



## HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ESTABLISHMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED PERSONS IN KENYA

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### Abstract:

This paper examines the involvement of the government in the development of education for the Visually Impaired (VI) persons in Kenya from the time such education was established to the present. The paper presents the government's hand in the strides made and the challenges experienced in the development of education through the years. In documenting the involvement of the government, the researchers employed the use of a historical research design in data collection, analysis and interpretation. Data was evaluated through external and internal criticisms. The historical inquiry was done by collection of archival data through archival research, collection of data through interviews and research into secondary materials in libraries. Data collected was analyzed qualitatively through triangulation and deduction of themes. The research findings in the paper provide an overview of the state of education for the VI learners in Kenya. The research findings reveal that whereas the government may not have done much towards supporting education for the VI, the government still played a significant role that has led to the current improved access to education for the VI learners in Kenya.

**Keywords:** special education, education for the visually impaired learners, government's participation, Kenya

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## 1. Introduction

Despite the fact that special schools for the VI in Kenya were established immediately after the Second World War, the state of this education is still not sufficient enough to satisfy the educational needs of all the VI learners. The pace of its development has been slow despite several steps that have been undertaken in promoting it. This makes it crucial to establish the government's involvement in the development of education for the VI through the years to establish why, despite Kenya's high achievement in education, Special Education (SE) for the VI has lagged behind. This is because history informs the present and the future.

Education for the Visually Impaired (VI) learners in Kenya started in 1946 through the establishment of Thika Institute for the Blind. Kiarie (2004) however notes that children of primary school going age with visual impairments were not adequately accommodated in the education system for a long period even after the establishment of this type of special education. This is attributed to lack of sufficient assistance from key stake holders such as the government of the time. In agreement with Kiarie, Mwangi (2013) notes that most of the developments realized in SE in Kenya up to the 1970s were largely expedited by volunteers such as the missionaries and private organizations. The government's participation was thus minimal being limited to provision of the general curriculum and later training of teachers for the deaf in the 1960s. Even though there is limited literature on the extent of governments involvement in education for the VI, Mwangi (2013) alludes to the fact that there was minimal involvement in funding and formulating policies for Special Education (SE) by the government during this period. From the 1960s however, the government started being involved through funding and taking over the management of most of the institutions that were offering SE (MoEST, 2003).

In her study on development of education for the physically challenged learners in Kenya Kamere, (2004) observes that the Government of Kenya has shown some commitments towards development of SE in terms of improving quality and access to education system to all Kenyans including those with special educational needs such as the VI. She argues that these commitments are demonstrated by ratification and domestication of various global policy frameworks in education. These include among others the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the 1990 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the 1994 Salamanca Statement, the 1999 Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (SNE), and the 2000 Millennium Development Goals and EFA. There have also been various education commissions and committees since Kenya's independence (1963) initiated by the government, whose policy recommendations have been used as a guide in providing education to the learners with special educational needs such as the VI. These include among others the Committee on Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled [Ngala Mwendwa Report] (1964), Kenya Education Commission [Ominde Report] (1964), National Education Commission on Education Objectives and Policies [Gachathi Report] (1976) and the Presidential Working

Committee on Education and Training for the next Decade and Beyond [Kamunge Report] (1988). Others are Commission of Inquiry into Education Systems [Koech Report] (1999), The Children's Act (2001), The Task Force on SNE [Kochung Report] (2003), the Persons with Disabilities Act [PDA] (2003) and the Gender Policy in Education (2007).

While the National Review of Education for All Report of 2015 alludes to the fact that some recommendations of these commissions have been used in directing and guiding provision of education for learners with special needs and disabilities such as the VI (GoK, 2015), Adoyo and Adeny (2015) observe that most of these previous recommendations have not been legalized or harmonized for smooth provision of SNE. There however seems to be lack of a study that has analyzed in detail how the recommendations of these reports have affected education for the VI or that of special education in general. This study therefore strived to analyse how the recommendations from these reports have affected the development of education for the VI in Kenya.

Abilla, (1988) also notes that despite tremendous growth of educational services by the government, educational prospects for learners with special needs and disabilities have lagged behind in the education sector. The majority of learners that require SNE in Kenya have had poor access to educational services. For example, in the year 1999, out of the estimated 55,000 children with special needs and disabilities within the school-going age bracket, only 22,000 learners were enrolled in special schools (primary and secondary), special units and integrated programs (GoK, 2010). This number of enrolled learners with special needs is further shown to be small when compared to a total of over 10 million learners that were enrolled in the primary and secondary schools (GoK, 2015). Even though the number of SNE learners rose to 26,885 in 2003 and 45,000 in 2008, there were still a large number of children with disabilities that were out of school (GoK, 2015).

The studies mentioned under this section reveal that the government has been involved to some levels in provision of education for the VI as a subset of special education in Kenya. This includes provision of funds to support the program as well as policy formulation to guide the running of the program. Studies reviewed however only point to the government's involvement in special education after Kenya's independence in 1963 although special education had been introduced way back in 1946. This creates a gap that this study sought to fill by documenting on government involvement right from the time education for the VI was introduced in the country. The studies reviewed here also fail to provide a detailed analysis of how the level of government's funding and policy formulation have affected the development of education for the VI, a gap that this study sought to fill as well.

## **2. Methodology**

The study is a qualitative research that employed the historical research design. This involved systematic location, collection, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order

to establish facts and draw conclusions concerning past events, which is the intent of a historical research. This study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary sources included archival data and oral evidence from informants. Archival data search included analysis of reports as well as original documents such as educational reports and minutes as well as records from special schools for the VI. To ensure reliability of the data collected, the researchers carried out a dual process of establishing the authenticity (external criticism) of the sources and validity of their contents (internal criticism) as suggested by Parkash (2007). This was further enhanced by use of triangulation as suggested by Guion, Diehl & McDonald (2013). After the collection of data, the data was verified and validated before being used as historical evidence for the study. The evidence was then analyzed qualitatively. The developments in education for the VI as acquired from documentary sources and oral interviews were analyzed qualitatively through triangulation and emerging themes deduced.

## **2.1 Early Government Involvement and Formation of the Royal Society for the Blind 1944-1950**

Kenya was a colony of Britain and therefore before independence, the British Colonial government was in charge of education through the education department that was set up in 1911 (Sifuna & Oanda, 2014). While the colonial government was engaged in educational activities from 1912 through establishing of schools, providing grants-in-aid to missionary schools and policy formulation through various education commissions and ordinances, there was little effort and engagement in provision of education for disabled persons such as the VI up to mid-1940s.

It was not until 1944 that the government got interested in the experimental activities of training the blind by the Salvation Army in Nairobi that had been started in 1942 by Mrs. Barrell. The government gave a promise of financial assistance to the SA mission on condition that they would organize and maintain on a larger scale the welfare work for the blind which had already commenced (KNA, DC/TTA/3/15/1). The training for the blind at Nairobi was thus transferred to Thika town in Central Province of Kenya leading to the establishment of Thika Institute for the Blind in 1946 as the first institution of special education in Kenya.

At Thika Institute for the Blind, the government gave an undertaking to provide £1,000 per annum for payment of staff. In addition, the government committed itself to provide Shs.25/- (in East African currency) to the institute on monthly basis for each blind African Kenyan accommodated at the institute to meet the recurrent charges (KNA, MOH/3/282). In the case of non-Kenyan blind students from other East African Territories admitted to the institute, a fee of £50 per head was to be paid to Kenya Revenue Department on a yearly basis. The fees were to be paid by the respective governments of the country from which the blind student hailed from (KNA, MOH/3/282).

In 1946, payment of £2,000 was made to Thika Institute for the Blind by the Kenyan government in accordance to this undertaking. This sum included a small additional amount for contingencies. The financial support provided by the government was however insufficient to cater for the many needs that the institute had, considering that it was in its early years of establishment (KNA, MOH/3/282). It therefore became apparent to the government that a grant on the basis of enrolment was insufficient in meeting the recurrent costs of the institute. In the 1947 budget estimates, a grant of £3,225 was therefore allocated to the institute to meet the full deficit in the estimates approved by the advisory committee of the institute.

From 1947 onwards, a budget grant was regularly made in accordance with the recommendations of the advisory committee and subject to approval of the honorable secretary of finance (KNA, MOH/3/282). The establishment and early growth of Thika Institute for the Blind therefore had government involvement through provision of funds. One of the informants however, opined that the assistance was very minimal as a lot of the costs of the establishment was met by the Salvation Army (S. Bukhala, Oral Interview, June 6, 2018).

The involvement of the government in development of education for the blind was further boosted by the events in Britain. Back in Britain, the welfare and training of the blind was under a government body called National Institute for the Blind (KNA, MOH/3/282). In 1945 the British Colonial office together with the National Institute for the Blind, focused attention on the problems of blindness in its colonial empire. Within Britain, work among the blind had reached a leading position of competence and scope, but in the young, partly undeveloped lands in the colonial empire such as Kenya, it was quickly apparent that a major and a national problem existed. A committee was therefore set up jointly by the Colonial Office and the National Institute for the Blind to study the documentary and other evidence available on the state of the welfare of the blind in all the British colonies.

The committee soon found itself confronted with an immense field in Africa and the Middle East where blindness was indeed being combated, but on a scale that was clearly inadequate in the face of such wide spread problems. Delegations of the joint committee visiting the African colony, the Middle East and elsewhere took surveys of the situations as they were in these regions. In Kenya, the committee visited and stayed at the Thika Institute for the Blind just a few months after it had been established in the year 1946 (KNA, MOH/3/282).

The subsequent report of the committee which was published in a White Paper in March, 1948 depicted a somber and significant picture of human suffering and social loss (KNA, AB/14/34). It not only showed how little was being done but also showed how all the skill and money necessary to deal adequately with the situation, simply could not be found by the Colonies themselves. It was apparent that alone and separately, the colonies were in no position to initiate, much less to sustain, campaigns of the magnitude required, if they were to cope adequately with the needs of the blind (KNA, MOH/3/282). The joint committee's report therefore led to the realization of the

need to establish a central body to organize and facilitate all the activities that were to cater for the welfare of the blind not only in Britain but in all its colonies as well. The committee reiterated that the new body to be established was to provide positive leadership, and coordinate action by both governments and specialized societies. The new body was also expected to lead in the campaign that would befit the status and force of a great empire movement.

In January 1950, the Royal Empire Society for the Blind (RESB) was established as the proposed central body. RESB which was also commonly referred to as British Empire Society for the Blind therefore came into being, sponsored jointly by the Colonial Office and the National Institute for the Blind. The society was constituted as an independent limited company under the direction of an executive council with seven founder members. The sponsors appointed the first seven members of the new Society's Executive Council, but the number was subsequently enlarged to include members with financial experience and those with intimate knowledge of large-scale voluntary organization and colonial administration (KNA, MOH/3/282). As an independent company, RESB was empowered to take action in every territory of the British Colonial Empire to prevent blindness and to provide for the education, training, welfare and employment of blind people.

It was at this point that regional branches of RESB were formed in each of the British Colony territories. This led to formation of the Kenya Branch of the British Royal Society for the Blind. The first task of this body was to evolve a basic plan of action, and to create the organization required to carry the plan into effect. The plan required surveys of the blindness problem, adequate publicity, grants to establish or improve research, the establishing and assisting of eye hospitals and training centers and the provision of Braille presses. The Kenya Branch however prioritized two objectives namely: a) to conduct a survey of eye diseases in the colony which was linked to the provision of mobile clinic for treatment of eye diseases and b) to extend the work of the Thika Institute of the Blind. The committee published appeals for the funds from the Kenyan public in order to raise funds to support among others, education for the blind which had started at Thika Institute.

In an endeavor to promote training for persons with visual impairments, the Kenyan Branch engaged the activities of social welfare workers from the government to single out blind children from among various communities and recommend their placement at Thika Institute for the Blind and other institutions for the blind that emerged later such as the Shamba training centers (KNA, CA/3/49). Similar efforts were made by DCs on the request of the Thika Institute for the Blind.

## **2.2 Government Involvement from 1950 to 1963 and Formation of the Kenya Society for the Blind**

The period after 1950 was characterized by increased government involvement in the education and training of the blind besides other welfare issues as a result of then newly formed Kenyan Branch of the British Royal Society for the Blind. Apart from

simply identifying VI children, the government officers through the Kenyan Branch went a long way in trying to change the traditional societal attitudes which tended to view any disabled persons as valueless elements of society (Ojwando, 1990). This led to gradual increase of the number of students enrolled at Thika Institute for the Blind since many parents were now responding positively through allowing their VI children to be taken to school without resentment. In 1950 for instance, there were 46 learners enrolled at the institute but the population slightly increased to 51 in 1951 and to 56 by 1952 (KNA, MOH/3/282).

The Kenyan Branch continued with more efforts in an attempt to increase the welfare and education of the blind. In August 1953 for instance, there was a discussion between representatives of the Kenyan Government and the Kenya Branch of the British Royal Society for the Blind on possible government share in services to the blind (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4). These services included among others education, care and treatment as well as preventive measures on blindness. From the meeting, it was agreed as follows:

- 1) That an autonomous body be established in Kenya to carry out services on behalf of the government and philanthropic public.
- 2) That more primary schools for the blind such as the one that was at Thika be established elsewhere to increase access.
- 3) That Shamba training centers to be set up as an intermediate sound and economical method of rehabilitating many blind men and women.
- 4) That permanent workshops, possibly near Nairobi and Mombasa, for such activities as brush ware, coir fiber goods and the whole basket ware trade to be established.
- 5) That secondary schools for the blind be established in conjunction with training for the higher vocations
- 6) That resettlement and after care department for the blind be established.

These recommendations undoubtedly formed part of the blueprint for the developments in education for the VI that were realized gradually from the time they were made. Acting on the first recommendation, that an autonomous body be established in Kenya to carry out services on behalf of the government and the philanthropic public, the Kenyan government formed an ad hoc Committee for the Blind in December, 1953. The recommendation was based on the need by the local blind people to have an internal autonomous body that could manage the activities of the blind rather than the then Kenyan Branch of the British Empire Society for the Blind that relied on the Society's decisions in Britain. This move could also have been necessitated by the political agitation of the local Kenyans towards attaining self-governance.

The ad hoc Committee for the Blind was therefore established as an interim measure until such a time that the proposed new Foundation for the Blind would be established. The committee was charged with the responsibility of considering and making recommendations on all aspects of welfare for the blind in Kenya including education. The ad hoc committee was under the chairmanship of the director of medical

services with four officials and five non official members nominated by the Kenya Branch of the British Empire Society for the Blind (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4).

Among its first tasks, the committee came up with further recommendations on the role of the government. The committee agreed that the government should do the following: a) Establish Kenya Foundation for the Blind to replace the then Thika Advisory Committee, and continue with education Aid to Thika, b) Provide aid to other primary schools in the same measure as to mission schools, c) provide similar measures of aid to blind men and women in the Shamba training centers from Technical Training Department Funds and d) contribute 50 percent of capital expenditure for capital developments (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4).

The ad hoc committee further led the efforts of establishing a foundation for the blind through its engagement in drafting a bill that was aimed at establishing the said foundation. Upon consideration and approval by the Kenyan parliament in 1956, Kenya Society for the Blind (KSB) was established through an act of parliament CAP 251 of 1956. The opening statement of the act states as follows:

*“An Act of Parliament to establish a society to promote the welfare, education, training and employment of the blind and to assist in the prevention and alleviation of blindness; and for other purposes recorded therewith” (KSB Act, 1956).*

Through the act, the government delegated its responsibility of coordinating education for the blind to KSB. The society was charged with exclusive responsibility of promoting education for the blind and soliciting funds through philanthropic donations and gifts from well-wishers. No other person or party including the schools for the blind was to solicit funds for the blind without permission from KSB. Even though the Act was reviewed in 1984 and in 1988, KSB has remained an active agent in development of education for the VI since its establishment. In partnership with different missions, KSB took an active role in opening Shamba training centers for the blind, primary schools for the blind as well as technical institutes for the blind such as Machakos Institute for the Blind.

By the time of establishment of KSB, there were only a few educational institutions for the blind in the East African region. These institutions were not sufficient to meet the demand of the huge population of people who had visual impairments. In Kenya for instance, there was only Thika Institute for the Blind. In Uganda, there was a craft training school near Kampala and a Shamba Training Primary School at Teso aided by the Uganda Foundation for the Blind (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4). In Nyasaland (Malawi) the situation was slightly better because there were two mission schools for the blind children supported by Nyasaland Society for the Blind. There was however a negative tendency in Nyasaland where the two mission schools were becoming colonies for the blind persons by keeping the learners in the mission throughout without allowing them to return home for holidays (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4). The other territories including Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Southern Rhodesia



(Zimbabwe) and Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) had not commenced provision of organized educational activities for the VI (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4).

It was in this regard of the poor state of education for the blind in the entire East African region that the Kenya Society of the Blind in collaboration with blind welfare bodies of other East African countries organized for an inter-territorial conference on work for the blind. The conference was held from 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> of February in 1961 in Nairobi, Kenya. In attendance were stakeholders from countries in East Africa including Tanganyika, Uganda, Zanzibar and Kenya. There was also representation from Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia, and Nyasaland. The conference acted as a springboard in the development of education for the VI since it illuminated the poor state of this education and showed the need to act swiftly towards improving it (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4).

In the conference, it was noted that out of about three million blind persons in the commonwealth, about seven hundred thousand lived in Africa. Kenya for instance was noted to have had three times as many blind persons as Canada. Despite the high levels of blindness in the in the region, East Africa had only 300 children in school and 150 blind adults in training out of about 150,000 blind persons in the region. The conference brought to light the fact that despite the region having been the first in starting a Shamba training scheme, the number of the VI persons in employment was so small due to lack of adequate training of these individuals. The poor state of unemployment was contrasted to the state in the United Kingdom where one third of the blind were employed, mostly in open industry. The conference therefore emphasized that the techniques that were being used in the United Kingdom should be applied on a wider scale in the Royal Commonwealth region.

These findings in the conference did not only depict a serious neglect towards educating the blind but also showed the dire need for government's involvement towards educating the blind with regard to that large proportion of the blind that were not receiving any form of training. While tribal customs in East Africa had in the past assured blind persons of food and shelter, this was at a great economic cost to the family and the country, and these traditions were therefore losing their force in modern times creating a need for empowerment of the blind through education and training. It was therefore recognized that there was need to have a modern system of education and training for the VI so that the individuals could lead an ordinary life and make a place for themselves in the community. The participants were therefore urged to talk of practical beginnings and sound plans.

The 1961 conference played a key role in the development of education for the VI since it brought to the forefront the need to create more educational institutions for the VI. This was through the realization that the few schools for the VI in the territory provided much less capacity compared to the statistical figures of the blind in the region. For instance the incidence of blindness in Kenya was estimated to be 12 per every 1000 people, about 600 people in the whole of Zanzibar, 550 per 100,000 people in Uganda while there were no records for estimates in Tanganyika (KNA, DO/ER/2/6/4).

It was after this conference that a few more institutions for the blind were created in Kenya leading to a more improved access to education by the VI persons. These institutions include St. Oda School for the Blind established in 1961, Likoni School for the Blind established in 1965 and Kibos School for the Blind established in 1965. The training at the already established Machakos Institute for the Blind and at the two Shamba training centers at Kolanya and Chuka was also enhanced with introduction of more vocational courses (KNA, BY/12/21).

### **2.3 Governments Involvement in Post-Colonial Period 1963-2015**

Following Kenya's independence in 1963 the Kenyan government took a more active role in promoting education for the handicapped including the visually impaired learners. In 1964, the first post-independence educational commission, the Kenya Education Commission chaired by S.H. Ominde released its report. The Ominde committee however only dealt with special education concisely recommending that children with mild handicaps be integrated to learn in regular schools (GoK, 1964). This led to enrolment of VI learners with low vision in mainstream schools even though there was no any special consideration in learning for this group.

In the same year, 1964, the government formed the first taskforce that was directly charged with assessing and recommending persons that required special needs education such as the VI. The taskforce that was referred to as the Committee on Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled was chaired by Ngala Mwendwa (GoK, 1964). The committee made 28 recommendations concerning the handicapped but these recommendations were not implemented until in the early 1980s when the government started to pay increased attention in the special education field. The work of the commission however led to the formulation of Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1968 titled Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled which provided a framework for the development of special education.

This Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1968 formed a key milestone as far as special education policies were concerned. This is because prior to its establishment, education for the handicapped referred to as special education was not defined in either the constitution or the Education Act of 1968. It was this particular sessional paper that made clear not only what special education entailed but also laid down the specific course of action that was to be taken by the Ministry of Education in liaison with other agencies to provide education to the visually impaired in the country.

The paper had several objectives that aimed at providing a framework for the development of the welfare of the disabled such as the VI. Among these objective were the following: 1) to make an assessment of the numbers and types of disabilities in Kenya, 2) to investigate existing facilities for the education, training, settlement/employment of persons with disabilities, 3) to formulate a broad program of training and placement of the disabled involving community care designed to assist the economic independence of as many disabled persons as possible and 4) to examine and

make a report on the existing machinery for the co-ordination of services to disabled persons.

As a follow-up of recommendations from the report of the Committee of the Care and the rehabilitation of the Disabled, the sessional paper recommended that all chiefs and sub chiefs were to make a count of all persons with disability throughout their districts. This therefore created the first formal statistics on the state of disability in the country which could guide planning and expansion of related services such as education. In relation to educational services for the disabled, the paper recommended that efforts be made to integrate VI learners in regular schools. The paper also recommended that transportation be provided to learners with physical disabilities, so that they could attend school. The transportation was however to be provided by voluntary persons and agencies in conjunction with local authorities and not by the government. This paper also laid a plan for the establishment of special units in some regular schools especially in urban areas for learners with disabilities such as the VI. It reiterated that all schools that could provide educational services for learners with all forms of disabilities were to be treated as special schools and receive funding accordingly.

It can be concluded therefore that Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1968 influenced the establishment of the department of special education under the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1973. Even though this step was significant in the development of special education, it was the researcher's conviction that the department was supposed to be under the Ministry of Education rather than that of Home Affairs. This is because the Ministry of Home Affairs' main role was to provide rehabilitation and correctional services to convicts through the prison services. Bukhala (2018) seems to agree with this view pointing out that the Ministry of Home Affairs was only engaged in soliciting and registering external support for special education services from voluntary organizations with little educational support. An attempt to involve the Ministry of Co-operatives side by side with the education ministry to take care of the education aspect of the handicapped in Kenya was unsuccessful making the progress of special education sluggish (Ojwando, 1990).

The department was later transferred to the Ministry of Education to serve as an inspectorate and administrative unit for the purpose of effective management and supervision of special education programs such as the one that was being offered at Thika School for the Blind (TSB) (Ojwando, 1990). The government's establishment of a fully-fledged department of special education in the ministry of education led to positive developments to the programs that TSB as an institution offering SE education was engaged in (TSB, S/2/1994). This included the department's intervention in ensuring smooth clearance of learning materials and equipment for TSB at the customs office which had previously been a challenge.

Since most of the equipment's required for VI education came from abroad in terms of donations and as imports, the school was facing challenges of clearing these materials at customs office since they had to incur costs and it would take long for the

materials to be cleared. In 1986, the school made a request to the government through the ministry's special education department to waive the customs costs and facilitate easier clearance of such materials (TSB, S/2/1994). The government stepped in to facilitate smooth clearance of such equipment without imposing duty.

In addition to the facilitation of acquisition of materials and equipment, the government continued to support TSB through the special education department by continuing to send grants to the school. However, in most of the occasions, the funds were delayed and were insufficient to meet all the needs of the school. In 1976 for instance, the Head teacher of Thika Primary School for the Blind shared with the school's Board of Governors on the difficulties he was facing in running the school due to limited and sometimes complete lack of finances (TSB, P/2/1978). The head teacher, reported that the ministry of education was not sending enough grants to the school and more so, it was not sending it on time. He gave an example of the first quarter of the year 1977 where a sum of Kshs. 43, 750 was received from the ministry. This sum of money was to cater for workers' salaries that were amounting to KShs. 36, 000 thereby leaving only a small amount to run all other school activities (TSB, P/2/1978).

Another example of the government's involvement in education of the VI as special education was illustrated in the report of the National Committee on Educational Objectives and Policies referred to as the Gachathi Report of 1976 (GoK, 1976). Even though the committee was not concerned directly with special education, it made several recommendations some of which concerned the area of special education. These included coordination of early intervention and assessment of children with special needs, creation of public awareness on causes of disabilities to promote prevention, research to determine the nature and extent of handicaps for provision of SE, establishment of ECDE programs as part of special schools and development of policy for integrating learners with special needs. At TSB, these recommendations strengthened the programs of the Sunshine Home in the school which was officially recognized and supported by the government as an ECDE center of the school (TSB, P/2/1978).

The government's efforts towards education for the VI were further boosted in 1980, when the leadership of the time, by the then President, His Excellency Daniel Moi, engaged in raising of funds for the handicapped. This was however done through mobilizing for donations by individuals rather than enhancing the budgetary allocation for the same. The government leadership organized a massive Harambee (Fundraising drive) in which twenty five million Kenyan shillings was collected to help the handicapped such as the visually impaired (TSB, S/2/1994). The Harambee therefore generated the Disabled Fund from which TSB and other special schools received their shares.

In 1986, the government once again formed another commission, the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the Next Decade and Beyond (GoK, 1988). The report of the commission which is commonly referred to as the Kamunge Report was released in 1988. With reference to SE, the Kamunge Report made

several detailed observations and recommendations for different categories of SNE including the VI. Concerning education for the VI, Kamunge report made the following eight recommendations:

- 1) That the young VI children of pre-primary school age be integrated in regular pre-primary schools;
- 2) That the partially sighted be integrated in regular primary and secondary schools and be provided with necessary facilities and equipment including low vision aids to enable them learn effectively;
- 3) That the learning and examination needs of the VI students in sciences and applied subjects be catered for in the various curricula and examinations;
- 4) That the Kenya National Examination Council should make adequate provision for qualified transcribers and examiners, to cater for the special needs of the VI candidates;
- 5) That Sikri Vocational School be assisted to revive the operation of its braille press;
- 6) That there be increased government participation and co-ordination in the production and distribution of Braille materials;
- 7) That education and training institutions be encouraged to appropriate library services to their VI students.

The Kamunge report is therefore one of the reports that gave detailed recommendations for the VI. This recommendation affected positively the development of education for the VI in that it influenced the adaptation of the curriculum in science and applied subjects such as biology and agriculture, an aspect that had not been done before (TSB, S/1/2000). The recommendations also led to more considerations by the Kenya National Examinations Council towards the VI candidates such as addition of 30 minutes for every paper administered to the VI (TSB, S/1/2000).

Besides these recommendations that were specific to VI, the Kamunge report also made recommendations that led to deployment of SE inspectors at district level. The inspectors were to serve a critical role of maintaining necessary contact with schools, teachers and the community. They were to involve all stakeholders at different levels in areas of SE such as that offered at TSB. The committee also recommended cost sharing in education, a suggestion that was implemented almost immediately after the publication of the report. In effect, the government reduced its funding to all public schools, TSB included. The action shifted more burden of financing the school to parents of the VI at TSB and this led to financial constraints in the school since most parents were unable to bear the burden (TSB, S/4/1999).

In 1999 the Totally Integrated Quality Education and Training Taskforce was appointed. The taskforce's report commonly referred to as the Koech Report recommended the establishment of a national special education advisory board. It also noted that there was no comprehensive SE policy or legal framework on SE despite existence of various policy guidelines (GoK, 1999). The recommendations of the report were however not implemented with budgetary constraints allegedly being stated as a

basis for not implementing the recommendations. Amutabi (2003) has however criticized the lack of implementation of recommendations of the Koech report noting that the failure was linked to the politics of the time rather than the budgetary constraints as claimed. Nevertheless, some recommendations were later accepted which led to the setting up of the Kochung Taskforce (2003).

In 2003, the government formed the second taskforce since independence that was primarily charged with addressing the needs of handicapped persons. The report of the taskforce, Kochung Report (2003) gave rise to the Persons with Disabilities Act (2003) which was brought into force in June 2004. Prior to the enactment of this act, the objectives of SE in Kenya were contained in the Ministry of Education's Draft Policy for Special Education of 1981 and the Report of the Presidential Working Party on Education and Manpower Training for the next Decade and Beyond (Ojwando, 1990).

The Kochung taskforce was set to examine the challenges that individuals with special educational needs such as the VI face. Besides identifying those challenges, the report while borrowing from the Koech Report of 1999 however went further to providing a comprehensive legal framework which outlawed all forms of discriminative treatment of persons with special needs and disabilities. The report recommended that all persons with special needs should have access to education and training. It further reiterated that there should be adaptation of infrastructural, socio-economic and environmental facilities to ensure a conducive environment for persons with special needs and disabilities. The taskforce also led to the establishment of a National Council for Persons with Disability whose mandate was to implement the rest of the Act on the rights, privileges and protection of persons with disabilities such as inclusion of persons with disabilities in education and training programs.

In 2003, the government introduced free primary education. The money given by the government was used as subsidy of the fees that was paid for every student thus reducing the fees charged to the students. This brought much relief to parents of the VI learners most of whom were struggling to raise fees for their VI children since they were only levied the deficit of what the government funds could cater for as a supplement to government's contribution (TSB, P/1/2005). The government therefore enhanced its financial assistance to TSB and other special schools following the declaration of FPE.

Since 2003, the government has continued its engagement in education for the VI and other sectors of special education through both financial aid as well as policy formulation. In 2005 for instance, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2005 was formulated. The paper states in part the overall government policy direction on learners with special needs and disabilities. It sets out clear policy guidelines for all education sub-sectors, including SNE and further underscores the government's commitment to ensuring that learners with special needs and disabilities have equal access to quality and relevant education. It provides the overall policy framework for the education sector and references the necessary legal context within which education and training, including SNE, shall be designed, developed and implemented in Kenya. Currently, Kenya has

five special secondary schools and six special primary schools serving most of the VI students in the country. Additionally, the country has 19 units for students with visual impairments in regular education schools (MoEST, 2016). In addition, there are various other educational institutions for the blind such as Machakos Institute for the Blind.

### 3. Conclusion

The government has played a key role in fostering education for the VI in Kenya in general through its various departments. This has been demonstrated by its involvement in the establishment of the first institution for the VI in Kenya through provision of a capital grant and its continued support to the school through annual grants from Ministry of Education. The government has also supported education for the VI through policy programs such as commissions and conferences. These includes among others the Inter-territorial Conference on Work for the Blind of 1961, the Committee on Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled of 1964, Sessional Paper No. 5 of 1968 and the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2000. The government has been involved in establishment of bodies to run the affairs of the VI such as RESB in 1950, Kenya Committee for the Blind in 1953 and KSB in 1956 which is still in place to present. The government's participation in the development of education has therefore moved from simply supporting the private agencies to full owning up the educational programs for the VI.

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