



IMPLEMENTATION OF INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATIONAL PLAN AND ITS CHALLENGES IN NGALA SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF, NAKURU COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

The study aimed to establish the challenges in the implementation of the individualized educational plan in schools for students with hearing impairment at Ngala Secondary School for the Deaf in Nakuru County, Kenya. Data was collected from a target population of ninety-eight students, thirteen teachers and one administrator through purposive and stratified random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used on school administrators and teachers to select all 13 teachers and 1 school administrator. On the other hand, stratified random sampling was used to select a total of 24 students. The study sample comprised 24 students, 13 teachers and 1 administrator leading to a total of 38 respondents. The research instrument included the use of questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis. A pilot study was conducted at Kedowa Secondary School for the Deaf to enhance the reliability and validity of the research instruments. Quantitative data were cleaned, labelled, coded, entered into a computer and organized using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30. Quantitative data were analyzed statistically using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequencies. The analyzed data were presented using tables, bar-graphs and pie-charts. Qualitative data collected were grouped into different themes, presented as a narrative and discussed based on the objectives of the study. Findings revealed that the major challenge towards implementation IEP was the lack of adequate teaching and learning resources. The study concluded that the major solutions to the challenges facing teachers in developing and implementing IEP suggest that the provision of adequate resources for IEP were anticipated to enhance the academic achievement of students with hearing impairment. The study recommended that the Ministry of Education and other

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stakeholders should help acquire adequate resources for students with hearing impairment.

Keywords: implementation, individualized educational plan, students with hearing impairment, special needs education, special schools

1. Introduction

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) is a learner-directed planning and monitoring tool, which customizes learning all through secondary education expanding viewpoints and supporting the accomplishment of objectives (The State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations Department of Education 2010). IEP for students with special needs dates back to 1975 when Education for All Children Act (PL 94-142) was passed in the United States of America (Keogh, 2007). An IEP is an important monitoring tool for teaching students with disabilities. Its policy states that students must be actively engaged in the implementation and monitoring of IEP. Parents have a right to participate with the learner's educational team since the implementation of IEP is a joint responsibility of the IEP team (Yell, Bateman, & Shriner, 2020). The IEP team includes; special education teachers, regular teachers, administration, parents, students and professionals such as speech pathologists, and physical therapists among others depending on the child's needs. IEP for students' needs to be reviewed and updated yearly to ensure it fits the educational needs of the learner and plans for transition (Johnson & Seaton, 2020).

In Australia, the development of IEP for deaf students in the school districts of Queensland endeavors to deliberately join learners, parents and experts in the design of programs concentrated on the performance of the learner (The Queensland State Department of Education, 2020). In New Zealand, the Special Education Policy Guidelines Education Act 1989, states that similar rights and obligations should be agreed to by learners with SNE (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2003). In the United Kingdom, support for IEPs was given provision in 2002 through the Special Education Needs Code of Practice (SENCP) (Wilkerson, 2010). In Scotland, IEP must be implemented for students with educational needs in special schools and mainstream classes by stating short and long-term goals with an eighty percent target of achieving its success (Riddell, 2002). This implies that when appropriately implemented, it is going to benefit the students, parents, community and the stakeholders who engage in the process to ensure proper implementation of IEP.

Michael and Oboegbulem (2013) on learners with disabilities in an inclusive education setting in Nigeria reports that IEP yield positive academic achievement for students with Special Needs when students are appropriately placed and the teachers receive adequate training on IEPs in Nigeria. However, the country does not have a federal mandate on placement of students with disabilities and teachers have low-quality teaching of students with disabilities thus influencing academic planning by school administrators on school academic activities. In Kenya, a study was conducted by Ndanu

(2012) in Mwingi District, on the evaluation of the development of IEP by teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities in Kisumu and Nairobi counties and revealed that IEP enhances students' performance. The government of Kenya has rewarded them with extra remuneration for the extra work believed to be in these institutions such as the use of total communication. The challenge is that these schools produce low academic achievements on summative assessments of their students despite the special needs policy which requires all students with special needs to have IEPs to improve their academic achievements.

Teachers trained in SNE have been deployed to these schools to implement IEP's for learners with hearing impairment to improve on their academics so that they are at par with their hearing counterparts (Nakazibwe, 2018). Despite these efforts, the performance of students with hearing impairment in their final examinations mean grade is still low. This is evident as shown in Table 1.1 (Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education performance in Ngala Secondary School for the Deaf) the school under study. Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) (2014) reports that education outcome for learners with special needs is poor due to the challenges teachers experience while meeting the curriculum demands that need an IEP (Musili, 2020). This calls for an assessment of the implementation of IEP and students' academic achievement in the school on whether the government, other education stakeholders and partners are putting necessary efforts into the provision of education for students with hearing impairment based on the policy of IEP adoption in special education for positive educational outcomes.

1.1 Specific Objective of the Study

Specifically, the study sought to find out challenges in the implementation of the individualized educational plan in schools for students with hearing impairment.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework is based on Constructivist Theory of Instruction. Bruner (1966) explains that learning is an active process in which learners construct new ideas or concepts based on current and or past knowledge relying on cognitive structures. Instructors are to encourage students to discover principles actively by themselves. Curriculum instructions to learners are to be presented at the present level of learners' understanding and be organized spirally so that students build up from what has already been learnt thus being able to extrapolate concepts going beyond instructions given (Tobias & Duffy, 2009).

This theory applies to this study in that the students with hearing impairment are identified, assessed and placed in special schools for the deaf so that their academic needs are met. An IEP is to be developed by the teachers who are the curriculum implementers by finding out the learner's strengths and weaknesses and then coming up with short-

term and long-term objectives with specified evaluation procedures (Barrett & Long, 2012). Teachers play a major role in education for the deaf since they should have adequate training, a positive attitude, good communication skills with learners with deafness and appropriate pedagogical practices that will enable them to provide individualized curricular instructions that yield good academic results. However, when these teacher qualities are challenged then the student's academic results will be affected negatively yielding poor achievement.

2.2 Empirical Studies and Knowledge Gaps

President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education in United States of America in 2002 organized thirteen public meetings over a period of six months in all cities in The United States. Teachers tend to develop these documents, not with the sole agenda of working to improve learners' academic achievement but rather security for their jobs. Brown & Byrnes (2014) in a study on the development and use of individual learning plans for deaf and hard of hearing students in Victoria, Australia investigated IEPs of eighty-five sampled students from a target population of three thousand eight hundred who are deaf and hard of hearing by assessing student's assessment and planning portfolios.

Bwalya (2014) conducted research in Zambia on the preparation and use of individualized education plans in prevocational training in selected special education units in the Copperbelt province. It was found that teachers do not prepare and use IEPs since they are not trained in pre-vocational skills. They are not familiar with assessment and placement procedures for their students. This was further challenged by congestion in classes, inadequate resources and lack of teamwork, lack of understanding of the enactment, lack of knowledge of specialist terms or not recognizing what is being asked of them would all be able to fill in as hindrances to parental participation. Such negative demeanors of teachers and other school staff towards parents' inclusion in IEP practice may obstruct the implementation of IEPs for learners with SEN in mainstream education programs (Staples & Diliberto, 2010). In this manner, it tends to be said that the responsibility of IEP members to help out parents in the development of an IEP is a key issue. The IEP gives a decent chance to link the parents of SEN learners with staff in schools. Based on the above-mentioned, parents are an integral part of the process of improving the implementation of IEPs for learners with scholarly disabilities.

Al-Kahtani (2012) and Aldosari & Pufpaff (2014) on IEP process for students with intellectual disabilities in Saudi Arabia challenges and solutions assert that the degree of parental participation in special education activities for learners with hearing impairment, regardless of whether at home or at school, is to a great extent impacted by their educational level and the number of relatives. An ongoing report by Al-Kahtani (2012) looked at the hindrance to communication between teachers of learners with intellectual disabilities and their parents in special and mainstream schools in Riyadh. It found that the most significant of these deterrents could be credited to the parent dimension. However, a significant duty to parents in actualizing IEPs in mainstream

schools and the above examinations show a clear challenge to implementing policy in Saudi Arabia.

A local study by Ndanu (2012) revealed that challenges in the implementation of IEP have been identified for different categories of learners with disabilities. This research sought to find out challenges faced during the implementation of IEP and yield possible solutions to the challenges identified for students with hearing impairment in Ngala Secondary School for the Deaf. Collaboration among the IEP team is the key strategy in developing and implementing an IEP to yield positive academic outcomes however it faces challenges that when addressed its key objective will be achieved. Ndanu (2021) conducted a survey on the influence of IEP on students with learning disabilities in public primary schools in Mwingi District, Kenya and found out IEP enhanced learners' academic performance however inadequate teacher training and limited teaching/learning resources challenged its effectiveness.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

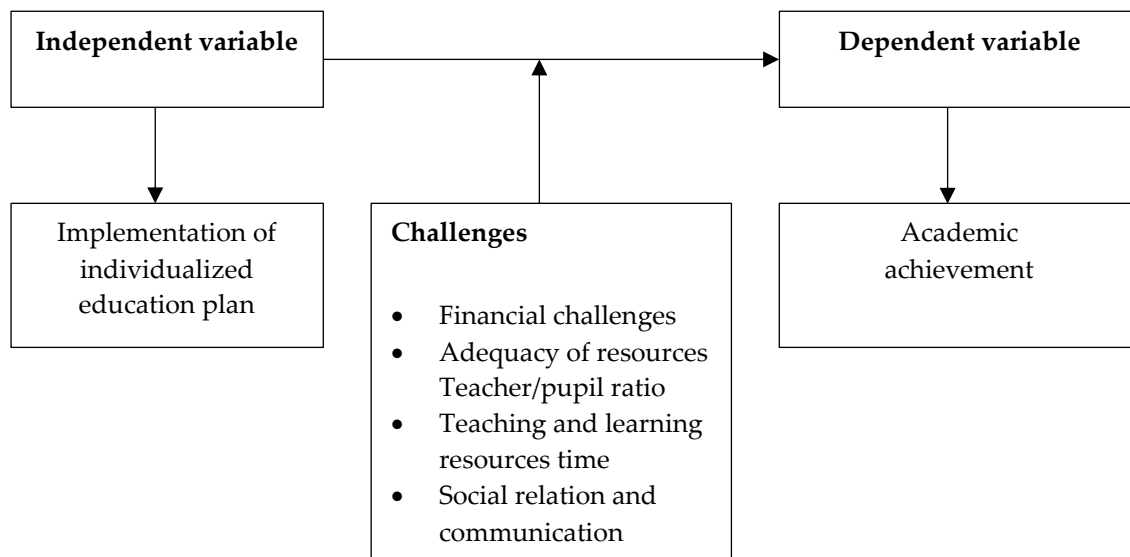


Figure 1.1: A Conceptual Framework

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Target Population

The researcher adopted a Case study design. A case study design determines the factors and relationships among the factors that result in behavior under the study of the selected group (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003). A case study seeks to describe a unit in detail, context and holistically so as to obtain rich information that can be learned from the phenomenon under study (Orodho, 2008). Data from the sample of the population yields quantifiable information that can be used to determine the status of IEP implementation by teachers of students with hearing impairment. The fact that all special needs teachers were trained competently to develop and implement IEP, the study gave the status of the

program in the school for students with hearing impairment. The target populations were all students and teachers of Ngala Secondary School for the Deaf. There were 98 students, 13 teachers and 1 administrator giving a total of 112 respondents. The school was one stream school from form one to form four with full boarding facilities.

3.2 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

Both purposive sampling and stratified random sampling were used. Purposive sampling was used on the school administrator since he/she is the supervisor of all the educational programs in the school. Thirteen teachers were purposively sampled since they play a major role in the implementation of IEPs. On the other hand, stratified random sampling was used to select students from form one to form four. A total of 24 students (three boys and three girls from each class) were selected. The techniques were appropriate producing valid information required to represent the whole population with respect to the objectives under the study. The study sample comprised 24 students, 13 teachers and 1 administrator leading to a total of 38 respondents. This represented 33.9% of the target population which agrees with Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) views that a sample of at least 30% is ideal for a population under study.

3.3 Research Instruments and Pilot Study

The research instrument included the use of questionnaires, interview schedules and document analysis which the researcher developed to suit the research objectives. A pilot study was conducted at Kedowa Secondary School for the Deaf. Piloting of instruments helped to find out if there were unclear directions, or vague questions and gave the researcher knowledge of the shortcomings that could have affected the actual data collection process. To find out the validity of questionnaires, observation checklist and interview schedules, two experts on the development and implementation of IEP from the department were consulted. The feedback obtained was then used to amend the research instrument in preparation for the actual study. The reliability of the data was obtained using the test-retest method. The research instruments were administered twice with an interval of two weeks to a selected sample of respondents in Kedowa Secondary School for the Deaf beginning with the interview schedule for the school administrator followed by administering questionnaires to the sampled five teachers followed the interview schedule for five sampled students and lastly documents were analyzed on IEP implementation on the school. Responses were scored manually and a comparison of the first and second scores was computed using Pearson's product moment of correlation formula to check the consistency of these tools used to collect data. The coefficient of 0.712 and 0.737 was obtained for interview schedules and questionnaires respectively.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures, Analysis and Presentation

The interview schedule was administered to the school administrator by the researcher. Documents were analyzed by the researcher in relation to assessing the effect of IEP and the academic achievement of the sampled students. Lastly, interview schedules were

administered to the students to yield the needed information. The instruments are intended to give data on the implementation of IEP for students with hearing impairment. The data collected from the questionnaires, interviews and analyzed documents were cleaned, labelled, coded and processed. Close-ended questions generated quantitative data which were arranged and recorded based on research objectives and then entered into a computer using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 30 for analysis. The data was analyzed statistically using descriptive statistics where percentages and frequencies. Qualitative data collected from open-ended questions were grouped into different themes, presented as a narrative and discussed based on the objectives of the study. Data and research findings were presented in graphic illustrations using tables, pie charts and bar graphs.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Bio-Data of the Respondents

The following are the general characteristics of the respondents involved in the study.

Table 1: General characteristics of the respondents

Teachers' characteristic	Detail	Frequency	Percent (%)
Teacher's gender	Male	4	40.0
	Female	6	60.0
	Total	10	100.0
Students' gender	Male	11	55.0
	Female	9	45.0
	Total	20	100.0
Teachers' teaching experience	0-1 year	1	10.0
	2-4 years	3	30.0
	≥5years	6	60.0
	Total	30	100.0
Students by grade levels	Form 1	0	0.0
	Form II	0	0.0
	Form II	7	70.0
	Form IV	3	30.0
	Total	30	100.0

Table 1 shows that there was an almost equal distribution of teachers as concerns gender at Ngala Secondary School for the Deaf. The findings also revealed that teachers' experience varied in the number of years. This implies that a good number of teachers had capabilities of comprehending the needs of students with varied hearing impairments and hence would effectively implement IEP programs in school given all guidance and resources. Findings revealed that all teachers were professionally trained in handling students with HI and had the capacity of designing an Individualized Educational Plan for every learner in school. Students from every category of grade level

participated in the study with the highest proportion 6(30.0%) of the participants from form four while the least 5(20.0%) from form one.

4.3 Challenges in Implementation of IEP in Schools for Students with HI

Teachers were asked to mention the challenges that they faced while implementing IEP in their schools. Table 1 presents a summary of the findings on this attribute.

Table 1: Challenges Encountered while Implementing the IEP (N=10)

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Resources are limited	10	100.0
High teacher-student ratio	9	90.0
Broad syllabus to cover	8	80.0
Inadequate content mastering	5	50.0
Language barrier	7	70.0
A wide variety of testing methods are required	9	90.0
Resistance by students	4	40.0

There were certain problems that the implementers had while implementing the IEP in relation to the resources available. The results showed that 10(100%) of the respondents stated that the resources were not enough and thus it affected the implementation of the program negatively. Other common challenges mentioned by teachers were: a high number of students with special cases 9(90.0%), the requirement of a wide variety of testing methods during IEP administration 9(90.0%), broad syllabus coverage 8(80.0%), language barrier 7(70.0%) and inadequate content mastery among students with HI 5(50.0%). These findings implied that teachers in Ngala secondary school for the deaf faced a number of challenges in implementing IEP that unless the gap is bridged, implementing IEP for students with HI in the school would mean nothing.

Using the interview schedule, the school administrator was also asked to provide the challenges that the school faced in implementing IEP. The participant reported the following challenges: lack of multi-disciplinary teamwork; high teacher/learner ratio, time constraints, and language problems during both teaching and examination. Results from the IEP documents revealed that most students did not have IEPs for all the subjects implemented on them due to various factors. For instance, the teacher/student ratio was high and thus it was difficult to devise an IEP for each student in the whole school. Time was also limited, following a high number of students in class and strict time allocated for each lesson made it challenging to implement IEP despite its importance for the academic achievement of students with special needs. The results further indicated that the syllabus was too wide to cover within a given time alongside the implementation of IEP. Finally, the mode of communication affected IEP implementation in assessment areas covered as students were taught using Kenyan Sign Language (K.S.L) but examined in English. Hence, most students missed linking the K.S.L word/sentence order with the correct English language as used in the examination.

Further results from an interview with the students revealed that both teachers and students were actively involved the IEP programs. However, a relatively higher number of parents did not turn up for IEP meetings even though they were called upon by the administration. On the other hand, for those parents who turned up for meetings, most of them did not understand their children’s needs due to the language barrier. As a result, parents did not follow up on their children’s progress after IEP administration. These findings implied that there were some parents who had lost interest in attending school meetings due to a lack of skills and knowledge of how to assist their children with special needs. These findings support Smith (2007) who suggested reasons parents don’t participate in the IEP process as: communication problems and educational jargon; lack of understanding of the school system, lack of knowledge of how to help their child, or feelings of inferiority; and logistical problems. According to Rock (2000), parents should be phoned at the beginning of each year by the new case manager to open lines of communication. This would help parents to be actively involved in the academic progress of the students.

Further, the study sought to find solutions to the problems by asking teachers to give any recommendations for implementing IEP in school. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Ways Forward as Reported by Teachers (N=10)

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Provision of many resources for IEP	10	100.0
Provision of adequate personnel in IEP	9	90.0
Encouraging multi-disciplinary cooperation	8	80.0
Involvement of all stakeholders	9	90.0

Table 2 shows results related to possible solutions for the problems identified by teachers as, 10(100.0%) stated that the provision of adequate resources for IEP implementation could act as a solution, and 9(90.0%) indicated that they needed to provide adequate personnel in IEP, another 9(90.0%) stated that they should ensure that all stakeholders were involved while 8(80.0%) of the participants were of the opinion that there should be multi-disciplinary cooperation in IEP implementation in the school. These results agree with those of Kupper (2000) who noted that the United States Department of Education encouraged an active discussion between parents, teachers, learners, bolster personnel and community agencies for the IEP’s effective development. This implies that the family should be a dynamic and integral component in the process. Schools ought to likewise guarantee that individuals from staff are furnished with the necessary assets to satisfy the IEP, notwithstanding setting out clear methods for planning and discussion between team members. The objective is to guarantee the quick and away from of data, in this way encouraging the planning procedure, just as ensuring that the necessities of every learner are met and that any troubles are overcome.

Based on the provision of enough staff in IEP as a path forward, the result support Asikhia (2010) who reported that qualified examiners ought to have the training and

understand the standards of test organization, including setting up and maintaining rapport, following standardized testing strategies, and statistical ideas identified with scoring and deciphering results. In relation to the findings of the present research, Martin et al. (2004) concur with this idea expressing that similarly as understudies need guidance in the IEP procedure and the meeting, so do general education teachers.

Students were also asked to give any suggestions that could assist to improve their academic achievement for HI. Table 3 displays the results.

Table 3: The Way Forward for Academic Improvement as Reported by Students (N=20)

Statement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Many teachers to be employed	20	100.0
Encouraging follow-up activities	18	90.0
Anticipating better performance	16	80.0
Giving exams in sign language	18	90.0
Reducing the syllabus content by the Ministry of Education	15	75.0

The way forward on the implementation of the IEP was important and 20(100.0%) of the respondents indicated that more teachers needed to be employed, 18(90.0%) indicated that the way forward was encouraging follow-up activities, another 18(90.0%) indicated that giving exams in sign language was a way forward, 16(80.0%) indicated that better performance should be anticipated and 15(75.0%) suggested that reducing the syllabus content by the Ministry of Education would improve their academic achievement apart from having IEP implemented in class.

In an interview, the school administrator was also asked about views regarding the improvement of IEP in school. The following suggestions were provided by the school administrator: there is a need to check on the teacher/learner ratio per class; government to review lesson time with respect to IEP implementation in class, parents should be actively involved, and special schools should have a standard language of communication which ought to be used for instruction, teaching and learning process as well as an assessment during the examination. The results additionally support Hughes and Chen (2011) who revealed that without parent involvement, it follows that learners would likely not take an interest. Parents, in this manner, become an indispensable connection in the IEP procedure. A parent ought to be counseled when building up the IEP and if a parent doesn't show enthusiasm for being included, it turns out to be additional time clear to let them alone for the procedure.

5. Conclusion

Findings show that the individualized approach faces many problems in its formulation and implementation. The study concluded that the major solutions to the challenges facing teachers in developing and implementing IEP suggests that as the provision of adequate resources for IEP was anticipated to enhance the academic achievement of students with hearing impairment.

6. Recommendations

1. Teachers should be encouraged to attend more training being offered on competence-based curriculum. This will help them learn and acquire skills on effective ways to assess the learners in competence-based assessment.
2. The relevant authorities are to provide adequate necessary resources in a bid to enhance the implementation of IEP for learners with hearing impairment. This includes employment of human personnel making up an IEP team, physical resources, adaptation and modification of the curriculum with adequate time allocation.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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