

Influence of Teachers' Experience on Retention Rates of Learners with Intellectual Challenges in Special Units in Public Primary Schools ,Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu, Kenya.

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ABSTRACT : An effective education system enables teachers who teach children with intellectual challenges to teach them effectively and also creates awareness in the society to accept the children. The failure to achieve education and essential skills for life is a big problem to children with intellectual challenge. The purpose of this study was to establish the influence of teachers' experience on retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County in Kenya. The researcher included all the 8 schools Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County in this study and interviewed all the teachers and the head teachers. The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches whereby both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. The study revealed that there is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$, $P < 0.05$) between teachers' experience and the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in public primary school.

Keywords: Intellectual challenge, special unit, retention.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual challenge is characterized by limitations in intellectual functioning resulting in the need for extra ordinary support for the person to participate in activities involved with typical human functioning. The distribution of learners with intellectual challenge depends on severity of the disorder. Among those with intellectual challenge are mild intellectual challenge which affect 85%, moderate affecting 10%, severely affecting 4% and profound intellectually disabled which affects 2 % (Hallan, Kauffman, Pullen, 2009). This study targeted learners who are mild and moderate intellectually disabled. These learners demonstrate delays in cognitive, social and adaptive skills within typical classrooms setting. With appropriate support in place these children can achieve a high quality life in different aspects .The curriculum and instructions must be carefully modified to help these children reach their potential. Although there has been an increasing awareness on the need to give these children proper education, many people and organizations still do not know much about them Obaseki & Osagie (2009).

The education of children with intellectual challenges is increasingly receiving attentions across the world but at varying degrees. Palmer, Wehmeyer, Gipson & Agran (2004) argued that expectations that teachers hold about performance are related to subsequent learners' outcomes. Teachers form high expectations for learners' learning and progress according to special education labels that intellectual disabilities are associated with the lowest expectations. The support that teachers give to the learners will make them achieve higher outcomes depending on their level of ability Tejeda and Delgado (2009). The outcomes of learners who are intellectually disabled is individualization. These categories of learners have unique learning needs that require curriculum modification from time to time and alterations as a function of learners' age and intensity of support needs. When these learners receive the required support from teachers, parents and care givers it leads to enhanced retention rates in education and there will be very few dropouts (Garguilo, 2006). Helping teachers to develop supportive learning communities, where teachers and learners form learning partnerships, there is support from family and friends, there is establishment of goals and progress towards those goals is measured and where student self-esteem and self-confidence are obvious, contributes to increased retention and learning gains.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Meaning and Concept of Intellectual challenge

The perception of the concept of intellectual challenge is continually changing and the changes can be seen as a reflection of the changing public perception towards individuals with intellectual challenge Wilmshurt & Bruce (2010). Indeed, this is a step in the right direction based on the research done and a clear understanding of the issues involved in defining the concept (Kiarie, 2006). According to American Association on Mental Deficiency (AADM), intellectual challenge refers to significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with the deficits in adaptive behavior and manifested during the developmental period Gargiullo (2006). A child who is intellectually disabled has limitations in intelligence conditions which usually arise between conception and 18 years.

2.2 Teachers Experience and Retention Rate Learners with Intellectual challenge

Identifying experienced teachers is a complex process. According to Atay (2008) experienced teachers are those who have taught for many years, they are able to motivate students and hold attention for a long time, they know how to effectively manage their classrooms, and easily adjust the lesson to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities just to enhance learning. However, the basic definition of who an experienced teacher is basically hinge on the number of years taught (Bivona, 2002). Most commonly, experienced teachers are those who have continuously taught in classroom for approximately 5 years or more (Tsui, 2005).

Experienced teachers are different from novice teachers. Experienced teachers are likely to need professional development for the purpose of affirming the knowledge, experience, and intuitive judgment they have cultivated during their teaching. Teaching experience does not necessarily make one an expert. Some experienced teachers are repulsive to professional development just like the new teachers are (Tsui, 2005).

In a study conducted in the United States (US) at a time when the US was currently facing a teacher retention crisis where teachers were leaving the teaching career at the beginning of their education careers (Minark, Perreault, & Thornton, 2003). Approximately a third of new teachers quit the profession early in their years of teaching. Beginning teachers had not developed coping mechanisms to deal with the many stresses in the profession. The stress factors stemmed from little experience in the classroom, discipline management, limited knowledge of teaching methods and implementation strategies, and developing and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues. On the contrary, experienced teachers have long experience in the classroom, are effective discipline management, are knowledgeable in teaching methods and implementation strategies, develop and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues (Chen, Paquette, & Rieg, 2007). Teacher experience improves teachers' effectiveness in enhancing student learning. However, the relationship observed is not always a statistically significant or entirely linear one. Evidence suggests that while inexperienced teachers are less effective as compared to the more senior teachers, the benefits of experience level is higher after some years (Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, 2000). The study suggests, the more experience a teacher has, the higher the pupil retention rate.

III. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To establish how teachers' experience affects the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in the public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County in Kenya.

IV. HYPOTHESIS

There is no significant relationship between teachers' experience and the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County in Kenya.

V. METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey design. The target population for the study included all the public primary schools within Kikuyu Sub-County with special units. The researcher included all the 8 schools in this study and interviewed all the teachers and the head teachers. The collected data was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis approaches whereby both descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Descriptive statistics that was used in this study include frequencies, means and standard deviations. The Hypothesis was tested using Pearson's moment of correlation coefficient. The qualitative data were presented in the form of narrative and integrated.

VI. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Teaching Experience and Retention of Learners with Intellectual Challenges

The objective sought to establish how teachers' experience affects the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in the public primary schools in Kikuyu Sub-County, Kiambu County in Kenya. To achieve this objective, the teachers were first requested to indicate their working experience in their current station. The responses are presented in Table 1

Table 1: Duration of Stay in the Current School

Duration in years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	2	20%
5 - 10	3	30%
11 – 15	4	40%
Over 15	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Table 1 revealed that majority (40%) of the teachers in the study had been in their current school for 11 – 15 years. This was followed by 30% who had been in their current station for 5 -10 years. These results indicate that most teachers in the study were in schools with intellectually challenged children hence could give reliable information for the study. Further the researcher required the respondents to indicate their experience in handling special education needs children. The responses were presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Experience in Handling Special Education Children

Duration in years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Less than 5 years	2	20%
5 - 10	6	60%
11 – 15	1	40%
Over 15	1	10%
Total	10	100%

Table 2 shows that majority (60%) of the respondents had handled handling special education needs children for 5 -10 years. This means that majority of the teachers were in a good position to give information on retention of children with intellectual challenge. The respondents were further required to indicate their level of agreement with the statements given in a Likert scale where SA = Strongly agree, A= Agree, N=Neutral, SD= Strongly Disagree and Disagree (Table 3)

Table 3: Working experience and retention of intellectually challenged children

	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Teachers who are more experienced handle intellectually challenged children better	4	40.0	3	30	1	10.0	2	20	0	0
Experienced teachers helps intellectually challenged children to perform well	3	30.0	3	30.0	1	10	2	20.0	1	10.0
Inexperienced teachers do not like teaching intellectually challenged children	5	50.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	1	10.0	1	10.0
Schools should assign Intellectually challenged children to experienced teachers	4	40.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	2	20.0	1	10.0

Table 3 shows that majority (50%) of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement that, Inexperienced teachers do not like teaching intellectually challenged children. This was followed by 40 % who strongly agreed that teachers who are more experienced handle intellectually challenged children better and that schools should assign intellectually challenged children to experienced teachers. These results are in line with Chen, Paquette, & Rieg, (2007) who argued that the beginning teachers had not developed coping mechanisms to deal with the many stresses in the teaching profession including the handling of intellectually challenged children. On the contrary, experienced teachers have long experience in the classroom, are effective discipline management, are knowledgeable in teaching methods and implementation strategies, develop and maintaining positive relationships with students, parents, and colleagues.

Table 4: Correlation between teachers experience and retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges

		Teachers experience	Retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges
Teachers' experience	Pearson Correlation	1	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	10	10
Retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	10	10

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Results in Table 4 shows that, there is a strong positive correlation ($r=0.714$, $P < 0.05$) relationship between teachers' experience and the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in public primary schools. On that base, we do reject Hypothesis one. These results agrees with a study by Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kain, (2000) who argued that teachers' experience improves teachers' effectiveness in enhancing student learning and that evidence suggests that while inexperienced teachers are less effective as compared to the more senior teachers, the benefits of experience level is higher after some years.

VII. CONCLUSION

It was concluded that teachers' experience significantly influenced the retention rates of learners with intellectual challenges in the special units in public primary schools. This means that the more qualified teachers the better the retention of learners in the special units.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the need for the Ministry of Education should train more teachers on special needs education so as to increase the number of teachers with that skill.

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