Attaining 100 percent transition from primary schools for learners with disabilities in Kenya: reality or fantasy?

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Abstract
Kenya has adopted a policy that will ensure that all learners transit from primary to secondary levels of education until they attain 'basic education', which is a fundamental right as recognized in the Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Historically, learners with disabilities and special needs in Kenya have had very low transition rates from primary to secondary levels, a factor which might jeopardize the government policy, unless drastic measures are undertaken to include this marginalized population into the education system. This situation then begs the question as to what new strategies the country will employ to ensure that all learners are able to acquire quality inclusive basic education regardless of their disability. This paper is a case study of Kenya, critically analyzing the considerations that are being made and the strategies put in place for all learners with disabilities to transit, in the spirit of 'leaving no one behind'. In doing this, it questions whether indeed there can be complete transition of the said group of learners under the prevailing conditions, hence addressing equity in accessing education, or whether this is a pipedream. The study focuses on the policy framework and the practical steps that are being taken to ensure 100% transition for learners with disabilities in the country. The role of technology is discussed. Observations are also made regarding potential hurdles on the road towards realizing the transition goal for the learners.

Key words: 100 percent transition, access, equity, transition, secondary education, disabilities, special needs education**.**

1.0. Introduction

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 4 calls for "inclusive and quality education for all". Learners with disability are a marginalized group, especially in developing countries. Children with disability are most likely to be excluded from education as a right. The Global Partnership for Education (2017) in the Working Paper No. 2 on "Educational Challenges of Transition" observes that as more children enroll and complete primary school, key challenges arise concerning the management and expansion of secondary education to accommodate the increased numbers. Globally, almost 50% of learners with disabilities are out of school (UNICEF, 2016). From Table 1, learners with disabilities in secondary schools in Kenya make up 5 percent. This is a worrying indicator that only a limited number of learners with disabilities are transiting to secondary schools. The number of learners with disabilities and special needs completing the primary school education cycle in Kenya is negligible given their percentage in the general population. In 2018, students with disabilities were 0.24% of learners who sat for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examination, being 2,495 out of 1,052,364 (MoE, 2018). Transition rates from primary to secondary school level increased from 81.9 percent in 2015 to 88 percent in 2018 January. With the policy on transition in place, all learners are expected to transition from primary to secondary education, necessitating the study to establish strategies in place for 100% transition of learners with disabilities and special needs and the potential challenges therein.

Table 1: Enrollment of Learners with Special Needs and Disabilities - 2016 (*Source:* MoEST and VSO Jitolee).

	Gender	Primary	Secondary	Total
Hearing Impairment	Boys	19,880	1,522	21,402
	Girls	18,300	1,243	19,543
Intellectual Disability	Boys	55,143	711	55,854
	Girls	43,143	718	43,861
Physical Disability	Boys	10,279	216	10,495
	Girls	7,948	176	8,124

Visual Impairment	Boys	17,901	1,918	19,819
	Girls	13,166	1,329	14,495
Multiple Disabilities	Boys	19,414	1,896	21,310
	Girls	17,553	1,697	19,250
Grand Total		222,727	11,426	234,153

The study was guided by the following four questions:

1. What legal framework exists to ensure 100 percent transition for learners with disabilities and special needs in Kenya?
2. What practical steps are being taken to ensure 100% transition for learners with disabilities in Kenya
3. What is the role of technology in promoting transition for learners with disabilities in Kenya?
4. What are the potential hurdles on the road towards realizing the transition goal for the learners with disabilities in Kenya?

2.0.   Methods

The researchers employed document review and expert knowledge as the sources of data for the study. The first author has wide experience working in special and inclusive education, including curriculum design and policy formulation while the second author is an expert in the area of special needs education and a researcher. They used their knowledge and experience to analyze the secondary data towards responding to the research questions.

3.0.   Literature review
3.1.   Theoretical framework

This study is based on the 4-As Framework, developed by Katarina Tomaševski (2006), the first UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education. This framework is best suited to identify State obligations relating to the right to education. The 4-As are availability (whether education is generally available); accessibility (obstacles in accessing education); acceptability (aspects of the content of education); and adaptability (adapted to the needs of various categories of learners). In the discussion, the study will put into perspective the relationship between the 4-As Framework and Kenyan educational policies and strategies towards 100 percent transition to secondary education for learners with special needs and disabilities.

3.2.   *Legal framework that exists to ensure 100% transition for learners with disabilities*

Education is a human right, and a fundamental right to every child as reflected in international law (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2007). Kenya is a signatory and a state party to a number of conventions included in this discussion. The right is clearly articulated in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and Articles 13 and 14 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The right to education has been reaffirmed in the 1960 Convention against Discrimination in Education; the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (AU, 1986). The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN, 2006), emphasizes that, "children or adults with disabilities cannot be excluded from the education system based on disability, and that they must be given the opportunity to learn the life and social development skills they need." The Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1990) articles 23, 28 and 29 further strengthens the provisions of the UNCRPD. Kenya ratified the UN Agenda 2030 as articulated in SDGs, and thus adopted Goal No.4 on "inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all."

Nationally, Kenya has comprehensive policy and legal provisions that obligates and promotes education for all learners. The **Constitution of Kenya** (Republic of Kenya, 2010) article 53 1(b) particularly provides for children's right to free and compulsory basic education. Article 54 1(b) further strengthens this right and entitles a person with disability to "access educational institutions and facilities for persons with disabilities that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with the interests of the person." **The Basic Education Act (2013)** enhances the right to education for all. Section 5 (e) calls for measures to be put in place to ensure transition to the next level of

education, especially for the vulnerable and marginalized children; Section 45 (g) of the same Act requires regulations to be made that will "establish mechanisms to ensure that every special school or educational institution offering special needs education has appropriate personnel, infrastructure, learning materials and equipment." The **Persons with Disabilities Act (2003),** provides a comprehensive framework which outlaws all forms of discriminative treatment of persons with disabilities such as lack of access to education and training. It also provides for adaptation of infrastructural, socio-economic and environmental facilities to ensure a conducive environment for persons with disabilities up to and including education institutions, especially by providing accessibility guidelines.

Kenya's Vision 2030 commits the government to develop human capital regardless of status and disability. The social strategy makes special provisions for Kenyans with various disabilities and previously marginalized communities. The Kenya's development blueprint commits to ensure that issues directly affecting persons with disabilities are adequately addressed in policies and legal frameworks, programmes and projects. The Vision 2030 is implemented through Medium Term Plans (MTP), currently in its Third Medium Term Plan (MTP III) 2018-2022. Different sectors are supposed to draw their plans from the MTP. The Education Sector has developed the **National Education Sector Strategic Plan (NESSP)** 2018-2022, that is soon to be launched. The NESSP, which has been developed subsequent to another one that ran between 2015-2018, has more substantive plans to promote transition of all learners to different levels of education. Towards implementing part of the strategy, the government has established a National Assessment Centre, a facility that has become a national referral centre for children with special needs and disabilities and aims at increasing the number of children being assessed. This is expected to expand, to a large extent, educational access for and transition of learners with disabilities from primary to secondary and vocational institutions.

3.3. *Practical steps being taken to ensure 100% transition for learners with disabilities*

Kenya launched a **Competency Based Curriculum (CBC)** in January 2019. The phased roll out of the CBC became effective in pre-primary and grades 1, 2 and 3. The CBC is part of education reforms in Kenya, which seeks to develop the learners' ability to apply appropriate skills and knowledge to successfully perform a function (Republic of Kenya, 2016). A number of countries have adopted competency in their education system. In Scotland, their Curriculum for Excellence focuses on formative assessments in the classroom, a "show what you know" crosscutting pedagogical strategy, learning goals that students clearly articulate, and the needs of the holistic wellbeing of the child. The five skill sets are aimed to help young people become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. Sweden follows the concept of competency as an attainment standard in the school curricula by integrating the vocational and liberal education. In Finland, the education system is designed to foster student agency, responsibility, and growth through self-directed, autonomous learning, especially in the later high school grades. The Kenyan curriculum emphasizes on the application of skills and knowledge to real life situations. The seven core competencies to be achieved by every learner in basic education are: a) communication and collaboration; (b) self-efficacy; (c) critical thinking and problem solving; (d) creativity and imagination; (d) citizenship (e) digital literacy; and (f) learning to learn.

Table 1: Comparison between old and new curriculum

Key areas	Old curriculum	New curriculum
Rationale	Was concerned about skills preparations for the world of work. The basic academic education thought to lack the necessary content to promote widespread sustainable (self) employment	Part of education sector reforms; need to align the education sector to: Constitution of Kenya 2010; Vision 2030 and the Global Standards
Goal	Aimed for knowledge acquisition (cognitive development)	Competencies (appropriate application of knowledge) to real life situations.
Focus	Emphasized competition for examination grades.	Emphasizes excellence and competitiveness.
Period of learning	8-4-4	2-6-6-3

| Basis	Objective based	Competency based
Mode of learning	Teacher at the center of learning with learners being more of passive participants.	Learner at the center of learning. Teacher facilitates learners
Methodology	More rigid in content, learning time and strategies	Flexible, responsive and supportive in embracing diverse learning needs and abilities.
Mode of assessment	Concentrates on summative assessment (KCPE, KCSE)	Balances between formative and summative assessment.
Parental involvement	Very little parental engagement and support.	Engage parents through empowerment and allow shared responsibility in all tiers and levels of basic education
Transition	Not guaranteed, especially for learners with disabilities	Transition is guaranteed for all leaners through different pathways, except for special cases of disabilities
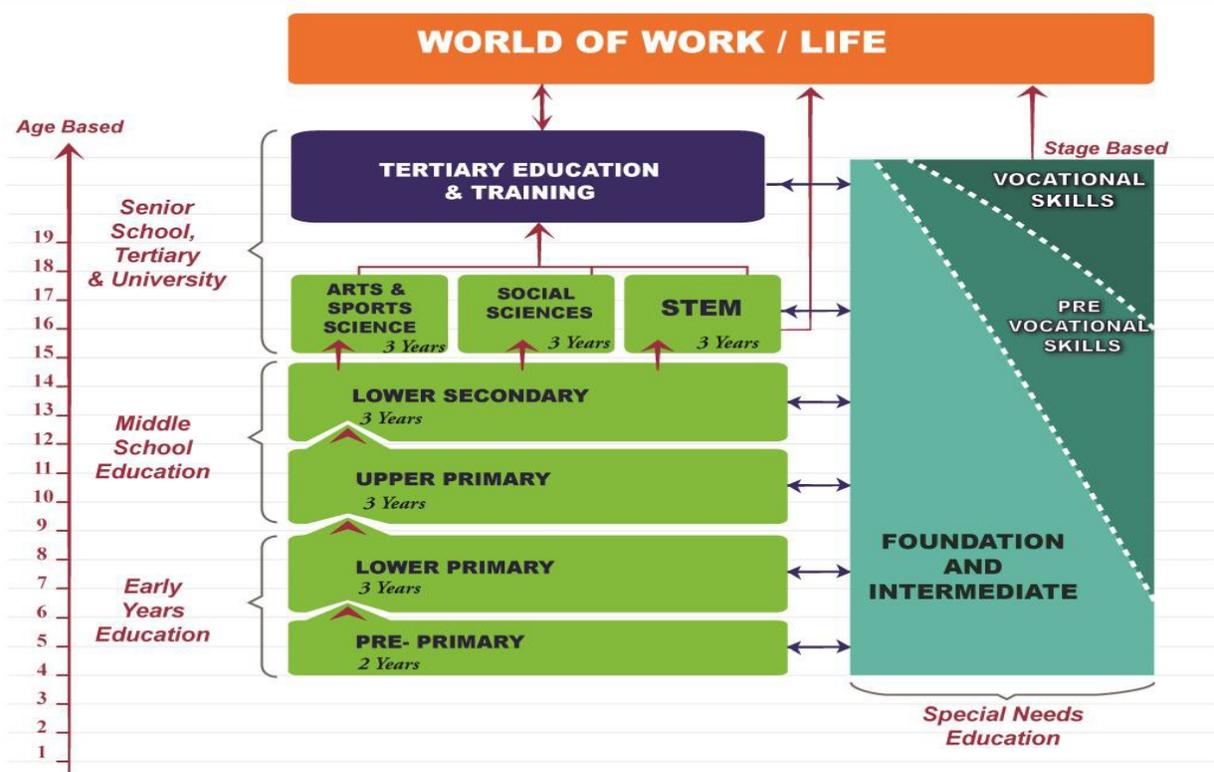
Figure 1: Basic Education CBC Framework

The CBC for learners with special needs shall be in two modalities: those who follow the regular curriculum and those who may not. For those that may follow the same curriculum as learners without special needs to access the regular curriculum, adaptation will be necessary at the secondary level which will include substitution of curriculum content, removal of specific curricular content areas and adaptation of teaching and learning strategies, resources and assessment. For learners who are gifted and talented, the curriculum will be enriched, by providing additional and advanced content and resources (Republic of Kenya, 2016). Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) is developing curriculum for learners with special needs and disabilities and the government has allocated resources for curriculum materials for the same. Currently, KICD has developed 31 curriculum designs and adopted 21 designs for Special Needs Education (SNE) 2017/18 and piloted phase 1and 2 in 470 schools across the country.

Despite the government's plans, a few gaps were observed during piloting which the Government is systematically addressing to ensure the full benefits of the CBC are realized for all. Firstly, the CBC provides pathways for all learners including transition for learners with severe and profound intellectual and physical disabilities who may not benefit much from the formal curriculum. Secondly, the Government is currently enhancing the capacity of the CBC implementers, chiefly the teachers and education officers. Thirdly, the CBC materials were considered inadequate particularly the books and adapted resources for learners with special needs, hence the Ministry's concentration on developing the curriculum support material for this group of learners.

Kenya, led by the President launched the **Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities** in May 2018. The policy recognizes the need for Kenya to move towards inclusive education, as an overarching principle that advocates for the right of every learner with disability to be enrolled in regular classroom together with his or her peers without disabilities. The policy acknowledges that there are limited transition plans for learners with disabilities but proposes development of such plans that will guide transition of learners from primary education to the right pathways as per the competency based curriculum. The thematic areas on access to quality and relevant education and training reads *"…the Ministry of Education shall enhance equal access, retention, progression and transition of all learners and trainees with disabilities at all levels of education and training."* The Sector Policy and CBC both advocate for adaptability of the curriculum to suit the needs of learners with varied disabilities.

The government has made various initiatives on teacher professional development. For instance, the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), under its 'Teacher Futures' programme, has recently entered into a partnership with the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) and the Ministry of Education to build the capacity of teachers in both special and regular secondary schools on inclusive pedagogies. This programme is being piloted in 20 schools and does not include primary school teachers.

Education Sector budgetary allocations

Towards promoting availability, accessibility, affordability of education, from table 2, the Education Sector was allocated 26.1 percent of Kenyan total budget, a 7.1 percent increase from the allocation of financial year 2018/2019, according to the Budget Statement for the Fiscal Year 2019/20 Budget by the National Treasury (Republic of Kenya 2019).

Table 2: Medium Term Education Sector Ceilings, 2019/20 - 2021/22 (Ksh Million)

FY allocations	Printed Estimates 2018/19	BPS Ceiling 2019/20	Projections 2020/21	2021/22 Projections
Budget estimates (millions)	442,328	473,706	492,539	503,979
% Share in Total Ministerial Expenditure	25.30%	26.10%	26.20%	26.60%

Source: The National Treasury, Republic of Kenya (2019).

Other practical steps toward promoting access and transition that the government has made include:

a) Recruitment of additional teachers to support the 100 percent transition policy of the Government
b) Expanded educational infrastructure thereby enabling higher student enrollment and transition rates

c) Increased capitation to Free Primary Education and Free Day Secondary Education

d) Developing and adopting a unit cost of education and training for each learner and trainee with disability that will inform its allocation

e) Increased capitation to SNE learners at both primary and secondary levels

f) Provision of examination fees for all students in KCPE and KCSE

From the above policies, laws, plans and the planned resourcing, it is clear Kenya has great interest towards contributing to availability, accessibility, affordability and adaptability of education for learners with special needs and disabilities and particularly to transition to secondary education. This will require partnership with non-state actors in the education sector. Quality and accountability remains a challenge that the Ministry of Education is addressing in order to achieve the plans.

3.4. *Role of technology in promoting transition for learners with disabilities*

Dikusar (2018) observes that no single technological solution can suit the needs of all learners with special needs and disabilities and that due to diversity, different group of learners, depending on their needs can only be supported by custom-made solutions designed according to their requirements. In Kenya, the Ministry of Information and Communications Technologies (2016) Policy stipulates that ICT is expected to be integrated seamlessly in teaching and learning across all levels of education. This is in line with one of the CBC core competencies, digital literacy, which should be integrated in all learning areas. A number of programmes have been developed in order to integrate technology in education for learners with disabilities.

The Global Initiative for Inclusive Information and Communication Technologies (G3ict) developed two new tools to support more inclusive education; 9 Steps to Procuring Accessible ICTs for Inclusive Education and a Discussion Guide for Engaging ICT Vendors. Both tools will help schools and education system institutions of all levels to integrate accessible information and communication technologies (ICT) into their policies and practices. The 9 Steps to Procuring Accessible ICTs for Inclusive Education tool lays out specific actions that schools and ministries can take to make sure that their ICT procurement process fully embraces principles of accessibility and inclusion and helps every learner to get the most out of learning and reach his or her maximum potential (Global Initiative for Inclusive ICTs, 2018).

The Digital Learning Programme (DLP) is one of the key flagship Programmes that was initiated by the Government of Kenya in 2013. The Programme targets learners in all public primary schools and is aimed at integrating the use of digital technologies in learning. From the monitoring reports, one of the impacts of DLP is that cases of absenteeism have reduced and increased number of pupils admitted to public schools. The government is developing accessible CBC digital Course Materials at the KICD, including through partnering with UNICEF in an initiative known as the Digital Accessible Textbook.

A study carried out in Makueni County, Kenya by Ndiku and Mutie (2018) revealed the availability, though not quantified, quite a number of assistive technology resources are available in schools. The key challenges noted from the same study by Ndiku and Mutie (2018) and the MoE (2018) outlined the challenges of use of technology in Kenya. The study noted that though the government provides top up capitation to cater for specialized teaching and learning materials and other assistive devices for all learners with disabilities in primary and secondary schools, it is still too inadequate to purchase sufficient teaching and learning materials in all institutions of learning. Other challenges noted include: (a) the capacities for technology adoption in the schools and training institutions remains low; (b) limited availability of specialized hardware and software resources; (c) difficulties in procuring and managing the assistive technology equipment; (d) lack of proper and coordinated assessment thus unreliable information to inform the provision of assistive technology among others

The use of technology in education is seen as a way to cut costs of real text books, where e-materials as can potentially replace printed textbooks and reading books. These digital initiatives will be key in promoting access and adaptability of learning content thus contributing to more learners transiting from primary schools. A number of learners with special needs and disabilities are part of this programme, but proper measures are needed to ensure that they all benefit.

3.5. *Potential hurdles on the road towards realizing the transition goal for the learners with disabilities*

The Global Partnership for Education (2017) and UNICEF's Child Friendly Schools (2011) classifies the factors affecting educational inclusion into four main categories including individual characteristics; school quality; household characteristics; community social, economic and political factors and educational governance and resources factors.

A. Individual characteristics

SNE Policy Review Data Collection Report (2016), that informed the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities noted that transition from primary to secondary school, vocational to job placement especially for learners with severe disabilities remains a major challenge. Children with severe, profound and multiple disabilities cannot transit just easily as those without and with mild and moderate disabilities. They may not even attend school due to the limitations of mobility and other related challenges. This means that this group of children according to the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities will benefit from the home-based education provided by teachers from neighbourhood schools, thus prepares a child with disability for smooth transition from home to school. However, this remains an uphill task for the already inadequate teachers. Such learners, especially those who are highly dependant, cannot undergo any functional or pre-vocational training thus limiting their transition. Some learners may lack life's aspirations and motivation due to limited exposure and the stigma associated with their disability. This further limits their urge to transit to secondary school.

B. Quality of learning environment

Teachers serving learners including those with disabilities remain inadequate, occasioned by attrition and increased enrollment. An assessment by the Teachers Service Commission shows 12,626 teachers are needed for the increased population in secondary school, this is the case with special schools and inclusive settings. In cases of special units especially for children with severe disabilities, the recommended student pupil ration is one teacher to one learner. Teachers may not have the time or resources to support learners with disabilities and not manage to handle the individual needs of children with disabilities (Chimedza and Peters, 2001). Teacher aids are very important in supporting the teacher in classroom work and this also remains a gap. This is the same situation when learners with disabilities transit to secondary schools of vocational trainings. It is important to note that most of the learners with severe disabilities neither transit to secondary schools nor vocational trainings.

In the regular schools, the influx of students as a result of the near realization of the 100 percent transition from primary to secondary schools, is exerting strain on the existing school infrastructural facilities. This is because the government is still expanding programmes that would accommodate all the 1,052,364 candidates who sat for the Kenya Certificate of Primary Education (KCPE) examinations transited to secondary schools. Of this, 2,495 (0.24%) were candidates with special needs, up from 2,038 the year 2017 (MoE, 2018).

C. Household/family characteristics

Most parents with a child with disability in Kenya are not able to attend to their normal work thus reducing their earning potential. Yet, such children may require a higher income to achieve the same level of functioning as their peers without disability. The kind of support required would be medical treatment, travel costs, cost of assistive devices and personal support at home and at school as observed by UNICEF (2013); Groce et al., (2011); Mitra et al., (2013); WHO and World Bank (2011). Groce et al (2011) posits that people with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries such as Kenya are 'poorer than their peers without disability in terms of access to education and other basic services. This aspect of poverty further limits the chances of transition to secondary schools.

D. Educational governance and resources

A significant barrier to transition of learners with disabilities can be occasioned by limited or inappropriate resources. A study in the United by Chambers, Shkolnik and Pérez M (2003) found that the average cost for educating a child with a disability was 1.9 times the cost for a child without a disability, with the multiplier ranging from 1.6 to 3.1 depending on the type and extent of the disability. In most developing countries it is difficult to reach all those in need even when educational systems are well planned and support inclusion. UNESCO (2000) notes that there is shortage of resources such as few schools, inadequate facilities, insufficient qualified teachers and a lack of learning resources.

The current admission of students to form one is based on performance, the grades that a learner attains in the national examination (KCPE). Sometimes schools that cater for a certain disability may be fully occupied and therefore learners may have unique needs and do not fit in available slots.

The current mode of assessment poses substantial barriers to learners and trainees with disabilities due to administration and grading processes that do not account for disability (UNESCO, 2014). This yields low performance among learners and trainees with disabilities and constrains their transition from one level of education and training to another, and to the world of work.

E. Community social factors

In schools, learners with disabilities may be faced with violence against them – by teachers, other staff, and fellow students (UNICEF, 2005). The violent acts include physical threats and abuse, verbal abuse, and social seclusion. In Kenya, learners with disabilities greatly fear bullying as observed by Watson (1998) and this may lead to children and their parents preferring special schools to mainstream schools for fear of stigma or bullying. This may even limit transition to secondary schools, especially for children who are deaf given their difficulties in spoken communication.

4.0. Conclusion

From the analysis, the vision of Kenya to have 100 percent transition of learners with disabilities, to secondary education is a good plan, and is practical. However, the future may not be assured due to some of the potential barriers discussed above. For it to be fully achieved, a number of issues need to be systematically and urgently addressed. These issues include implementation of education policies; improved accountability; investment in training of teachers and other human resource involved in providing education; addressing affordability of assistive technology and other learning resources among other issues. Additionally, the government needs to deliberately promote the right policy environment that promotes partnership with non-state actors who are key in promoting 100 percent transition of learners with disabilities.

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