though KICD reviewed the functional assessment tool and availed it to all EARCs in 2011, the EARCs were not trained on the use of the tool thus hindering its effective utilization.

Lack of policy and proper funding compounded with cultural attitudes towards individuals with disabilities, hamper the attempts to address critical issues pertinent to those individuals with special needs in Kenya. The existing policies seem to be contradictory, due to lack of designated supervisory and implementation mechanism. The purpose of such mechanism should be to ensure that what is written in the paper is translated into action. In addition, the importance of funding cannot be overstated. Funding dictates what a country can do. Pang and Richey (2005) conducted a comparative study of early childhood in Zimbabwe, Poland, China, India, and the United States. Their findings indicated that Zimbabwe had adopted legislation and policies promoting the education of students with disabilities. While these initiatives have been perceived as positive effort to get donations from organizations or private donors, the Government has drastically failed to implement them. They reported that parents in Zimbabwe were ashamed of their children with disabilities to such an extent that they could not bring them out in public. However, the current study intendedto investigate the policy on assessment of learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub- County.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology used in the study under the following sub- headings: research design, area of study, target population sample and sampling techniques, research instruments, reliability and validity of instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

The researcher used descriptive survey research design. Descriptive survey design was adopted because it is not restricted to fact findings, but may often result in the formulation of important principles of knowledge and solution to significant problems. It is more than just collection of data since it involves measurement, classification, analysis, comparison and interpretation of data (Orodho 2009). It also the most relevant for the study because it describes the state of affairs, as it exists and allows collection of sufficient information in a relatively short period from a large representation of the population (Cresswell, 2014). Descriptive survey research design is appropriate because the information from members of the public with reference to the variables involved through administration of the questionnaire and interview to determine the status of the situation under study.

3.3 Area of Study

The study was carried out in forty regular primary schools where there were learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub-County. Ugunja Sub-County is one of the Sub-counties found in Siaya County in the Lake Region. The Sub- County was recently curved out of Ugenya Sub-County which up to 2008 was part of the former giant Siaya District. Ugunja Sub-County borders Gem Sub-County to the east, Ugenya Sub-County to the west, Kakamega County to the north, Siaya Sub-County to the south.

Ugunja sub- county lies between 34° 17 ' & 47°E. The Latitude and Longitude Coordinates are 0.182304 and .9688° E. The Sub-County is densely populated, According to the 2009 National Census that indicated the population of 88,458 ROK, (2002). It covers a total area of 198.8 Km. The most outstanding feature is River Nzoia which is geographically famous in the area.

The Sub-County has two rainy seasons but their reliability is low and the rains are distributed over a very long period making the cultivation of certain crops such as maize, millet, beans difficult. Most people practice subsistence farming. The Sub County in the recent past recorded improved enrolment in both primary and secondary schools, especially after the inception of FPE and FDSE in 2003 and 2008 respectively. .Education infrastructure is funded mostly by Ugunja CDF kitty through parents as the main providers of other school facilities.

3.4 Target   Population

The study was conducted in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub-County. The study Target population was 275 respondents, consisted of 120 teachers, 1 Educational Assessment Resource Centre officer and 154 parents (parents of children with special needs who have not been assessed from Grade 5-8) in Ugunja Sub County.

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

According to Mugenda (2008), a sample enables a researcher to gain information about a population. Further, Mugenda (2008) recommends 50 % of the population. In this study, purposive sampling was used to select 60 teachers and 46 parents (parents of learners with special needs from Grade 5-8). Saturated sampling was used to select 1 EARC Officer.

Table 2 Sample Distribution

Category	Population	Sample	%
Teachers	120	60	50
Assessment officer	1	1	100
Parents	154	46	30
Total	**275**	**107**	

Purposive sampling was used because the target population was not randomly distributed in the area and those who were intentionally picked were parents of children with special needs from Grade 5-8 because they had the information of interest to the study. Also, they were subjects with the vast knowledge and experience in the area of study. For purposive sampling, enquiries were made to pick schools with learners with special needs. Bryman, (2008) noted that purposive sampling means that the sites and units of analysis are chosen purposively so that the researcher can interview people within the field of investigation and

conduct observations of sites that are relevant for the field of investigation. Saturated sampling technique was used to select one EARC officer. All the schools chosen from the Sub County were public regular primary schools.

3.6 Research Instruments

The study used questionnaires for teachers, interview schedules for parents and interview schedule Educational Assessment and Resource Centre officer. Questionnaires were used in the study as they could be administered to a large number of respondents in a short time, they are easier to analyze since they are in an immediate usable form and because each item is followed by alternative answers (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 .1 Teachers` Questionnaire

In the current study structured questions which are accompanied by a list of possible alternatives from which respondents select the answers that best describes their situation was used,(Mugenda & Mugenda 2008).

Open ended, close ended and structured uniform questions were administered to the teachers. The questions were according to the different themes based on the objectives of the study. The first part of the questionnaire had questions on general information about the teachers and the second part of questionnaire had closed ended and open ended questions based on the objectives of the study. The questionnaires, including a cover letter were distributed to participants. All subjects were expected to respond to the questionnaire and their responses were guaranteed confidentiality. This helped to obtain information from teachers in a shorter period of time since they were many. A five point Likert Scale with rating ranging from strongly agree (5); agree (4); undecided (3); disagree (2) and strongly

disagree (1) for positive questions and strongly disagree (5); disagree (4);undecided (4); agree (2) and strongly agree (1) for negative questions was used. The questionnaire addressed objective i, ii & iv. The questionnaire was attached as appendix 1.

3.6 .2 Interview Schedule for Educational Assessment Officer

One- to- one interview was adopted to gather feedback on individual experiences, options and feelings. The interview schedule with the EARC officer addressed objective I, ii & iv and was attached as appendix ii.

3.6.3 Interview Schedule for Parents

Initially, the researcher initiated a process of individual interviews with parents. However, it became evident that there was a need to interview the parents in groups as the cross-checking and corroboration which group discussions would provide would strengthen the data with group processes helping parents to explore and clarify their views in ways that would be less easily accessible in a one to one interview. This is because when group dynamics work well, the participants work alongside the researcher, taking the research in new and often unexpected directions. It also makes it easier to analyze code and compare data. The interview guide addressed objective three and (Appendix iii).

Parents of children with special needs were 46 from the schools which were sampled participated in group interviews. The parents selected were those with children in Grades 5-8. The parents were given code numbers (P001-P046) where 'P' indicates parent. I conducted two interviews combining parents from the school each time and interview schedule remained the same. Each question served as a discussion point. The interview

guide was tested before it was used. It was tested with respondents who were representative of those who participated in the actual interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The languages used in respect of parents were Kiswahili and vernacular language, which they understood better than English. This was done to enable parents to express themselves freely. The free and open ended discussions enabled the parents to give any information they had on the life of their children and how this impacted on the type of support the learner should get at school. I made sure that the parents were comfortable by giving them freedom to choose the time and venue for the interview. This enabled them to be interviewed when they did not have other pressing commitments.

3.7 Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

3.7.1 Validity of the Instruments

Validity is a process of verifying the entire research process which checks on the credibility of the findings (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), define validity of a test as a measure of how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure. Content validity was used where the items in the questionnaire were checked against the research objectives. An expert judgment from the authority assisted in the validation of the instruments. The validity helps in identifying items in the questionnaires that need restating and removing unimportant items in the study. Validity according to Mugenda and Mugenda (2008) is the degree to which results obtained from the analysis of the data actually represent the phenomenon under study. It therefore has to do with how accurately the data obtained in the study represents the variables of the study. If such data is a true reflection of the variables, then the influences based on data are accurate and meaningful.

3.7.2 Reliability of the Instruments

Orodho (2009) defines reliability as the extent to which the instrument is stable and consistent across repeated measures. A reliability test is a method of making the test reliable by pre- testing the instrument. This identifies errors found in the study instrument which can later be corrected. To ensure the reliability, a pilot study was carried out in four schools which were not part of the actual study. A reliability test was through test re-test method. Tests were administered to the respondents for the first time then administered to the same participants after two weeks. Mean scores from the tests were then correlated using Pearsons "r". The reliability coefficient was set at 0.70 and above which is considered as an acceptable measure.

Reliability coefficient for the questionnaire for teachers yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.86 which indicated that they were reliable. The data collected through qualitative techniques was counter checked thematically to ascertain consistency. Any inadequacies, inconsistencies and weaknesses of the research instruments identified during the pilot study were corrected.

The respondents participated in the pilot study were selected by simple random sampling technique representing 10% of the study population to pre- test the instrument that was used in the data collection. The schools used included Yuaya, Luru,Ugana and Lukongo primary schools.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Before the process of data collection began in the respective regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub-County.The researcher sought permission to collect data from Maseno University Ethics Review Committee (MUERC) through the School of Graduate Studies (SGS) Maseno University to conduct research in the selected schools. Letters of Notification were sent to the County Director of Education, and to the heads of the sampled schools. Personal visit to the schools was made to brief those head teachers about the research, mode of data collection and possible date for data collection was clarified to teachers in each and every regular primary school what the research was all about. .A second visit was made by researcher to collect the dully filled questionnaires from teachers in various regular primary schools in the Ugunja Sub-County.

3.9 Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging field notes, data and other materials obtained from the field with an aim of increasing understanding and enable one to present them to others (Orodho, 2009). This research produced data that required both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Quantitative analysis entails analyzing numbers about a situation by choosing specific aspects of that situation, (Orodho, 2009).

Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the quantitative data obtained. The statistics used were frequency counts, percentages and mean. The values obtained from both quantitative and qualitative data was entered into the computer and further analyzed to establish correlation between the outcomes of the study.

The qualitative data in this study was analyzed by organizing them into themes and sub-themes and tallying the number of similar responses. From this the researcher closely evaluated the usefulness of the information in answering the research questions.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

The framework of "moral principles guiding research from its inception through to completion and publication of results" form the basis of the research decision-making process by providing values based on a respect for the rights and dignity of all those involved in the research programme and an integrity to produce valid and credible results, (Skovdal and Abebe, 2012). Ethical considerations protect the rights of participants by ensuring confidentiality. It is unethical for the researcher to share identifying information regarding the study with anyone not associated with the study. The respondents were assured of the confidentiality of information given and informed that their views were treated with high confidentiality. Informed consent, confidentiality, security and data management was considered in detail. Skovdal and Abebe, (2012), state that prior to undertaking any of the research activities each of the participants should receive the briefing document containing a statement of intent to protect their identity during the study and in the publication of results; in addition, they should be informed of their right to withdraw at any time without prejudice. Protection of the respondent's identity, that is anonymity and privacy were highly observed by not capturing respondent's names on the questionnaires. The researcher conformed to the principle of voluntary consent (consent letter attached as appendix 1) whereby the researcher disclosed the real purpose of the study and gave the respondents a chance to willingly participate in the study.

Secondly, the researcher sought permission from Maseno University Ethics and Review Committee (MUERC). The research information was highly protected by making sure it was saved or stored electrically with security password to protect the privacy of study participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This section presents results and discussion on data on educational assessment services for learners with special needs in education; opportunities and challenges in Ugunja Sub-County; Siaya County, Kenya. The data was collected using a questionnaires and interview schedule.   The following Mean level analysis key was used to interpret the mean results was as follows: Mean level Key: Mean= (4.0-5.0) indicates highest level, Mean= (3.0-3.9) indicates moderate level and Mean= (1.0-2.9) indicates lowest level. The mean analysis key was applied according to objective of the study.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Demographic characteristics are facts about the make – up of a population. In this study, these characteristics included gender, professional qualification and academic qualification. These were considered important variables in this study in assessment on learners who are totally blind in orientation and mobility for skills. The frequency table displays demographic information of respondents in frequency counts and percentages. From the findings it showed that all teachers were drawn from the regular primary schools in Ugunja sub-County. The teacher respondents were 27 (45%) males and 33 (55%) females.

Table 3: Demographic information of the teacher respondents (n=60)

Demographic	Category	F	%
Gender	Male	27	45
	Female	33	55
Age	19-24 years	3	5%
	25- 30 years	9	15%
	31-35 years	23	38.33%
	36- 39 years	17	28.33%
	>40 years	8	13.33%
Length of service	5 years & below	6	10%
	6- 10 years	20	33.33%
	11- 15 years	11	18.33%
	16- 20 years	14	23.33%
	Over 20 years	10	16.66%
Professional qualification	P1 Certificate	37	61.66%
	Diploma	16	26.66%
	Degree	5	8.33%
	Masters	2	3.33%
	PhD	-	
	Total	**60**	100%

Table 3 indicates that teachers aged between 31- 35 years were the majority teaching in regular primary schools for learners with special needs with a frequency of 23 (38.33%). They were closely followed by those aged between 36-39 years at 17(28.33%). They were followed by the teachers aged between 25-30 years at 9 (15%). The teachers >40 years of

age at a frequency of 8 (13.33%) and those aged 19-24 years recording 3 (5 %). There was unequal gender representation among the teachers in regular primary schools in Ugunja sub-County. This indicates gender inequity.

Table 3 indicates that the highest number of respondents who had worked for 6- 10 years were 20 (33.33%) while those who had worked for 16-20 years were 14 (23.33%). The teachers who had worked for 11-15 years were 11 (18.33 %) and teachers with over 20 years were 10 (16.66%). Teachers who 5 years and below were 6(10%). This implies that teachers who were sampled were teachers teaching learners with special needs in regular primary schools. The findings implied that teachers had good experience but none of the teachers indicated a background in Special needs education.

The findings are consistent with Akinsuli (2010) in a study in Nigeria which showed that teachers' qualifications and experience are significantly related to students' achievement.

4.3 Availability of Educational Assessment service for Learners with Special Needs

The first objective was to establish the availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in education. The findings are presented as shown by figure 2 and Table 4

Figure 2 :Educational assessment service is available in our school

yes
No
Dont know

11.67%
28.33%
60.00%
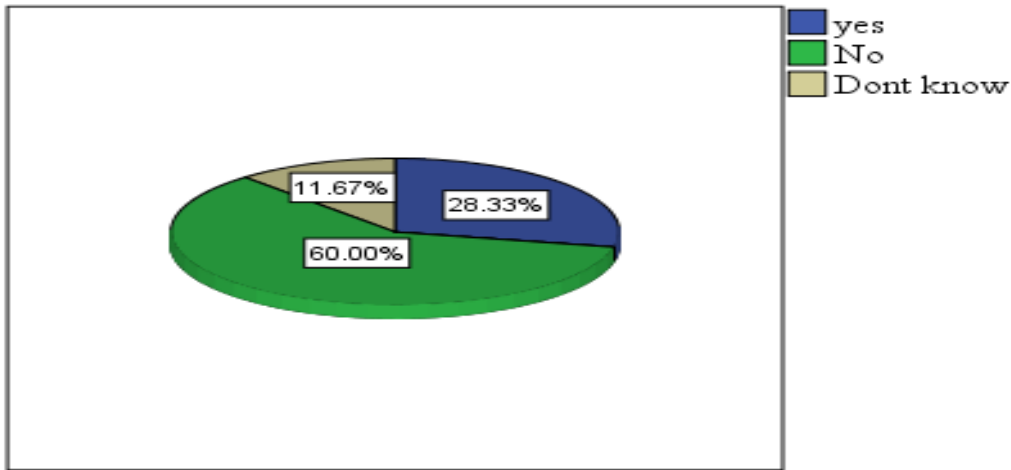
Figure 2: Availability of educational assessment services in regular primary schools according to respondents' response

Figure 2 illustrates the availability of educational assessment for learners with special needs. Responses on the availability of assessment were as follows: "Yes" indicates a state of agreement that the service is accessible. "No" response denotes not present at all while "Don't know" means the respondent does not know whether the service is there or not. The response "No" is represented by 36(60%) meaning the service is inadequate. Yes is represented by 17(28.33%) while don't know is represented by 7(11.67%). The results agree with the responses from interview schedule held with the parents where 42(91.30%) out of the 46 parents interviewed revealed that no educational assessments were done by EARC staff before admission of the child.

The responses were confirmed by the Interview schedule with EARC Officer as he said: *The assessment does not reach all the learners who require the assessment service as the Centre is located far away and it is one Centre serving many schools in different sub counties. Furthermore, the outreach programmes rarely take place due to lack of funds.*

It was also confirmed that: *I have not received referrals of learners who are admitted in school without being assessed.*

From the response, it can be concluded that it is due to unavailability of assessment service that learners with special needs are admitted in regular primary schools without being assessed.

Table 4: Availability of Educational Assessment Service for Learners with special Needs

n=60

Statements on Availability of Educational Assessment service for learners with special needs	Category	F	%
Does EARC assess learners with special needs in your school	Yes	17	28.3%
	No	36	60.0%
	Don't know	7	11.7%
		60	
How many times is the service available?	When need arises	2	11.76%
	Once a term	1	5.88%
	Once a year	3	17.64%
	Rarely offered	11	64.70%
	Not done	-	-
	Total	**17**	
Does EARC Staff make follow-ups after placement?	Yes	1	5.88%
	No	14	82.35%
	Don't know	2	11.76%
	Total	**17**	

Table 4 shows the responses on availability of educational assessment. From the table, 17 (28.3%) respondents said "yes" while 36 (60%) respondents said "No" and 7(11.7%) don't know about the availability of educational assessment service.

When asked how many times the assessment service is offered those who responded to the question were 17 respondents who responded by saying "yes" to the question on the availability of educational service. Those who indicated when need arises were 2(11.76%) while 1(5.88%) respondent indicated it is once a term. The respondents who indicated it is offered once a year were 11 (64.70%). About Follow-ups done by EARC, 14 (82.35%) of the respondents indicated "NO". Those who did not know were 2 (11.76%). There was only

1(5.88%) respondent who indicated 'Yes' about the follow-ups by EARC. This is a clear indication that educational assessment service is rarely available.

This was confirmed in the interview schedule held with the EARC Officer when asked about networking with other multidisciplinary team who said that: *I only network with physiotherapists and speech therapists in hospitals in Siaya when need arises for referrals to hospital.*

These findings are in line with the research by Dart(2007) who asserted that where assessment happens by accident or does not happen at all denies the learners the right to benefit from available accommodations such as specialized teaching and modified examinations. These findings are confirmed by Kuyini & Mangope, (2011) who asserted that often, this in turn leads to such students exhibiting low achievement in education and dropping out of school due to frustration, failure and lack of clear career paths.

These are confirmed by MoE Taskforce of Special Education in Kenya (2009) found that there was unqualified workforce in the EARCs, and lack of facilities. It concluded that the assessment was inappropriately done, leading to labeling and misplacement of learners with disabilities.

As EARC staff carry out assessment, keeping appropriate records would help capture data on learners who miss out on assessment. This could be captured by organizing school assessment to identify the learners legible for appropriate adaptation and accommodations to support them in learning.

Table 5 shows the Likert scale ratings on availability of Educational Assessment service for learners with special needs as follows: EARC assess learners suspected of a disability, outreach programmes are organized by EARC, EARC staffs assist schools in designing IEP, use of appropriate tools in assessing disability and that missing out on assessment means not benefiting in learning.

Table 5: Availability of Educational Assessment service for Learners with Special Needs
n=60

Variable	SA	A	UD	D	SD	Mean	STD Deviation
EARC assess learners suspected of a disability	-	-	9	38	13	1.93	1.064
Outreach programmes are organized by EARC	1	2	6	27	24	1.81	1.412
EARC staff assists schools in designing IEP	-	-	5	18	37	1.46	1.298
Assessment tools are available for learners with special needs	-	1	4	21	34	1.5	1.301
Missing out on assessment means a learner with special needs not benefitting in learning	3	19	3	5	2	4.20	1.086
Total mean						**10.9/5**	
Overall mean						**2.18**	**1.232**

KEY: SA = 5; A= 4; UD = 3; D= 2; SD =1

Table 5 results indicate that the highest mean was encountered on missing out on assessment as an implication that the learners would not benefit from learning (M=4.20, STD=1.086). This means that there is lack of assessment service among learners as positively viewed to enable learner gain more. Results further indicates that EARC assess learners suspected of a disability (M=1.93, STD=1.064). The standard deviation of above 1 also indicates variation from the mean response by some respondents. Assessment tools are available for assessing learners with special needs (M=1.5, STD =1.301). EARC staff rarely assisted schools in

designing IEP (M=1.46, STD=1.29) and organization of outreach programmes by EARC (M=1.81, STD=1.14). In both cases however, the standard deviation was higher than 1 standard deviation implying that there was no total agreement among the respondents. Finally, it was concluded that the availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs was low (M=2.18, STD=1.232).

The interview schedule held with EARC offer discussed ways in which EARC assists schools in designing IEP: The response from the EARC Officer was as follows: *Schools are many and it is not possible to sit at one school designing IEP. Moreover I do not have records of learners whose IEP are to be designed.*

Assessment for identification of children with special needs requires a multi-disciplinary assessment team that comprises specialist teachers, psychologists, speech and language specialists, physical and occupational therapists, counsellors, and other relevant professionals (Charema 2010). However, as the findings of the present study show, it can be said that there was no "team of experts" available for Ugunja sub-county. This implies that there has been no deliberate assessment for identification exercise with regard to children with special needs in the area of the study.

The findings of this study are in line with Dart, (2007) in Botswana, who observed that, a significant number of students with special needs are attending schools but are not being formally assessed. As a result, such students are denied the right to benefit from the available accommodations including specialized teaching and modified examinations. The

findings have been echoed by Kuyini & Mangope, (2011) who asserted that the students tend to struggle with traditional curriculum and examinations making them exhibit low achievement in education and dropping out of school due to frustration, failure and lack of clear career paths.

These findings are in line with Gargiulo, (2009) who asserted that making legal decisions about eligibility for special education services for a learner with special needs is important. He further explains that if the learner is eligible for special education services, individualized assessment plan (IAP) is designed. An IAP describes the steps in assessment and the procedures used in each step.

The findings of the study are echoed by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2000) who postulated that it is the responsibility of those who are being evaluated to ethically participate in the assessment, although there is ample evidence of test takers attempting to falsify results. It is the assessment developer's responsibility to design the test with strict ethical standards in all its stages: in the design and selection of the test, the revision of norms and standards to ensure suitability for the learner.

4.4 Challenges Teachers encounter when teaching unassessed Learners with Special Needs

The second research question sought to establish the challenges teachers encounter when teaching LWSN who are not assessed in regular primary schools. In relation to the question,

what challenges teachers face, come about in terms of specialized training, teaching strategies and specialized intervention. The results are as shown in the table 6.

Table 6: Challenges teachers encounter in teaching learners with special needs who have not been assessed
n=60

Category	SA	A	UD	D	SD	MEAN
It is difficult to identify a learner with special needs	45	14	0	1	0	4.70
Large class size does not enable individualizing instructions	36	21	2	1	0	4.48
Specialized Teaching and learning resources are not available	20	27	4	4	5	3.88
Lack of records are available from EARC to show a specific disability of a learner	22	33	4	1	-	4.2
Specialized facilities are not available	21	36	3	2	1	3.95
I lack specialized skills	19	24	7	6	4	3.76
Time is not adequate for individualizing instruction	14	26	2	11	7	3.48
Overall						**4.06**

KEY: SA=5 ; A= 4 ;U= 3 ; D=2; SD=1

Table 6 shows the challenges teachers face in teaching learners with special needs. One of the challenges was difficulty to identify a learner with special needs where the respondents who strongly agreed were 45 (75%) while 14 (23.33%) agreed. The respondent who disagreed was 1(1.7%). This was indicated by a mean (M=4.70) implying that teachers have a challenge in identifying learners who are not assessed. The other challenge was large class size that does not enable individualizing instructions in which respondents who strongly agreed were 36 (60%) while 21 (35%) agreed. The teachers who were undecided were 2 (3.33%). Only 1(1.7 %) teacher disagreed. The teachers were asked about specialized

teaching and learning resources available in school. The teachers who strongly agreed that teaching and learning resources were not available were 20 (33.33%) while 27(45%) agreed.

The teachers who were undecided were 4 (6.67%) and those disagreed and strongly disagreed were 4 (6.67 %) respectively. The mean rating for specialized teaching and learning resources was (M= 3.88). On lack of records available from EARC to show specific disability of a learner, the teachers who strongly agreed that no records were available were 22 (36.66%), those who agreed were 33(55%). There were 4 teacher respondents who remained undecided while one 1 (1.7%) disagreed. The mean rating for lack of records available to show specific disability was (M= 4.2). The teachers further indicated that there were no specialized facilities for learners with special needs in regular primary schools. On no specialized facilities available, 21 (35 %) teachers strongly agreed that there were no specialized facilities while 36 (60%) agreed. There were 3 (5%) teachers who were undecided and 2 (3.3 %) disagreed. Only 1(1.7%) strongly disagreed. Another challenge the teachers responded to was lack of specialized skills in teaching learners with special needs in regular primary schools. The teachers who strongly agreed were 19 (31.7%) while 24 agreed (40%). The teachers who remained undecided were 7 (11.7%). The teachers who disagreed were 2 (3.3%). And 1 (1.7%) strongly disagreed. The mean rating for lack of records was (M=3.76). The challenge on time as a resource not adequate for individualizing teaching and learning instructions, the response was as follows: 14 (23.3%) teachers strongly agreed while 26 (43.3%) agreed, 2 (3.3 %) remained undecided while 11 (18.3 %) and 7(11.7 %) disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The mean rating for time as a challenge was (M= 3.48).

The challenges teachers encounter when teaching learners with special had an overall mean of 4.35 implying that challenges that teachers encounter are above average.

The findings of this study are similar to findings by Najjingo (2009) who showed that only 1050 (0.85%) out of 122,904 primary school teachers in Uganda had been trained to help children with disabilities. Similar observation was identified in Nigeria by Ajuwon (2008) who investigated various initiatives geared to improve the special needs education sector. His findings indicate that dually-trained special educators (i.e., those holding certification in an area of special education and a subject-matter discipline) were not properly deployed to work with students with disabilities. The critical shortage of special needs experts is common not only in developing countries but also in some developed one. (Oreshkina 2009) found that lack of qualified teachers was undermining the quality of special education in Russia. Only 10% of the teachers in special schools have a degree in special education. The situation in regular schools is even more challenging.

Teaching learners with special needs demand besides special knowledge, a high degree of insight, sensitivity and devotion. Challenges teachers encounter are more serious in cases where there is lack of specialized training in teaching the learners which leads to lack of confidence in teaching the learners. Teachers tend to think that the presence of such learners may lower test scores in classes. Hence, special school is the best option for the learners.

4.5 Parents' Awareness of Educational Assessment Procedures for SN Learners

The third research objective sought to establish parents' awareness about educational assessment of learners with special needs. The respondents participated in an interview schedule on awareness about assessment of learners with special needs. The responses of the parents are reported as follows.

In every group interview session held with the parents they expressed their opinions on fear of their children being admitted in the schools where children without disabilities were learning. A number of responses reflected or implied the misconceptions associated with having a child with disability. However, parents did not themselves specifically say the experiences of the children interacting with children who were already enrolled in school.

During the interview schedule held with parents, admission procedures were discussed in which parents were asked about formalities required during the admission of the child with disability.

"*When I realized that the neighborhood school could admit my child with low vision, I simply took my child and she was admitted without check-up"*, (P021).

My child was interested in going to school but her condition (speech difficulty) caused him fear mixing with others. Eventually, I managed to secure him a place in the school, (P034).

"*When I took my child to be admitted in class One, I simply explained that the child had gone through nursery and had reached the age of going to Class On"*, (P0027).

"*I went and fitted my child uniform so that the child could start her learning as the school had opened one week ago",(P0019).*

The parents then discussed the time their children had been enrolled in the school.

"My child came back home one day and told me that the teacher wanted to see me that I accompany my child to school. On reaching school, the teacher told me that it seems that my child does not hear properly when I am teaching. I replied that the child has no problem with the ears not even pus has ever come out of the ears". The teacher told me that we need to seek medical attention (P035).

Is that why I was also called to school, the teacher seems to have noticed something wrong with my child because the child comes home with no work done at all, (P014)

About difficulties in learning parents' responses were given as follows:

"My child cannot even hold the pencil firmly, I keep trying to make her hold it but not possible", (031).

"My child faints during lessons and only gains consciousness after dampening her uniform", I have been called but I do not know what to do, (P001).

I thought children at school could laugh at my child because all the time he keeps repeating saying Number One (P008).

About the school working hand in hand with the parents to support children in learning, different parents gave their responses as:

When called to school and teachers made me aware and told about what my children need to learn, (P021)

On awareness on entitlement to assessment service procedures before a child is admitted in school, two parents discussed as follows:

Does it mean a child is taken to the doctor before being enrolled in school? (P012)

My child does not require any treatment, (012)

It is not about treatment, some children may have falls but that does stop them from learning (P003)

On Parent support groups being available to discuss issues pertaining to learners with special needs, the parents were not aware of such groups as indicated during their discussion. As the parents reported: *I have never joined any group with other parents from the school where my child is learning to discuss ways of supporting one another regarding learning,* (P032).

In the school (Yuaya) where my child learns I have not heard of parents of children with problems having such groups (P046).

One time a relative came to visit us and asked me about child having observed the manner in which my child was responding to simple instructions. I took interest and I have been looking for ways of reaching the centre, (P041).

The interview schedule held with the parents showed that parents were not aware of parental consent in educational assessment. The interview schedule revealed that 42 (91.30%) parents thought that assessment is solely the responsibility of the teachers. The high percentage indicated that parents were not aware of assessment of learners with special needs. The response from interview schedule indicated that 42 (91.30%) parents out of 46 parents were not aware of any assessment of learners with special needs.

These findings are in line with other studies that show poor involvement of parents in children with special needs when it comes to their education. For instance, a study by Alquraini (2010) in Saudi Arabia found that many parents were excluded from their children's education. Parent's poor participation in their children's special Needs education affairs is reflected in the findings of the study by Obaseki and Osagie-Obazee (2009) that some parents were ashamed of their children with disability. Carter (2006) found in

Thailand that more than 85% of the children with disabilities were from families considered at or below the poverty level and/or from families with little or no formal education.

Kumar (2008) research has indicated that families who are successful in coping with a disabled child are able to mobilize their internal and external means of support to deal effectively with the special needs of their child. Hence, such parents are aware of assessment procedures.

The findings are in line with the research study by Roger & George (2006) who postulated that the parents of the child are notified concerning the assessment of their child and are required to give their consent in writing.

It is important that a parent of the child with disability takes part in the assessment process because it is the parent who can give background information of the child.

Schools admit learners with disabilities as the admission policy does not require assessment but to admit on sight. Therefore, the learner with special needs admitted in school without assessment experiences difficulty in learning environment. Furthermore, it may lead to wrong placement because of lack of identification and decision regarding placement. Thereby, going against any decision being made should be to "the best interest of the child". Parental collaboration with teachers, social workers, house parents and EARC staff assists in assessment procedures. The parents interviewed by the researcher revealed that they have no collaboration and the parents do not belong to any parent support groups. Furthermore, the

parents do not even have any link with disability organizations supporting learners with special needs. This variation may mean that parents may not be able to cope with disability.

4.6 Teachers' Awareness on Policy Guidelines on Educational Assessment Services for Learners with Special Needs

The fourth objective of the study was: to determine teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs. In relation to the research question:

What is the teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment for learners with special needs? The results are shown on table 7.

Table 7: Teachers' Awareness on Policy Guidelines on Educational Assessment Services for Learners with Special Needs
n= 60

Category	SA	A	U	D	SD	MEAN	STD DEVIATION
Teachers are aware that learners with special needs are entitled to learn in regular schools	2	3	9	21	25	**1.9**	**1.17843**
Teachers are aware of inclusive education	1	2	4	24	29	**1.7**	**1.14228**
Teachers are aware of accommodation and modification of teaching and learning strategies for learners with special needs	-	1	3	17	39	1.4	**.87333**
Teachers are aware of Individualized Education Plan for learners with special needs in areas of learning	2	2	5	23	28	1.61	**1.00736**
Overall						**1.65**	

KEY: SA=5; A=4 ; U=3; D=2; SD=1

The findings presented in Table 7 indicated that indicated teachers' awareness of policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs. Teachers were asked on awareness

of learners with special needs entitled to learn in regular primary schools. The teachers' responses were as follows: strongly agree were 2 (3.3%), those who agreed were 3(5%), the teachers who remained undecided were 9 (15%) while the majority of teachers 25 (41.66%) strongly disagreed and 21 (35%) disagreed on awareness of the entitlement of the learners with special needs. The mean rating for teachers' awareness on the entitlement of learners with special needs to learn in regular schools was (M=1.96). The teachers were then asked to rate the awareness on Inclusive Education and the ratings were as follows: strongly agree were 1(1.6%), agree 2(3.3%), undecided were 4(6.6%), an overwhelming majority of 29(48.33%) and 21(35%) strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively that they were aware of Inclusive Education. The mean rating for teachers' awareness on Inclusive Education was (M=1.7). When asked on awareness on accommodations and modifications of teaching and learning strategies for learners with special needs the teachers' ratings were as follows: agree was 1(1.6%), undecided were 3(5%), disagree were 17(28.33%) and strongly disagree were 39 (65%). The mean rating for teachers' awareness on accommodations and modifications of teaching and learning strategies was M= 1.4). Teachers were asked to rate the awareness on designing of Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for learners with special needs. The teachers rated the awareness as follows: strongly agree and agree were 2(3.3%) and 2(3.3%) respectively, undecided were 5(15%), the teachers who disagreed were 23(38.33%) and strongly disagreed were 28(46.66%). The mean rating for teachers' awareness on designing an IEP was 1.61. The overall mean rating on teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs was 1.65 implied that teachers' awareness on policy guidelines was still below average.

The findings of this study are consistent with other international studies. For instance, (O'Connor and Vadasy, 2011) conducted a study in Norway and found that that the policy was ambiguous when it came the question of the locus of authority, distribution of responsibility, and the local scope for action, then some local authorities and schools adopted practice according to their own culture and tradition, even where this was contrary to the intentions of the government. Similarly, a study by Nordahl and Hausstätter (2009) uncovered an inadequate understanding and practice of national policies on special needs in several municipalities. The variation in the scope of special education was associated with local differences in the interpretation and practice of policy. The local interpretations of the guidelines may in some cases deviate from the intentions of the law, creating a situation in which the formal requirements for special education are not met

The findings were confirmed by an interview schedule held with the EARC Officer in-charge of Ugunja Sub-county who said that:

"through diagnostic test, I can be able to tell the right intervention for a learner with a disability admitted in a regular school. Teachers should be equipped with knowledge on screening disability. Moreover teachers need skills to assist them conduct screening at school level for referral purposes. The screening tools can assist teachers identify learners with disabilities in school.

The findings of the study agree with the study by Okumbe & Malatsi (2005) who argued that learners with special needs can access the educational benefits only if they have been diagnostically assessed.

The results are in line with O'Connor's model as shown in the conceptual framework explaining the availability of assessment service as an important aspect in assessment for learners with special needs as they reveal opportunities and challenges of an individual learner.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter looks at the summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the specific objectives of the study which were: availability of assessment, challenges teachers face when teaching LWSN who have not been assessed, parents' awareness of assessment procedures and teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment of LWSN.

5.2 Summary of study findings

5.2.1 Availability of Educational Assessment Service for Learners with Special Needs in Regular Primary Schools

The study revealed that availability of assessment service is inadequate as indicated by the respondents by a mean rating of 2.18. This implied that the availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in Ugunja Sub- County was below average.

For availability of assessment service to be successful, it is important to ensure that the EARC guides schools where the learner has been placed in designing an IEP which will give a feedback of placement. Of greater importance is to work closely with the teachers of the learner with special needs. When all the appropriate measuring tools and facilities are made available no learner with special needs would miss out on assessment. This will limit a significant number of learners with special needs who are attending schools but are not

being formally assessed. When the right assessment procedures are followed it will enhance available accommodations including specialized teaching and modified examinations.

5.2.2 Challenges Teacher face when teaching unassessed Learners with Special Needs

The study revealed that 98.33% of the teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they had difficulty in identifying the learning needs of a learner with special needs. Moreover, large class was a challenge to teachers as they could not cater for individual needs of learners, this was revealed 60% of teachers who strongly agreed and 35% who agreed making a total 95%. This revealed a big challenge to teachers. On specialized teaching and learning resources the teachers indicated it as challenge with 78% of teachers strongly agreeing and agreeing respectively. The revealed that there was lack of records from EARC indicating a learner's specific disability and it was rated at 91.06% where teachers strongly agreed and agreed respectively that there were no records. The teachers lack specialized skills to teach learners with special needs as indicated by 71.7% of teachers. The teachers also mentioned time as a challenge revealing that it was not adequate. This rated at 66.6% of teachers strongly agreeing and agreeing.

The mean rating for challenges teachers faced was 4.35 implying that teachers encountered challenges in teaching learners with special needs.

5.2.3 Parents' Awareness on Assessment of Learners with Special Needs

The study has revealed that parents were not aware of assessment of learners with special needs as expressed in the interview schedule where 42(91.30%) out of 46 parents reported that they were not aware.

5.2 .4 Teachers' Awareness on Policy Guidelines on Assessment for Learners with Special Needs

The findings of the study revealed that teachers were not aware of policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs. The mean rating for teachers' awareness was 1.65 implying lack of awareness on policy guidelines.

5.3 Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to establish availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in education and establish opportunities and challenges for teachers and parents in Ugunja Sub-County; Kenya. To establish availability of educational assessment service for learners with special needs in education in Ugunja Sub- county; to establish challenges teachers encounter when teaching learners with special needs; to establish parents' awareness about assessment of learners with special needs in education and to determine teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment of learners with special needs in education.

The study revealed that availability of assessment service for learners with special needs was inadequate in Ugunja sub-county. The assessment services should be available to cater for learners with special who attend regular primary schools without any form of assessment. Educational Assessment and Resource Centre should ensure that out-reach programmes are available as the only centre in the county is far away. Once placement is done follow-ups help in confirming the progress of the learner.

The study revealed that teachers face challenges in teaching learners with special needs who have not been assessed. These come about in terms of lack of skills in catering for the diverse needs of a learner with special needs. Teachers in regular schools are not conversant with the specialized teaching strategies and the accommodations required. Therefore, the learner with special needs does not benefit from classroom activities.

The study revealed that lack of awareness made parents fail to cope with disability of their children. When parents are made to understand issues surrounding having a child with a disability, the parents give consent for assessment and will come out strongly to support the child and even collaborate with fellow parents.

The study revealed that teachers' awareness on policy guidelines on assessment would enhance follow-up procedures on assessment. In which case, the teachers can identify disability before a learner is placed in school. Therefore, the provision of specialized facilities availed in schools would equip teachers with the basic skills and knowledge on screening for a disability at school level.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the summary of findings of the study, the following recommendations were made as per the study objectives**.**

It is the obligation of the personnel at EARC to avail the assessment services both at school level and community level. Every category of disability requires trained personnel to carry out the assessment.

Teachers require training in the area of disability. Refresher courses for teachers would enable the teachers cope with the rapid and ever increasing world of technology and diversity.

Organization of awareness on disability by Disability Organizations to sensitize the parents on disability issues and to form parent support groups in their locality so that they may benefit from one another. Moreover, parents' awareness on early intervention would curb disability at early stages.

The government should support teachers in their endeavor to cope with the rising number of learners with special needs in regular schools as Kenya moves towards Inclusive Education system. As Inclusive Education is the current trend worldwide, more and more teachers require updates on disability issues.

The policy guidelines on Inclusive Education should be strengthened to enable teachers apply when admitting learners with special needs in regular primary schools and provide appropriate accommodations for learners with diverse needs.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

1. Addressing parents/families support as true partners in assessment

2. Effectiveness of special education intervention and practices in regular primary schools

3. Placement of learners with special needs in regular schools; opportunities and challenges in school activities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i : Consent Form

CONSENT LETTER AND QUESTIONS FOR GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH PARENTS

Dear Parents,

RE: Consent to take part in a group and an individual interview

Bernard Ochieng Osur

First of all, I will read this letter out loud to help you decide whether or not you want to participate in this study. I assure you that there is no risk involved in your participation in the study. Please, pay attention to all the statements I read. If you have any questions concerning the study, you can raise it at any time. For further information, please contact me, the principal researcher: Bernard Ochieng Osur using my cell phone 0720544150 or emailbosur2011@gmail.com

I am a master student, conducting a research study entitled "*Educational Assesssment for Learners with Special Needs; Opportunities and Challenges in Regular Primary Schools in Ugunja Sub-County,;* ' under the supervision of Prof. Edwards Kochung and Prof. Aloys Odeck at Maseno University and Department of Special Need, School of Education.

I would like to know whether you would be willing to participate in the group interview in which you will be expected to answer questions. The interviewing process will take about 50 -80 minutes of your time. Therefore, I request for your consent.

You only have to participate if you choose to do so. If you choose not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty. The transcribed data will be kept safe in my office for five years from the completion of the study, and then be discarded with great care.

Sincerely,

Bernard OchiengOsur

CONSENT FORM

I Code No......................... agree that:

I understand the information of the consent form for this research.

The nature and purpose of the study have been explained to me.

I understand that this part of the study involves both group interviews that may take about 20-35

minutes respectively.

I understand that there are no specific risks involved in participating in this study.

I understand that the researcher will maintain my identity confidential and that any information I

forward to the researcher will only be used for the purposes of the research.

I agree that the research data gathered from me may appear in the final thesis anonymously.

I understand that all the research data will be kept for five years after the completion of the

study, and will then be discarded with great care.

I agree to participate in this study and understand that I may withdraw at any time without any

effect.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Sign ....

Appendix ii: Questionnaire for teachers

Introduction

I am a Master student in the school of education at Maseno University. This research is undertaken as part of my Masters studies. Data will be collected using questionnaires and interview schedule. The research I am undertaking is on **Educational Assessment Service for learners with special needs in Regular primary schools; Opportunities and Challenges for teachers and parents in Ugunja Sub-county Siaya- Kenya** for which you are requested to be part of the respondents. The questionnaire forms the critical part of the study; you are therefore kindly asked to complete it as honestly as possible, and where necessary, provide additional information. Do not indicate your name. Your respond will be treated confidentially. Kindly respond to the following questions appropriately (put a tick or write briefly in the space provided).

Tick only one answer that you find appropriate

Section A: Demographic Information

1. Please indicate your gender.   Male [   ]   Female   [   ]

2. What is your age bracket? 2 0- 25 years [   ]   26 – 35 years [   ]   36- 45 years [   ]

   46 –55 years [   ]   Over 55 years [   ]

3. What is your highest professional qualification?   P1 Certificate   [   ]   Diploma

   [   ] Degree [   ]   Masters   [   ]   PhD   [   ]

   Other (specify)……………………………………………

4. What is your length of service as a teacher / special needs teacher?

5 years and below [ ]   6-10 years   [ ]   11-15 years   [ ] 16-20 years [ ]

Over 20 years   [ ]

Section B: Information on frequency of availability of educational assessment service of learners with special needs in education; opportunities and challenge.

5. i) Are educational assessment services available for learners with special needs in your school?   Yes   [ ]   No   [ ]   Don't know [ ]

ii) If yes, how often are they being offered?

When need arises [ ]   Once a term [ ]Once a year   [ ]   Rarely offered   [ ]

Not done   [ ]

6. Does EARC make follow-ups after a learner with special needs is placed in the school?
Yes [ ]   No [ ]   Don't know   [ ]

6. Indicate with a tick (√) your level of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements on availability of assessment services for learners with special needs in your school. **SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, UD = Undecided, D= Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree**

Availability of assessment service for learners with special needs	SA	A	UD	D	SD
i. Educational assessment and resource centres assess learners suspected of a disability	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
ii. Outreach programmes are organized by EARC to assess learners with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iii. Educational assessment and resource centres assist schools in designing IEP for learners with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iv. Assessment tools are available to assess learners with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
v. When learners with special needs miss out on assessment they do not benefit from learning	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Challenges teachers encounter when teaching learners who have not been assessed	SA	A	UD	D	SD
i. It is difficult to identify the learning needs of learner with special needs who has not been assessed	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
ii. Large class size does not enable individualizing instructions for a learner with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iii. Teaching and resources are available to meet the needs of learners with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iv. Records are not available from EARC to specify the specific disability of a learner	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
v. Specialized facilities for learners with special needs are available in the school	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
vi. I lack specialized skills to cater for a learner with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
vii. Time is not adequate for individualized attention for a learner with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Teachers' Awareness on Policy Guidelines on Assessment of Learners with Special Needs	SA	A	UD	D	SD
i) Teachers are aware that learners with special needs are entitled to	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
ii) Teachers are aware of Inclusive Education	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iii) Teachers are aware of accommodations and modifications of teaching/learning strategies for learners with special needs	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
iv)Teachers are aware of Individualized Education Plan for Learners with Special Needs in areas of learning	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Appendix iii: Interview Guide for Educational Assessment and Resource Centre officer on educational assessment for learners with special needs

Date............................ Time of Interview............................ Setting............................

1. Is educational assessment available in Ugunja Sub-County?

2. Do you have records of referrals from primary schools for learners with special needs who were admitted without being assessed?

3. Do you provide outreach assessment programmes for learners with special needs in regular primary schools in Ugunja Sub County?

4. How often do you provide educational assessment services to schools?

5. Do you provide advocacy on disability in schools/community?

6. Do you network with schools/ NGOs/ Medical practitioners/ social workers to support learners with special needs in school?

7. What is the extent of networking with the above mentioned personnel?

8. What would you recommend to be done to improve the efficiency of education assessment services in your Sub-County?

Thank you for your time and participation

Appendix iv: Interview schedule for parents of children with special needs

1. During admission of your child with special needs did the school require any proof to show that the child had been assessed?

2. Have the teachers of your child asked you to go to school to discuss your child's difficulty in school routines?

3. What did you discuss when they invited you to school about difficulty of your child?

4. Does the school work hand in hand with you to support your child in learning?

5. Are you aware that a child with special needs is entitled to assessment procedures before being admitted?

6. Do you have parent support groups to discuss issues pertaining to learners with special needs?

Thank you for your time and participation

Appendix v: Research Permit

MASENO UNIVERSITY ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Tel: +254 057 351 622 Ext: 3050
Fax: +254 057 351 221

Private Bag – 40105, Maseno, Kenya
Email: muerc-secretariate@maseno.ac.ke

FROM: Secretary - MUERC

DATE: 14th June, 2018

TO: Benard Ochieng Osur
PG/MED/074/2011
Department of Special Needs Education
School of Education, Maseno University
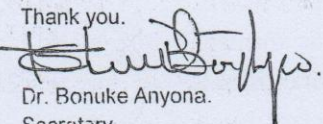P O. Box Private Bag, Maseno

REF: MSU/DRPI/MUERC/00500/18

RE: Proposal Reference Number MSU/DRPI/MUERC/00500/18 Educational Assessment for Learners with Special Needs, Opportunities and Challenges in Regular Primary Schools in Ugunja Sub County, Kenya

This is to inform you that the Maseno University Ethics Review Committee (MUERC) determined that the ethics issues raised at the initial review were adequately addressed in the revised proposal. Consequently, the study is granted approval for implementation effective this 14th day of June, 2018 for a period of one (1) year.

Please note that authorization to conduct this study will automatically expire on 13th June, 2019. If you plan to continue with the study beyond this date, please submit an application for continuation approval to the MUERC Secretariat by 15th May, 2019.

Approval for continuation of the study will be subject to successful submission of an annual progress report that is to reach the MUERC Secretariat by 15th May, 2019.

Please note that any unanticipated problems resulting from the conduct of this study must be reported to MUERC You are required to submit any proposed changes to this study to MUERC for review and approval prior to initiation. Please advice MUERC when the study is completed or discontinued.

Thank you.

Dr. Bonuke Anyona.
Secretary,
Maseno University Ethics Review Committee

Cc: Chairman,
Maseno University Ethics Review Committee.

MASENO UNIVERSITY IS ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFIED