

# **Beneficiary Processing and Implementation of Special Education Policy: A Comparative Study of Nairobi and EMBU Counties in Kenya**

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## **Abstract**

Special Education Policy implementation remains a critical component towards attainment of inclusive education globally. Studies have shown widespread failure in implementation of Special Education Policy particularly in developing countries. A lack of early identification and intervention of learners with special needs has left many deserving cases unattended and ignored. Thus, this study examined the effects of beneficiary processing on Implementation of Special Needs Education Policy. It was framed using the hybrid model and the management model of policy implementation. Pragmatism philosophy guided the study as it employed descriptive, cross-sectional survey research design. The study targeted 1121 respondents in Embu and Nairobi counties, from whom 239 individuals were sampled. This research utilized stratified, purposive and random sampling techniques. Six strata that comprised of officials and trainers from Ministry of Education (MoE), District Education Boards (DEB), Kenya Institute of Education (KISE) and Kenyatta University (KU), Head teachers, teachers and learners were considered. Instruments for data collection included an interview guide, a questionnaire and structured a participant observation checklist. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics while qualitative data was analyzed using thematic analysis. This study found out that a negative and significant association also existed between beneficiary processing and enrolment rates in Embu and Nairobi City Counties.

**Key words: Special Needs Education Policy, Implementation of Special Needs Policy, Inclusive Education, Beneficiary Processing, Learners with Disabilities**

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## **I. Background of the study**

Globally, PWDs need access to quality education. This has been the drive for many countries in the push for educational policies implementation (WHO, 2016). Ainscow (2005) citing Mitler (2000) notes that attempts have been made by countries to shift educational practice and policy to increased inclusivity. Following the Salamanca Declaration of 1994 and the setup of the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in 1997, Special Needs Education experienced worldwide transformation from the 1990s with a shift towards inclusive education. In the 1980s and before, Special Education provision took place outside regular schools in special schools (UNESCO, 2015). Substantial steps were taken in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to push for equality in education provision.

Special Education in Brazil has evolved since 1600 when the first school for the individuals with physical impairment was established (Elisheba and North, 2018). The Brazil Public Law 1989 provided legal support and the National Policy of Special Education launched in 1994 promoted the protection and inclusion of students with disabilities in society (Santos, 2001 & Lin, 1987). South Africa's National Strategic Plan Vision 2030 vouches for Inclusive education noting that necessary accommodations and accesses should be put in place in schools for LWDs (Dalton, Mckenzie & Kahonde, 2012)

Kenya's original endeavor to provide Special Needs Education dates back to the late 1940s. This was largely done by Salvation Army Church. Later the Catholic, the Methodist, the Presbyterian and the Anglican churches joined in with support for children with hearing, physical, visual and mental disabilities in different parts of the country (Muhombe & Rop et. al, 2015). The management and operations of majority of these institutions has since been handed over to the ministry of education (MoE, 2017). The National Special Education Policy Framework of Kenya (2009) provides a guideline on the provision and implementation of

special education in Kenya noting that the MoE in Collaboration with other partners is necessary in the SNE execution.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Existing evidence shows that the implementation of SNE has failed globally and locally. Studies exist showing the relationship between existing policies and their implementation; NSNEPFK (2009), Mitler (2014), Ainscow (2012, 2005), Matsha (2016), Oracha and Odeny (2015), Muhombe and Rop et al. (2015), KIPPRA (2019) and Mugambi (2017).

However, these studies have not focused on timely identification and intervention of special needs children (Best & Kahn, 2006).

Studies by Ainscow (2005) and Mitler (2012) examining the implementation of inclusive education gave findings on the implementation of Special Education. Ainscow (2005) suggested a change of thought in the provisioning of Special Education policy while Mitler felt that change was not necessary and should continue being delivered under Inclusive Education. According to Ainscow (2005), a change was necessitated to accommodate the LWDs. Both scholars did not cover the LWDs in the Secondary school settings. Evidently, the sampled studies concentrated on school level barriers at the primary school level and no study focused on beneficiary processing.

### **Objective of the Study**

This article seeks to explore the effects of beneficiary processing on implementation of Special Needs Policy.

## **II. Literature Review**

### **Concept of Special needs Policy Implementation**

The National Special Needs Educational Policy Framework (2009) provides a guideline on the provision of Special Education in Kenya. The Ministry of Education in Collaboration with private education institutions, line ministries, Development Partners, CBOs, NGOs, parents and other stakeholders are bound to implement LWDs education in Kenya.

Implementation can be viewed as a process, an output, and an outcome that involves a variety of players, organizations, and control systems (Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973). It essentially refers to the process of carrying out the law, in which a variety of parties, institutions, methods, and approaches collaborate to implement laws to achieve predetermined policy objectives (Stewart et al., 2008).

Owuor (2014) in an assessment of the determining factors of inclusion of LWDs in public primary schools in Kisumu municipality suggested that curriculum restructure should be done to accommodate the LWDs. A need was presented for a quality monitoring framework to oversee the implementation of SE under the IE system which is in line with the Special Needs Framework (2009). The study pointed out the necessity for an adapted curriculum for LWDs which is in line with SNE policy (2009) pointing out the need for the full implementation of the SNE Policy framework.

## **III. Beneficiary Processing**

Insufficient data on LWDs is evident in Kenyan schools. This is owing to a failure of early identification of the children with disabilities due to inadequate skills and tools for early identification and assessment (NSNEPFK, 2009). The Kenyan Persons with Disabilities Amendment Act Amendment Bill (2019) sections 6 shifted the role of keeping the Database of PWDs, assessment and identification of LWDs, coordination of implementation of LWD programs and awareness creation to the County level.

In Chile, early diagnosis of PWD is still a challenge since a comprehensive approach to education lacks in these areas. The schools in the remote areas have low levels of integration presenting a need to strengthen teacher training for the traditional teachers at the schools (Gallegos et al., 2007). Embracing Multi-grade methodologies in the teacher training curriculum should empower teachers better to handle learners.

Transitioning of LWDs to self-reliance post education is a challenge and LWDs education in Uganda is still marred by prejudices both at the schools and the immediate communities (CSBAG, 2018). Clear guidelines on mainstreaming of SNE at all levels also misses. Inadequacy of physical infrastructure is noted in the schools to enhance mobility of the LWDs especially in rural areas where schools are more in number (NSNEPF, 2009). Disabilities Amendment Act Amendment Bill (2019) indicates that accessibility and mobility accommodations must be ensured in the schools for LWDs.

Kippira (2019) highlights that there is a lack in accurate data relating to LWDs. Additionally, attainment of quality education for learners and trainers with disability is largely dependent on the provision of specialized human institutional and community development for personnel such as caregivers, support assistants, educational managers and technical disability personnel such as ICT experts, mobility trainers, occupational

therapists at all levels. Intervention programs such as EARC to determine placement and suitable intervention measures are necessary.

**Theoretical Review**

The Hybrid model of policy implementation and management model was selected for this study since it examines the end-to-end policy implementation process while the Maslow’s theory critically looks at the need for meeting the basic needs for a person prior to rising above physiological needs.

**IV. Methodology**

The research employed descriptive survey design. Data was collected cross sectionally. It involved utilization of mixed methods including observation, interviewing and administering questionnaires to the respondents while measuring variables as they exist naturally, Orodho (2003), and Gravetter and Forzano (2003). Concurrent triangulation was employed converging quantitative and qualitative data aimed at providing an all-inclusive analysis of the research problem (Creswell, 2009).

The target population totaling to 1121 respondents was drawn from Department of Special Education in the Ministry of Education, Trainers from Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) and Kenyatta University (KU), Sub-County District Education Boards (EARC) in and secondary schools in both Embu and Nairobi counties. A sample size of the study was 287 of target population was calculated using Yamane’s formula and took part in the study. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Quantitative data was examined by means of ordinal logistic regression regression . Qualitative data was analysed using thematic content analysis based on the derivatives from the objectives. The study then presented quantitative data using tables and figures while qualitative data was reported in continuous prose. Using Yamane’s (1967) formula for sample size calculation at 95% confidence level, 287 respondents formed the sample size for the study.

**V. Discussions and Findings**

**Descriptive Statistics**

Beneficiary processing, learner tracking, records of LWDs, teacher training and assessment of LWDs were evaluated using a Likert scale. The respondents disagreed (49.4% disagreed, 15.6% were neutral and 26.6% agreed) that MoE tracks the Learners with Special Needs joining and exiting schools as well as their performance during their study programs in the sampled schools (Mean = 2.858, Standard deviation=1.18). The respondents disagreed (49.4% disagreed, 13% were neutral and 29.9% agreed) on whether schools have records of LWDs who join and complete school (Mean = 3.009, Standard deviation=1.09). Contrastingly, the respondents were strongly agreeing (11.2% agreed and 88.8% strongly agreed) that teacher training enabled teachers to identify LWDs in schools (Mean=4.681, Standard deviation=1.14). In line with this, Policy monitor by KIPPRA (2019) highlights that there is a lack in accurate data relating to LWDs attributing this to poor structures in support of early identification of children with disabilities.

Furthermore, on the statement about teachers’ ability to professionally intervene upon identification of LWDs, the respondents disagreed (33.1% disagreed and 49.4% agreed) that teachers can professionally intervene upon identification of LWDs (Mean of 3.103, Standard deviation of 1.05). Further, the respondents disagreed (49.4% disagreed, 15.6% were neutral and 26.6% agreed) that teachers are empowered to conduct assessment of LWDs and track their performance (Mean of 2.867, Standard deviation of 0.09) as illustrated in **Error! Reference source not found.** below.

*Beneficiary Processing and Learner Performance*

Embu and Nairobi City Counties		SD (%)	D (%)	N (%)	A (%)	SA (%)	Mean	STD
Q39	MoE tracks the Learners with Special Needs joining and exiting schools as well as their performance during their study programs	1.9	49.4	15.6	26.6	6.5	2.858	1.18
Q40	Schools have records of LWDs who join and complete school	1.3	49.4	13	29.9	6.5	3.009	1.09
Q41	Teacher training enabled teachers to identify LWDs	0	0	0	11.2	88.8	4.681	1.14
Q42	Teachers are able to professionally intervene upon identification of LWDs	0.6	33.1	9.7	49.4	7.1	3.103	1.05
Q43	Teachers are empowered to conduct assessment of LWDs and track their performance	1.9	49.4	15.6	26.6	6.5	2.867	0.09
Composite index for Beneficiary processing							3.304	0.91

Statements on Beneficiary Processing		Embu		Nairobi	
		Mean	STD	Mean	STD
Q39	MoE tracks the Learners with Special Needs joining and exiting schools as well as their performance in the course of their study programs	2.540	0.99	3.253	1.29
Q40	schools have records of LWDs who join and complete school	2.814	1.00	3.253	1.15
Q41	Teacher training enabled teachers to identify LWDs	2.434	0.88	2.989	1.35
Q42	Teachers are able to professionally intervene upon identification of LWDs	2.938	0.90	3.308	1.18
Q43	Teachers are empowered to conduct assessment of LWDs and track their performance	2.447	1.10	2.869	0.54
Composite index for Beneficiary processing		2.635	0.97	3.134	1.10

The Uganda Society for the Disabled Children (2017) indicates that early identification of PWDs is a challenge for the government more so for the children born in the rural areas. Respondent EE3 cited that some parents do not accept the conditions of their kids and they end up hiding them in the house, so they need to be reached out and get advices on the same. Respondent EE3 in agreement cites the challenge of identification and intervention of LWDs

*‘EARC Officers do not exist. TSC removed them. No assessment tools and rooms. It is pathetic out here. Initially the system was good. The assessment room was near the hospital for easier referral, now we have been taken to the sub-counties and the process of referral is long. We have not equipment, no capacity and one has to go to the headquarters in Embu. The support is given as CSO not EARC. There is a lot of confusion. It depends on who one is dealing with. That is a major gap in the Ministry. There is a tag of war between TSC and Ministry thus causing a lot of problems to EARCS*

From the study, 60% of MOE officials affirmed that MOE tracks the Learners with Special Needs joining and exiting schools as well as their performance during their study programs. The 60% MOE officials cited that they have a database, which is not updated noting that there are challenges where LWDS drop out of school, they cannot be traced and parents don’t want to bring them back. They also noted that’s they track them from Primary, Secondary, Tertiary and Vocational Institutions, college and universities. (Respondent M1). Respondent M2 mentioned that LWDS are assessed by EARCS, they are then placed. Respondent M2 and M3 cited that exit programs are not clear and that there is not special policy guiding on LWDS transition.

*“The ministry knows the numbers in Primary and Secondary Schools, but once they exit, there is no tracking. Those in the Universities and Vocational institutions are under TVETs – But those who join Teachers Training Program are under the MoE.”* (Respondent M3)

EARC officers were asked on whether they agree or disagreed that EARC enabled teachers in identification of LWDs, 40% of the EARC officers strongly agreed that EARC enabled teachers in identification of LWDs. Respondent NE2 noted that teachers were not well enabled and that creating awareness was not as good as training in regular schools. The Respondent mentioned that it was chaotic in regular schools because teachers ‘harass parents’ and do not know how to assess and handle the learners. The respondent emphasized the need for the government to support the current teachers in re-training in SNE.”

From the study, 20% of the EARC officers were disagreeing that EARC enabled teachers in identification of LWDs. Respondent EE3 stated that;

*‘EARC Officers do not exist. TSC removed them. No assessment tools and rooms. It is pathetic out here. Initially the system was good. The assessment room was near the hospital for easier referral, now we have been taken to the sub-counties and the process of referral is long. No equipment, no capacity and one has to go to the headquarters in Embu. The support is given as CSO not EARC. There is confusion. It depends on who one is dealing with. That is major gap in the Ministry. There is a tag of war between TSC and Ministry thus causing a lot of problems to EARC.’*

From the study, 20% of the EARC officers strongly agreed that EARC supported the schools in assessment of LWDs. In support of the affirmation, Respondent NE2 indicated that EARC is usually called upon by the people who are aware of its existence and mostly are parents and teachers. Notably, 60% of the EARC officers agreed that EARC supported the schools in assessment of LWDs. Respondents EE1 and EE2 mentioned that LWDs assessment needs funds, empowerment and knowledge and EARC only helps in the process of identifying the LWDs. The Schools do not assess and the teachers are not mandated to assess. They look at a case and raise the matter with the EARC Officers. Only the EARC officers are allowed to conduct assessment amid the challenges of finances and inadequate staffing.

Contrastingly, 20% of the EARC officers were neutral that EARC supported the schools in assessment of LWDs. The neutrality is supported by HET (2018) and Berndinelli (2018). Who note that poor LWD performance is attributed to delayed assessment and identification as well as lack of resources and facilities. In support, UNESCO (2015) notes the need for a working monitoring system to assist in tracking the delivery of SNE in schools.

From the study, 20% of the EARC officers indicated that assessment of learners with Special Needs in schools was never conducted. Respondent NE1 stated the reason that “it is only done at EARC Centres. Unless where it is an organized camp in collaboration with other NGOs” Respondent NE2 noted that assessment of learners with Special Needs in schools was rarely done and it was only depended on need which necessitated “awareness within the schools.” In contrast, Respondent EE1 indicated that assessment of learners with Special Needs in schools was “done in a cluster of schools in a locality each term. This was because of the challenge of possible to moving from school to school.

**Inferential Statistics**

**Regression analysis**

The study computed the composite indices for beneficiary processing (BP) and Implementation of SNE Policy – Enrolment Rates (BE), then grouping the obtained indices into three categories (Agree, Neutral and Disagree). The coefficient of determinants (Pseudo R<sup>2</sup>) was generated to describe the proportion of variation in enrolment rates that has been accounted for by beneficiary processing, which was the regressor. The regression model summary, goodness of fit and coefficients’ outputs was as presented in below.

*Model summary, Goodness of fit and coefficients’ output for beneficiary processing and Enrolment rates*

BE	Coef.	St.Err.	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf	Odds.	Sig
					Interval]	Ratio	
Aggregate score for BP	0	.	.	.	.	.	
Agree	1.24	.336	3.70	0	.582	1.898	3.456 ***
Disagree	1.79	.35	5.12	0	1.104	2.475	5.989 ***
Constant	.763	.219	.b	.b	.333	1.193	
Constant	2.817	.296	.b	.b	2.236	3.398	
Mean dependent var	0.652		SD dependent var	0.717			
Pseudo r-squared	0.076		Number of obs	204			
Chi-square	31.003		Prob > chi2	0.000			
Akaike crit. (AIC)	382.829		Bayesian crit. (BIC)	396.102			

\*\*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*  $p < .1$

In the model summary in Table above, 7.6% of the variation in enrolment rates was accounted for by beneficiary processing (R<sup>2</sup>=0.076). In addition, the decision to reject the null hypothesis and adopt the alternative hypothesis was based on the significance of the overall model, where the P<sub>value</sub> were used. From the overall P<sub>values</sub> of .000 which was less than  $\alpha=0.05$ , the null hypothesis that beneficiary processing does not affect the Implementation of SNE Policy was rejected. Thus, the study found that beneficiary processing significantly affected enrolment rates in Embu and Nairobi City Counties.

Beneficiary processing and enrolment rates were quantified and an Ordinal logistic regression equation developed as depicted below.

$$Y = e^{2.817 + 1.24Agree + 1.79Disagree} \dots\dots\dots \text{Equation 4. 1}$$

$$Y = e^{2.817 + 1.24Agree + 1.79Disagree}$$

Beneficiary processing and enrolment rates were evaluated using three categories (Agree, Neutral and Disagree, where neutral was the reference category). That is whether the respondents odds of agreeing/disagreeing, in contrast to neutrality, with beneficiary processing (Identification of LWDs, School joining ages, Completion ages, intervention for LWDs and frequency of assessment) enhancing enrolment rates was different. Then whether the difference in odds was statistically significant. The models indicate that the respondents odds of disagreeing (OR=5.989) that beneficiary processing enhanced enrolment rates in Embu and Nairobi City Counties was higher than the odds of agreement (OR=3.456). As such, in Embu and Nairobi City counties, enrolment rates of LWDs was 6 times less

## VI. Conclusion

The study found out that beneficiary processing had a negative and significant effect on Implementation of SNE Policy in Embu and Nairobi City Counties. As literature suggests, early identification and intervention of children with disabilities is critical. Adequate skills and tools for early identification and assessment are key in beneficiary processing (NSNEPFK, 2009).

NSNEPFK (2009) agrees with this study noting that insufficient data on LWDs is evident in Kenyan schools. This is owing to a failure of early identification of the children with disabilities due to inadequate skills and tools for early identification and assessment (NSNEPFK, 2009). The Kenyan Persons with Disabilities Amendment Act Amendment Bill (2019) sections 6 shifted the role of keeping the Database of PWDs, coordination of implementation of LWD programs and awareness creation to the County level; despite this shift, accessibility of varied resources in schools by LWDs has not been achieved.

In agreement with this study, Bell (2013) examined teaching and learning support for students with hearing impairments at the university in the Western Cape, South Africa. His study revealed that the existing support services were largely inadequate, while at the same time many barriers instruction and assessment of learners were experienced. Mantsha (2016) conducted a similar study at the university of Venda that investigated the educational support of students with disabilities at institutions of higher learning in South Africa and noted that a lack of support structures intervention and support for these learners led to their dropping out of school. Poor academic achievement was attributed to barriers related to teaching and assessment.

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