



**EXAMINING SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY  
PREPAREDNESS FOR TRANSITION OF YOUNG ADULTS  
WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY FOR INDEPENDENT  
LIVING IN SELECTED COUNTIES, KENYA**

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**Abstract:**

Despite the Government of Kenya's commitment to provide education for all its citizens including those with disability, those with mild and moderate ID seem not to proceed for further education, training, employment and settling in their community after special or primary school. The main goal of the study was to examine the school and community preparedness for transition of young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disability for independent living in Kiambu and Murang'a counties, Kenya. The specific objectives of the study were investigated barriers to successful transition of young adults with intellectual disability for independent living and to establish the levels of independent living among young adult graduates with intellectual disability within the last five years in Kiambu and Murang'a counties. The study adopted descriptive research design which utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. Target population was 239 headteachers, 405 SNE teachers, 1,200 young adults in school, 600 young adult graduates and 199 opinion leaders in 9 special schools and 230 special units. Purposive sampling method was used to select 120 young adult learners, 60 graduate, 30 headteachers and 20 opinion leaders while simple random sampling method was used to select 48 SNE teachers to participate in the study. This gave a total of 278 study respondents. Questionnaires and interview guides were used to collect data. The study established that dual diagnosis, assistance of taking medication independently, medical condition, running or wandering from home and loneliness were the main barriers to independent living for adult learners with ID. The study found out that the level of

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independent living was low among individuals with intellectual disabilities in the schools and units of study. After graduating from special schools and units, majority of learners with ID went back home and they were not engaging in any activity after school. Among the few who were engaging in activities after school, most of them were doing beadwork and weaving, hairdressing, farming, carpentry and dressmaking. Others were employed in their former schools/units as security guards. Graduation of the learners with intellectual disability was not considered as a very relevant process and hence most schools were not given any certification to learners with ID. This is despite most of the teachers and headteachers reporting that learners with ID graduated after learning the required skills. The study recommends that; the government through the Ministry of Education should create a special class in secondary schools for those in the borderline; provide policy that Ministries, NGOs, private sectors among others should employ young adults with ID to promote independent living.

**Keywords:** independent living, community preparedness, transition and intellectual disability

## 1. Introduction

Transition from school to the society is an exciting but challenging period, which see the youth between their teenage to mid-twenties setting off on adult roles (Jekielek & Brown, 2005). Transition curriculum is part of education which is a prerequisite for providing the required environment for securing people's economy, wellbeing, good health, security, participation in political and social activities and liberty. Dieffenbach (2012) in a study on developmental disabilities and independent living found that many of those individuals in Minnesota in United States were capable of living on their own or with a roommate, when provided with an adequate level of support services and most of them desired to live in more independent settings. Papay (2011) in a study on best practices in transition to adult life states that comparative studies have found significantly higher proportions of successful employment outcomes for youth with ID who received work experiences or vocational education and youth who had participated in a program that included transition planning, age-appropriate inclusion, and interagency collaboration than for youth who did not have these experiences.

Article 23 in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989 stipulates that the child's education shall lead to the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development having the right to enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. However, this has not been the cases as young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disability have not fully benefited from special and regular education even after being in school for decades in Kenya. After leaving school, these learners who are now adults join the community but remain dependent. Majority of young adults with ID continue to be in special schools and

special units irrespective of their age, ability and duration of schooling (Thressiakutty & Rao, 2001). At times, uninformed people believe persons with ID are not capable of obtaining and holding a job. As a result, they rarely become productive members of their society after leaving school and joining their community (Gargiulo, 2009).

Chomba, Mukuria, Kariuki, Tumuti and Bunyasi (2014) in their research paper recognize Kenya's great potential for enhancing education for individuals with ID in developing programs for special education in institutions of higher learning and in starting special schools and units. This has led to improved enrolment of children with ID in special schools and special units. It has also enhanced improvement in teacher expertise in handling learners with ID. However, the goals of education for individuals with ID which are geared towards achievement outcomes that enhance self-sufficiency, including adult responsibility and community membership have not been achieved in Kenya. Out of the issues facing transition of young adults with mild and moderate intellectual disability, the researcher examined how prepared the school and the community were for effective transition.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Despite the Government of Kenya's commitment to provide education for all its citizens including those with disability, those with mild and moderate ID seem not to proceed for further education, training, employment and settling in their community after special or primary school. For instance, a study by Makanya (2012) found that 16 students had graduated between years 2005 and 2010 and only 10 were traceable because they were working in the institution of study. According to this study, there were 100 trainees in the vocational center of study out of a total of 300 in all other special institutions with vocational training in Kiambu County during the time of the study. It was against this background, the researcher sought to find out where learners that had undergone education and training had gone and where those undergoing the same were intending to go after graduating from special schools and special units in Kiambu and Murang'a Counties.

### **1.2 Specific Objectives**

1. Investigate barriers to successful transition of young adults with intellectual disability for independent living in Kiambu and Murang'a counties;
2. Establish the levels of independent living among young adult graduates of special schools and special units for learners with intellectual disability within the last five years in Kiambu and Murang'a counties.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Barriers to Independent Living for Individuals with Intellectual Disability**

Previous studies have shown that majority of individuals with ID struggle with managing their daily living activities independently and hence depend on the family and

community support (Ramdoss et al., 2012; Hale, Trip, Whitehead, & Conder, 2011; Vilaseca et al., 2017). Most of the challenges individuals with ID face range from difficulties with personal care and household activities, to trouble with community participation and employment. For instance, a study by Ruteere (2013) on the effectiveness of teaching methods for daily-living skills to learners with intellectual disability in special units in primary schools revealed that learners with intellectual disability were not taught daily living skills effectively because teachers did not use appropriate teaching methods, strategies, or correct teaching/learning materials. It further emerged that majority of the teachers (78.0%) were not trained to teach learners with ID. In another study, Musima (2014), established that employers were less willing to offer employment opportunities to persons with ID due to lack of supportive documents, lack of community awareness, inadequate follow-up, poor communication skills among trainees and low productivity. The current study sought to find out how ready the school and community were towards helping the individuals with ID become productive and lead their lives independently finally coming up with appropriate recommendations.

Murungi (2019) investigated job preparedness among learners with intellectual disability in Nakuru County. The study targeted 2 headteachers, 30 teachers and 196 parents for learners with ID in Nakuru hills and Pangani special schools. Among them a sample of 32 study respondents (2 headteachers, 10 teachers and 20 parents) was selected to participate in the study. The study established that transition from school to work in the special schools is not given much attention hence having over aged learners in the school. The major factors which hindered proper preparation of the learners for transition included lack of interdisciplinary transition teams in the schools and lack of adequate teaching and learning resources aimed at preparing the learners for life after school. From these findings, it was suggested that government through the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology should pay attention to the current and future needs of learners with intellectual disability to enable them to prepare to join the world of work with ease.

Sandjojo, Gebhardt, Zedlitz, Hoekman, Haanand Evers (2019) carried out a study with an aim of finding out how independence of people with intellectual disabilities can be promoted. The study population comprised of legal representatives and support staff promoting independence in this population. The sample comprised of 7 individuals with intellectual disabilities, 13 legal representatives and 17 support staff. Data used for the study was collected through focus group discussions and analyzed qualitatively using an inductive approach. The study found out that although people with ID required support from others, majority of them wished to lead an independent life. The most common barriers experienced by support staff and legal representatives during the promotion of independent living among people with ID included lack of time among the support staff, family taking up tasks allocated to individuals with ID, emotional difficulties among the individuals with ID and greater exposure to hazards. This study therefore suggests that in order to promote independence among the persons with ID,

more support and time is required as well as clear step-by-step tailored approach and good communication between all parties involved.

## **2.2 Levels of Independent Living among Graduates of Special Schools, Special Units and Vocational Institutions**

Gargiulo (2012) notes that becoming a productive, self-sufficient, and independent adult frequently remains an elusive goal for youth with ID. However, this is not the cases since most of the graduates of special education programs do not yet participate fully in the economic and social mainstream of their communities. Gargiulo (2012) found out that today, many individuals with intellectual disability either are under employed or remain unemployed. This finding was further supported by Makanya (2012) whose study on vocational education and community integration of young adults with ID established that only few individuals with ID had jobs in their former school, the rest trainees just left for their homes. Similarly, Musima (2014), investigated factors influencing low transition rates of learners with ID from vocational training to employment in Nairobi. The study found out that some learners remain in school even after vocational training so long as they can be accommodated, and that job placement is not adequately addressed. Many youths with intellectual disability have unexplained exit from school hence low employment and low independence level. The current study therefore sought to establish what schools and communities were doing to support these young adults towards independent living.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Research Design**

The study adopted descriptive survey design which utilized both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. These two approaches complement each other and were preferred in this study in order to elicit as much information as possible to answer the research questions (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie & Turner, 2007). This also allowed the researcher to combine elements of qualitative and quantitative research approaches so as to compensate for the weakness of one single approach with the strengths of the other in order to achieve the best outcome (Creswell & Clark, 2011).

### **3.2 Target Population**

The target population comprised 9 special schools and 230 special units in regular schools. The study targeted 239 headteachers, 405 teachers, 1200 young adults in school, 600 young adult graduates and 199 opinion leaders which added up to a target population of 2643.

### **3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Techniques**

Simple random sampling method was used to select 6 special schools and 24 special units out of the targeted 9 special schools and 230 special units in Kiambu and Murang'a

counties. The researcher also employed this technique to select 48 SNE teachers who participated in the study. Purposive sampling method was used to select 120 young adult learners, 60 graduate, 30 headteachers and 20 opinion leaders. In total, the study sample comprised of 278 respondents.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

Data collected from the field was both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Quantitative data was coded and entered into the computer using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The statistics used to analyze quantitative data included frequency counts and percentages. On the other hand, qualitative data was analysed using content analysis and findings presented in prose form. The results of the analysis were then presented using tables.

## 4. Research Findings

### 4.1 Barriers to Successful Transition of Young Adults with Intellectual Disability

The first objective of the study was to analyze barriers to successful transition of young adults with intellectual disability for independent living in Kiambu and Murang'a counties. To address this objective, the researcher first sought to establish whether learners with intellectual disability face barriers while leading an independent life. In response to this, all the headteachers and teachers (100.0%) agreed that they face challenges. This finding, concurred with the result by Reed, Strouse, Jenkins, Price, Henley & Hirst (2014) who found out that those individuals with disabilities and senior citizens faces varying challenges while leading an independent life. Table 4.1 demonstrates various factors which were considered as barriers to independent living of learners with intellectual disability.

**Table 4.1:** Barriers to independent living of learners with intellectual challenges

Factors	Headteachers				Teachers			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Dual diagnosis (intellectual disorder)	22	84.6	4	15.4	45	100.0	0	0.0
Medical condition	22	84.6	4	15.4	41	91.1	4	8.9
Assistance of household skills e.g. cooking	15	57.7	11	42.3	30	66.7	15	33.3
Assistance of taking medications independently	23	88.5	3	11.5	42	93.3	3	6.7
Assistance of daily living skills e.g. Bathing, Dressing	14	53.8	12	46.2	30	66.7	15	33.3
Personal safety e.g. Intruders	19	73.1	7	26.9	34	75.6	11	24.4
Running or wandering from home	17	65.4	9	34.6	39	86.7	6	13.3
Loneliness	14	53.8	12	46.2	36	80.0	9	20.0
Mobility difficulties	18	69.2	8	30.8	31	68.9	14	31.1

As shown in Table 4.1, over 70.0% of the headteachers felt that assistance of taking medications independently; dual diagnosis, medical condition and personal safety were the major barriers to independent living of learners with intellectual disability. Among

the teachers, majority of them reported that the major factors which were considered as barriers to independent living of adult learners with intellectual disability included; dual diagnosis (100.0%), assistance of taking medication independently (93.3%), medical condition (91.1%), running or wandering from home (86.7%) and loneliness (80.0%). Other barriers that were mentioned by the study respondents included; lack of finances, traditional myths, lack of enough support from the parents. This implies that there were so many barriers hindering learners with intellectual disability to graduate from special schools/units in order to start leading an independent life. In collaboration with these findings, opinion leaders who participated in interviews reported that one of the major barriers to learners with intellectual disability was lack of freedom to choose where to stay or whom to stay with. Other barriers mentioned were some parents are over-protective towards these learners; learners with ID lack the opportunity to proceed with education and also they are rarely given chance to work in firms or getting involved in community activities. In concurrence with the findings, previous researchers showed that individuals with intellectual disabilities face barriers while engaging in personal care activities, household activities, community activities and also employment related barriers (Dusseljee, Rijken, Cardol, Curfs & Groenewegen, 2011; Ramdoss, Lang, Fragale, Britt, O'Reilly, Sigafos & Lancioni, 2012; Smith, Shepley, Alexander & Ayres, 2015). As a consequence, these individuals relied on the support they received from their family members and others taking care of them (Vilaseca, Gracia, Beltran, Dalmau, Alomar, Adam-Alcocer and Simo-Pinatella, 2017). Additionally, Solish, Perry and Minnes (2010) in their study on participation of children with and without disabilities in social, recreational and leisure activities established that adolescents and young adults with disabilities have fewer friends and lower participation rates in social and recreational activities, perhaps resulting in greater loneliness.

Through focus group discussions, the researcher noted that most of the young adults with intellectual disability said that they lacked support from their parents, society and government, stigmatized in their families and also not offered job opportunities within the society. Another barrier raised by majority of the young adults with ID was lack of money. As quoted from young adults with intellectual disability:

*“Due to lack of money, I cannot manage to start my own business in order to lead an independent life. In addition, there are no jobs and community members, NGO’s and churches are not willing to support us.” (Learner 1)*

Additionally, further investigation was carried out with the young adults who had already graduated from the special schools and units. One of the specific goals of the researcher carrying out an interview with the graduates was to find out whether these learners face barriers while leading an independent life after school. The following were some of the responses the researcher gathered.

As quoted from one of the graduates:

*“Nilimaliza shule mimi. Sijui miaka yangu. Nyanya mzee sana na mama alikufa. Nataka kupata bibi. Wasichana wanataka pesa. Sina pesa. Nafanya kazi ya kutega fuko ninapewa 50 bob. Nalala kwa room moja. Nataka watoto wangu (Graduate 1)”*

*“I finished school, but I do not know my age. My grandmother is very old and mother passed on sometimes back. I would like to marry but I have no money to seduce girls to love me. My job is to trap moles and get 50 shillings per one. I sleep in a single room and desire to have children of my own.” (Graduate 1)*

Another graduate said that:

*“Mimi najua kutengeneza necklace, bag ya beads ikona flag. Sina pesa yakununua vitu ya kutengeneza.” (Graduate 2).*

*“I know how to make necklaces and bags with colors of the flag using beads. I have no money to buy materials to sustain my work.” (Graduate 2)*

Another graduate lamented that:

*“Natengenezanga necklace na bags. Nazunguka huko hawanunui sana, sasa nakosa pesa yangu. (Graduate 3)*

*“I make ornaments and bags, go round selling them but they do not buy in plenty, so I do not get adequate income. (Graduate 3)*

The above presented findings were confirmed by Nyaga (2015) whose study on the determinants of access and education achievement of learners with ID in Embu special school discovered that the major barriers for learners with intellectual disability to lead an independent life were inadequacy of financial support, poor levels of community and parental awareness of the importance of SNE, limited job vacancies and stigmatization.

#### **4.7 Levels of Independent Living Among Graduates**

The second objective of the study was to establish the levels of independent living among graduates of special schools and special units within the last five years in Kiambu and Murang'a counties. To achieve this goal, the researcher first asked the headteachers and teachers whether they made any follow up of the young adults with intellectual disability who graduates from their special schools/units. Table 4.2 illustrates results obtained.



**Table 4.2:** Respondents' follow-up of the special school/unit graduates

Response	Headteachers		Teachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	20	76.9	34	75.6
No	6	23.1	11	24.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Data presented in Table 4.2 depicts that 20 (76.9%) headteachers made follow up of graduates while 6 (23.1%) of them indicated that they did not make any follow up. Out of the 45 special school/unit teachers, 34 (75.6%) made follow up of the adult graduate learners while 11 (24.4%) did not make any follow up. This shows that a significant proportion of the headteachers and teachers were making follow up of the learners after graduating from their special schools/units. This proved that both headteachers and teachers were in a position to tell what their former pupils were doing after graduating from school. This finding concurs with Baer, Daviso, Flexer, Queen and Meindl (2011) who found out that most of the teachers were making follow-up of young adults with ID one year after high school completion. Further analysis was done with an aim of establishing whether graduates engage in any activity after school to earn a living and lead an independent life. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.3:** Respondents views in relation to young adult graduates' engagement in activity after school

Response	Headteachers		Teachers	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Yes	11	42.3	13	28.9
No	15	57.7	32	71.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Results presented in Table 4.3 shows that 42.3% of the headteachers and 28.9% of the teachers approved that young adult graduates engage in various activity after school to earn a living and lead an independent life. However, a significant number of them (57.7% of the headteachers and 71.1% of the teachers) felt that graduates were not engaging in any activity after school. This is a clear indication that young adults were not fully prepared for transition and hence most of them were not engaging in any income earning activities after school. However, among the few who were engaging in activities after school, most of the activities they were doing included; beadwork and weaving, hairdressing, scooping sand, farming, rabbit keeping, employed at school as a cook, assisting their parents, carpentry, casual work, dressmaking and security work (guarding gates mostly in their former schools). This concurred with Meadows, Alcorn, Beamish, Davies, Elias, Grimbeek and Punch (2006) whose research on the identification of where students with disability transit to after graduating from schools, found out that this cohort (individuals with intellectual disability) is underrepresented in employment and vocational education training. In yet another study, Parmenter (2011) found that post-school employment opportunities for youth with disabilities such as intellectual

disability are much lower as compared to the job opportunities for peers without disability

Similarly, Gargiulo (2012) found out that many individuals with intellectual disability either are under employed or remain unemployed. More so, previous studies by Grigal, Hartand Migliore (2011); Lipscomb et al. (2017) discovered that comparing learners with intellectual disability and their peers with learning disabilities, communication disorders, and emotional disorders, as well as their peers without disabilities, individuals with ID are less likely to participate in post school activities such as education, employment, and independent living. This is because learners with ID are less likely to have employment experiences than young adults with other health impairments (Lipscomb et al., 2017). The study findings demonstrated that most of the headteachers and teachers accepted that graduates of their schools did not engage in profitable activities/employment that would facilitate smooth transition to the community in support to independent living. The study suggests urgent intervention be done to improve the situation if education process and life has to be meaningful to all humanity in the society. Table 4.4 illustrates areas where young adults go after graduating from special schools/units.

**Table 4.4:** Young adults after graduating from special schools/units

After graduating young adults join/go.....	Headteachers				Teachers			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Secondary school	4	15.4	22	84.6	0	0.0	45	100.0
Vocational training	7	26.9	19	73.1	21	46.7	24	53.3
Polytechnic	2	7.7	24	92.3	16	35.6	29	64.4
Home	7	26.9	19	73.1	22	48.9	23	51.1
To look for job	3	11.5	23	88.5	10	22.2	35	77.8
Self-employment	2	7.7	24	92.3	6	13.3	39	86.7
Cleaning and security work	1	3.8	25	96.2	0	0.0	45	100.0
I don't know	2	7.7	24	92.3	7	15.6	38	84.4

As shown in Table 4.4, two similar proportions (26.9%) of the headteachers reported that young adults joined vocational training after graduating from schools while others went back home. Among the teachers, 48.9% said that young adults went back home after graduating from special schools/units, 46.7% said that they joined vocational training, 35.6% joined polytechnic while 22.2% reported that they started searching for job after graduating from school. This shows that most of the learners with intellectual disability went back home while others joined vocational training after graduating from special schools/units. The proportion of the young adults who were on employment/ self-employment was very small. This could be probably as a result of lack of job opportunities, funds, lack of skills among the young adults or community unwillingness for offer jobs to learners with ID. Gargiulo (2012) confirms that the graduates of special education programs do not yet participate fully in the economic and social mainstream of their communities and that today many such individuals are either underemployed or

remain unemployed. In line with the results, a study by Makanya (2012) discovered that only few young adults had jobs in their former school while the rest of the trainees just left for their homes. Musima (2014) found that employers were less willing to offer employment opportunities to persons with ID due to lack of supportive documents, lack of community awareness, inadequate follow-up, poor communication skills and low productivity among trainees.

Through focus group discussions, the researcher asked the young adults with intellectual disability what they would like to do after graduating from special schools/units. Majority of them said that they would like to lead an independent life, secure a job, have a family and assist parents in their daily activities. For instance, one of the young adults said that:

*“Nii ngenda gutuika administration police na GSU aria mathiaga Embakasi namarori. Njake nyumba ya ngoroba nahikie muiritu wa deputy ndimutware kuu.” (Learner 2)*

*“I would like to be an administration police or GSU who go to Embakasi by lorries, build a storied house and marry the daughter of our deputy.”*

Another one said that:

*“Nyumba yakwa, hikie Beatrice, Mbeca ngamuhe. Kurera ciana ciakwa na Beatrice. Duka ya migathi na bag (Learner 3).”*

*“I want to have my own house, marry Beatrice, have our own children and be able to take care of them. I will keep a shop to sell ornaments and bags.” (Learner 3)*

This is a clear indication that although young adults with ID required support from others, majority of them wished to lead an independent life (Sandjojo, et al., 2019). Another said that:

*“Ngenda gutuika engineer thondekage itanda cia mbau. Ngathondekagira Ikinu gwitu. Mr. Njoroge niekunya menye.” (Learner 4)*

*“I want to be a carpenter to make wooden beds at Ikinu, my home. I will be taught carpentry skills by my teacher.” (Learner 4)*

The qualitative data analysis clearly reveals the wishes of young adults with ID to achieve independent status in life and acquire material things as anyone else in the community. Also revealed is the trust put on teachers to facilitate their achievement desires in the education process and also in life after school. Gargiulo (2012), confirms this finding by stating that for most individuals with or without intellectual disability, work is an important part of status, financial success and personal fulfillment and is a

vehicle for opportunities to participate in one's community and that sometimes there are people who believe that individuals with intellectual disability are incapable of obtaining and holding a job which is untrue because with appropriate training, such individuals are able to secure and maintain meaningful and gainful employment.

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study concludes that the major barriers to successful transition for independent living emerged to be dual diagnosis, medical condition and assistance of taking medication, wondering from home, loneliness, personal safety and intruders' attacks. Young adults graduating from special schools and special units studied went back home and many were not engaging in any income generating activities. The level of independent living was low among individuals with intellectual disabilities in the schools and units of study. The study recommends that:-

- 1) The government should come up with policies enforcing companies and other employment agencies to create job opportunities for young adults with ID.
- 2) Parents, family and community members should be involved and willing to offer transition services such as practice attachments, job opportunities to learners with ID after graduating from special units/schools, involving them in community activities, supporting them with finances to start business after school, among others. This will help in ensuring effective transition of learners with intellectual disability from a dependent living to an independent living.
- 3) The ministry of health should provide and assure free medication to all individuals with intellectual disability and sensitize them on how to take medicine on their own.

### Conflict of Interest Statement

On behalf of all the co-authors, I declare that author(s) have no conflict of interest with the manuscript.

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