

Contemporary Factors Influencing Integration of Pupils with Special Needs in Public Primary Schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya

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Abstract

One of Kenya's Vision 2030 strategies is to enforce Children's Act which is meant to eliminate child labour as well as other retrogressive practices causing vulnerabilities among children and thus integration is inevitable. This study aimed at investigating school factors currently influencing integration of learners with special needs (SNE) in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, Kenya. The objectives were to investigate whether teachers' familiarity with SNE curriculum and availability of resources and facilities influenced integration of learners with special needs. It adopted a descriptive survey research design. Sampling involved 19 head teachers and 800 teachers from the 39 public schools. Stratified method of sampling was used to automatically include head teachers of selected schools in the study and simple random sampling to select 259 teachers to ensure sub groups were proportionately represented. The questionnaire was used to collect data from teachers and an interview schedule for head teachers. Descriptive statistics were employed in analyzing data using frequencies and percentages to meaningfully describe the distribution of scores and data were analyzed using SPSS. The results showed that 81% of the teachers in the municipal public primary schools were familiar with, and used the ordinary curriculum as opposed to a differentiated one which is special-needs friendly. SNE teachers, physical facilities and resources in the schools were either unavailable or inadequate.

Key Words: *Special Needs Education, Integration of SNE, Teachers' Familiarity, School Factors and Public Schools*

INTRODUCTION

The initial precept of virtually all educational systems is that each child should receive full- time instruction in school has resulted in a consequential overwhelming pressure of demand for education. To cater for learners with disability, integration has been adopted. According to UNESCO (2009), integration is increasingly understood more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners. Under this broader definition of integration, steps should be taken to eliminate discrimination and provide accommodations for all learners who are at a disadvantage.

Kenyan Vision 2030 strategy is to enforce the Children's Act to eliminate child labour as well as other retrogressive practices causing vulnerabilities among children, empower people with special needs to make them self-supporting; enhance support to orphans and vulnerable children (OVCs) reduce dependency by empowering them with knowledge, skills and attitudes (Kenya's Vision, 2030). However, to this end, majority of learners with special needs in Kenya do not access educational services.

Initially, special education was catering for impairments such as mental, physical, hearing and visual (Omolo, 2002). The stipulation by Dunn (1993) necessitated the emergence of integrative philosophy. However, educational opportunities for children with special needs are a major challenge to the education sector. The national education system has been characterized by lack of systems and facilities that respond to the challenges faced by learners with special needs. Winzer (2004) confirms that many countries (both developed and developing) have adopted and inculcated the policy of integration in their education policies.

Studies on special education and integration suggest that the programs face many challenges. They demand special equipment, face inadequate specially trained teachers, lack incentives for available specially trained teachers and lack proper administration and supervision of management.

According to Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) (2000), inclusive education refers to a philosophy of ensuring that schools, centres of learning and educational systems were open to all

children. Children should not be excluded from the society's activities due to disabilities, economic, physical or otherwise backgrounds. The curriculum, attitudes of staff, social structure, physical arrangement, allocation of resources within the classroom, and skills of teachers are elements of the school's educational ecology (Susan and Eames, 2013).

The modern approach is integration, where diverse learners are catered for within the neighbourhood primary school of choice other than in special schools only (MOEST, 2001). To attain this, Kenya needs to ensure the realization of integration and simultaneously develop and implement guidelines for mainstreaming SNE at all levels of the education system. The current status in Eldoret Municipality is that there are two special schools, one for the mentally challenged and the other for those short of hearing. 11 other public schools have special units attached to them while the rest of the learners attend other primary schools irrespective of their challenges.

Integration is a system used mainly to facilitate children with special needs attend ordinary schools that provide minimal modifications to accommodate learners with special needs (Stainback and Stainback, 1996). Integrative learning is a theory describing a movement toward integrated lessons which help students to make connections across curricula. It comes in many varieties- skills, knowledge, experiences, practices, etc. It involves making connections within or between fields, between curriculum, co curriculum or academic knowledge and practices (Huber *et al.*, 2005). Such children are expected to adapt to the regular school arrangement. The goal of integration that all participants in any society should aim at achieving is to ensure that all persons regardless of their economic, physical or any other difference are not excluded from any of society's activities (KISE, 2000). It is to provide the most appropriate education to all children in the most enabling environment.

The Session paper no. 1 of (2005), underscores the government's commitment to ensuring that special needs learners have equal access to quality and relevant education. It provides the overall policy framework for the education sector. The paper references the necessary legal context within which education and training, including SNE shall be designed, developed and implemented in Kenya.

In the past, the process by which children were identified, labelled and placed special classes had been criticized for the negative effects it had on children. There are problems of implementing educational reforms even among people who seemingly desire change. Any innovation cannot be assimilated unless its 'meaning' is shared (Fullan, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was. Survey research was, therefore, relevant to the study because it exemplified as a descriptive research. Both primary and secondary information were sought. Secondary information was collected from libraries, resource centres and internet among others. Primary data were collected by use of the questionnaire and interview schedules and analyzed using mixed methods.

The study was carried out in public primary schools in Eldoret Municipality, currently a fast growing cosmopolitan town because of the increased number of universities and businesses. Consequently, more schools have sprung up and pupils' enrolment has increased tremendously.

Going by trends, the increase in population likely translates into increase in the number of learners with specific learning difficulties. About a half (1/2) of the schools were studied, which was a good representation of the schools within the municipality.

The study focused on public primary schools' head teachers (39), teachers (800), in Eldoret Municipality. The head teachers of the selected schools were automatically included in the study. Simple random sampling was used to select at least 50% of teachers (12 or more) teachers per school to give each of them equal and independent chance of participating in the study and it was also representative of the entire population.

The data collection instruments of the study were questionnaire for teachers and an interview schedule for head teachers. The items sought to find out the influence of the following variables: teaching/learning

resources, physical facilities, content, and method of instruction and how these would contribute to effective implementation of the integration procedure.

To establish reliability of the questionnaires, Test-Retest method was used. Teachers of the selected school in Wareng District filled the questionnaire. After two weeks the questionnaires were administered to the same respondents. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (r) was used to determine the coefficient of stability of the data collection instruments. The correlation coefficient of 0.7 and above was considered reliable (Creswell, 2007). Data were collected and were coded, entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and analyzed into descriptive statistics in the form of frequency tables, percentage and pie charts. Data from interview schedule were analyzed qualitatively.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influences of teachers' familiarity with the integration process for special needs were considered and the results showing the numbers of learners are given in table 1.

Table 1. Number of learners with special needs

No.	No. of learners	Frequency	Percent
i.	Less than 5	27	12.6
ii.	6-10	26	11.8
iii.	11-15	40	18.5
iv.	16-20	18	8.4
v.	More than 20	105	48.7
	Total	215	100.0

Although the number of learners with special needs varied from school to school, this study showed that almost half of the respondents (49%) were of the view that the number was over twenty (20) in a school (Table 1) and eighty seven percent (87%) of the respondents being in agreement that such learners in a school were over five (5) in number. The information in Table 1 indicates and emphasizes the importance of taking into account measures to assist learners with special needs in a 'normal' school setting. Such pupils have different needs, learn in different ways, and interact socially in different fashions than other children. The techniques used may be very different from the general school population, and differ greatly within the special learner population itself. Teachers should be familiar with special needs education curriculum in order to balance the needs of the individual learners against the needs of the larger school population. The bottom line is that learners with special needs exist in all public primary schools (Ndurumo, 1993) so all teachers require basic skills on how to manage them.

Various categories of learners with special needs found in different schools were considered and the results presented in figure 1.

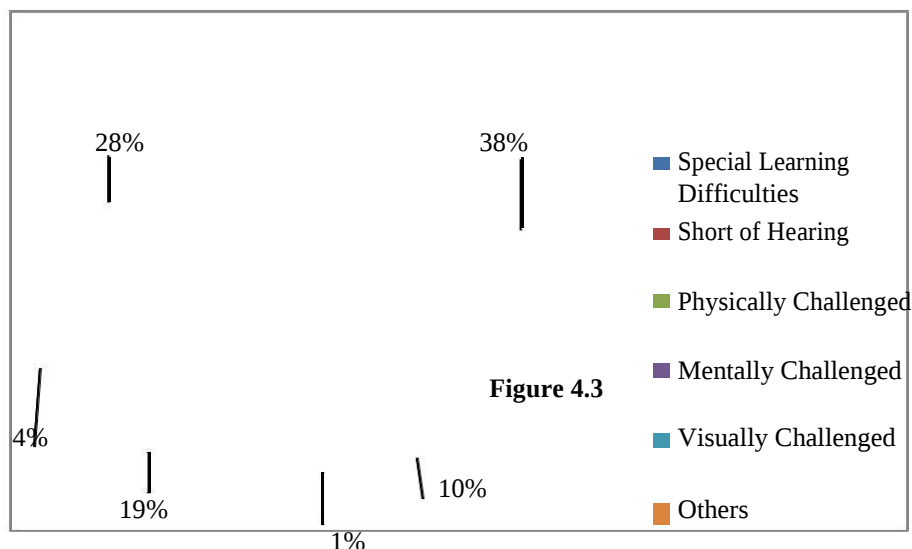


Figure 1. Category of learners with special needs

From figure 1, the main categories of learners with special needs in public primary schools in Eldoret municipality were those with special learning difficulties (38%), mental challenge at (19%) and short of hearing (10%). Although not many, visually and physically challenged learners (4% and 1%, respectively) were some of those with special needs. Others included those with behavioural disorders, hyper active, slow learners, just to mention a few. From the figures in figure 1, severe challenges like total blindness, deafness or dumbness and mental retardation are catered for in special schools or elsewhere. Those in public schools were mild or partial and could cope with or benefit from 'normal' children. Public schools should be equipped with basic facilities ramps, toilets, and so forth for special needs children which can be of great importance during integration.

The results of the extent of teachers' familiarity with the integration process of learners with special are presented in figure 2.

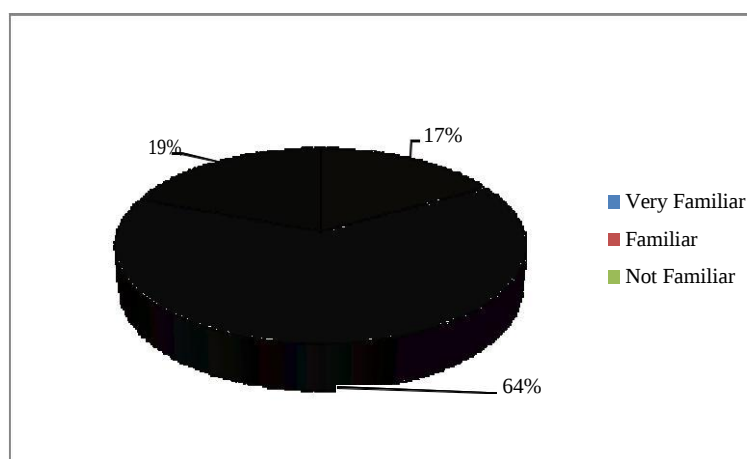


Figure 2. Extent of teachers' familiarity with integration of learners with special needs

Figure 2 presents information on familiarity of teachers with the process of integration of learners with special needs. Most of the teachers (81%) in public primary schools in Eldoret municipality were either very familiar (17%) or familiar (64%) with the process of integration of learners with special needs. This indicates that their responses in this study regarding the integration of learners with special needs were made from an informed position. According to FPE setting in Kenya all children in Kenya have a right to an education and studies on educational gains of children with special needs indicate that they do better academically in regular classrooms. Therefore children with special should be encouraged to join 'normal' children in class or social areas. Clayton (1996) notes that through interaction with the environment people learn, and only that learning which is related to active purposes and is rooted in experience translates itself into changes in behaviour. It is also found that children learn best those things that are attached to solving actual problems which help them meet real needs or those that connect them with some active interest. Learning in its true sense is an active transaction. Therefore, teachers of learners with special needs should be familiar with the curriculum that meets the needs of their learners.

Results of interview schedules indicated that majority of the teachers had worked for not more than five years while a few of the respondents had worked for 6-10 years. Although some of them could have trained in SNE, class experience with pupils with SN may influence integration of such learners in public primary schools. Nevertheless, the head teachers seemed to be able to recognize pupils with special needs because they were able to give the number of pupils with special needs in their schools.

The responses indicated that all schools in the study area had pupils with special needs with a variation in numbers from school to school. However, a very small fraction of the numbers ranged from one to over twenty pupils in the schools having 16- over 20 pupils with special needs. The head teachers interviewed were also aware of the type of curriculum used in their schools. Nine out of twelve head teachers that responded indicated that a small fraction of the schools used differentiated curriculum while the majority used ordinary curriculum. This could be an indication that most of the head teachers were familiar with integration of special needs education and would possibly support the implementation of the innovation.

The results showing the level to which integrating learners with special needs was a success is given in table 2.

Table 2. Level of success in integrating learners with special needs

No.	Level of success	Frequency	Percent
i.	Very Successful	18	8.4
ii.	Successful	132	61.3
iii.	Not Successful	65	30.3
	Total	215	100.0

As shown in Table 2, the integration of learners with special needs in schools in Eldoret municipality was regarded successful as indicated by the percentage of teachers that were of the view that the level was either very successful (8%) or successful (61%). The Success of integration as an innovation, however, is relatively dependent on school factors which are crucial in this study. These factors included teachers' familiarity with integration process and availability of resources and facilities. Such factors interact within the learners' school environment that determines how they actually respond to their circumstances and, indeed how teachers provide for them. Despite the fact that teacher training on special needs education and availability of resources were not adequate, teachers in integration schools were positive about the process of integration and said it was a success.

Teachers' responses on availability and adequacy of educational resources for learners with special needs are shown in table 3.

Table 3. Availability and adequacy of educational resources for learners with special needs

No.	Resources	Frequency	Percent
i.	Available and adequate	31	14.3
ii.	Available but not Adequate	112	52.1
iii.	Not available	72	33.6
	Total	215	100.0

Fifty two percent (52%) of the respondents were of the view that physical resources and facilities required for the integration of learners with special needs in public primary schools were available but not adequate. However, thirty four percent (34%) of the respondents were of the opinion that the facilities were not available (Table 3). Thus, according to eighty six percent (86%) of the respondents, the facilities were either inadequate or unavailable.

Physical factors cannot be ignored in implementing an innovation such as integration of special needs education. Oluoch (2002) notes that schools that are prepared to embark on the new curriculum should be those ones which can procure the necessary facilities and equipment. For example, one would expect to find acceptable facilities for teachers and pupils in the schools which are ready for curriculum improvement. This study, however, found out that schools in the municipality were not sufficiently equipped and so ill prepared for integration.

Inadequate facilities and lack of relevant materials is one of the major obstacles to the implementation of inclusive education in developing countries as shown by Kristensen *et al.* (1997) and Kisanji (1995). They further noted that in most regular schools where children with disabilities were integrated, the required materials were not provided for or were inadequate. Katwishi (1988) further showed that there were no specialist teachers in most mainstream schools that would provide important advisory services to assist regular teachers with managing learners with special needs who were being integrated. Table 4 shows the different types of curriculum used by primary schools in Eldoret municipality.

Table 4. Type of Curriculum used by primary schools

	Frequency	Percent
Differentiated Curriculum	18	8.4
Ordinary Curriculum	148	68.9
Both Differentiated & Ordinary Curriculum	31	14.3
Don't Know	18	8.4
Total	215	100.0

Also, most municipal schools used ordinary curriculum and few schools used differentiated curriculum. As shown in Table 4, sixty nine percent (69%) of the respondents concurred that the schools used ordinary curriculum; fourteen percent (14%) of them were of the view that both ordinary and differentiated curriculum were used in the schools; eight percent (8%) differentiated curriculum while another eight percent (8%) of the respondents did not know the kind of curriculum used in the schools. Learners have diverse needs and some of the needs require specialized attention which can only be offered by an expert. Ordinary curriculum is, however, examination oriented and tends to ignore the needs of challenged learners. This requires flexibility in terms of content and teaching approaches to meet each learner's needs (Ndurumo, 1993).

According to KISE (2000), a differentiated curriculum is an attempt to modify the regular curriculum to meet the individual needs of the learner. Although teachers were positive about integration, the use of ordinary curriculum implies learners with special needs were not adequately catered for. Some teachers were not even aware that there is a differentiated curriculum, hence used the ordinary curriculum indiscriminately.

Figure 3 presents the proportion (%) of respondents with various views on availability of facilities in schools that could be used to assist learners with special needs.

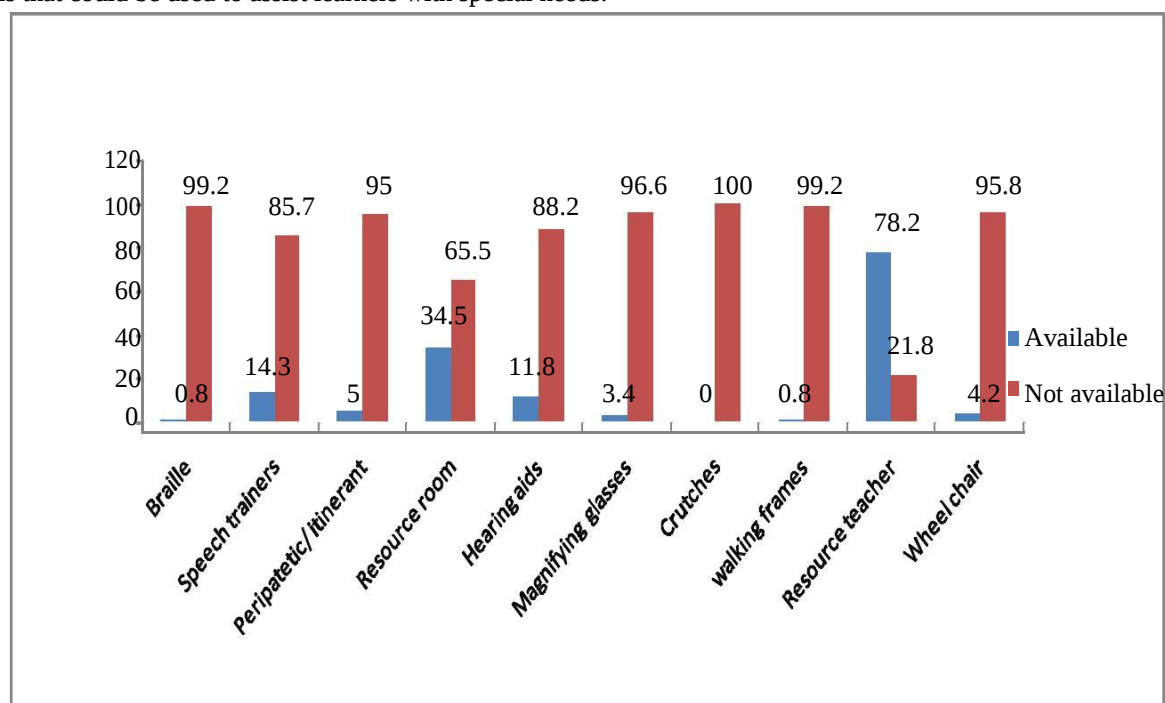


Figure 3. Availability of facilities required to assist special needs learners

From figure 3, most of the facilities required for learners with special needs were not available in public primary schools in Eldoret municipality. Although some schools had resource teachers (78%) and resource rooms (34%), over eighty percent (over 80%) of the respondents were of the view that facilities like Braille, speech trainers, itinerants, hearing aids, magnifying glasses, crutches, walking frames and wheel chairs were not available in the schools. This means that even the resource teachers in the schools could be ill-equipped to assist the learners with special needs. Results of interview schedules indicated that some schools had made adaptations when planning for programmes to integrate learners with special needs and these included the following: ramps, desks, seating arrangements and classrooms. The results, however, indicated that desks that were adapted for use by learners with special needs seemed to be the main form of adaptability by schools.

A study conducted by Agbenyega and others (2005) in Ghana showed that apart from some teachers' negative beliefs about integration and concern for their professional competency to practice integration, resource issues also generated a lot of concern. Resource issues addressed physical aspects such as

inaccessible classrooms to students in a wheel chair, overcrowded classrooms; materials such as Braille and large prints. This is in agreement with this study, that lack of facilities is a major hindrance to the innovation.

Figure 4 presents the proportion (%) of respondents with different liking for integration of learners with special needs (that is, whether they were highly positive, positive, negative or highly negative about the integration).

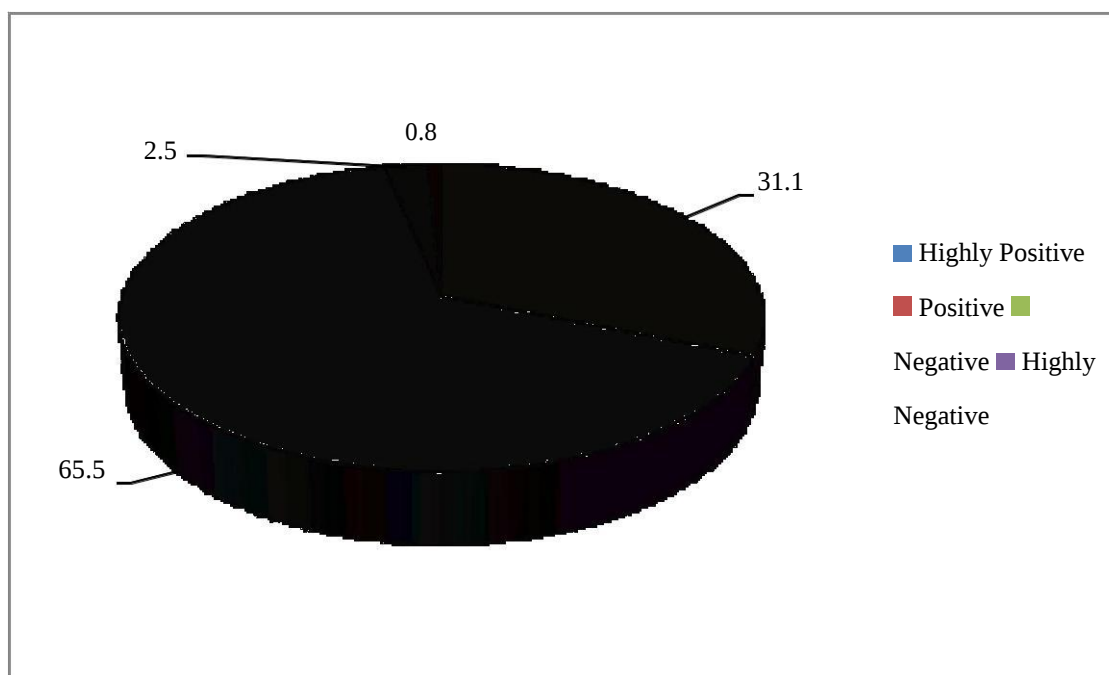


Figure 4. Rating of liking for integration of learners with special needs

From figure 4, thirty one percent (31%) of the respondents were highly positive about the integration while sixty six percent (66%) of them were positive, meaning that the total percentage of teachers that had liking for integration of learners with special needs was ninety seven percent (97%). The general liking for integration may be as result of training the teachers undergo and the 3% who don't like integration could be attributed to other school factors that influence integration.

Results of interview schedules indicated most of the teachers liked integration of learners with special needs very much or averagely. This indicates that very few do not like integration of learners with special needs. All of the teachers would either recommend or highly recommend integrative approach.

CONCLUSIONS

From the findings gathered in the study the following conclusions were made:

1. Most teachers in the Municipality were familiar with special integration of SNE. They were aware that they were supposed to teach them alongside 'normal' learners by modifying the ordinary curriculum to suit their individual needs.
2. Other than availability of resource teachers, physical facilities and resources in schools were either unavailable or inadequate thus hindering integration of learners with special needs in public primary schools. The most obvious facilities like ramps, resource room, and so forth were not available in most schools, which would negatively affect adaptation of special needs learners to the school environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Varied approaches when teaching learners with special needs in an integrative environment should be used.

2. Curriculum need not be examination oriented but adjusted to suit the individual needs of learners.
3. Public schools should be equipped with basic facilities to cater for learners with special needs.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to Moi University.

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BIO-DATA

Lusweti Pamela Musikhe was born on 25/05/1960 in Samia, Busia County. She is married and a graduate teacher at Moi Marula. She went to Nangina Girls for her O' levels in 1975 to 1978 and later joined Kisii TTC for P1 training in 1980. She joined Moi University for B.ed (ECDE) in 2004 and later a master's degree in special education in 2010. She also a lecturer in ECDE (diploma); been examinations coordinator; science head and mobilised/taught learners/parents in campaigns against HIV/AIDS and attended AMPATH (TOT), SMASE, HIV/AIDS workshops/seminars and computer packages. Her research interests are in special needs education.