

Original Paper

Assessment of Skills for Behaviour Change Taught to Learners with Emotional and Behaviour Disorders in Juvenile Rehabilitation Schools in Kenya

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Abstract

Learners with Emotional and Behaviour disorders are included in the category of learners with Special Needs Education. However in Kenyan perspective, there is a challenge as to how these children are guided in achieving their best in life. This study assessed skills taught for behaviour change among learners with EBD in Juvenile rehabilitation schools in Kenya. The Social learning theory and cross sectional descriptive research design were used to guide the study. The targeted population comprised of all the learners in Rehabilitations schools and the managers in Kenya. The learners were 466 boys, 160 girls and 20 managers. There were a total of 646 respondents. The population was sampled using probabilistic sampling techniques. Stratified random sampling technique was considered to sample the gender and duration of interaction with the rehabilitation programme. Questionnaires, interview schedules, focus group discussion, document analysis and observation schedules were used for data collection. Quantitative data collected was entered, coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented graphically. Qualitative data was coded, reviewed for patterns and emerging themes and finally reported narrative. On study findings, skills taught (academic and vocational), were not adapted to cater for learners with EBD. That enriched academic and skills competency lacked among staff (teaching, specialized and support) to address today's challenges of learners with EBD. The study recommended the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should develop guidelines for adaptation of the skills taught in RS to cater for each learner's special needs.

Keywords: behaviour, behaviour change, special needs education, teacher aide

1. Introduction

In a global view, Kauffman and Polloway (2017), in a study on demographic trends in educational programs for students with emotional and behavioral disorders in the United States of America, established that learners identified as having Emotional and Behavioural Disorders (EBD), have behavioral characteristics and educational needs such as significant difficulties in adjusting to school environment. As a result, educators are challenged to provide guidance on how best learners with EBD can be guided on their educational needs and behaviour change. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of (2004), defines EBD as a condition which is accompanied by one or more of the following characteristics: an inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors, an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers, inappropriate types of behaviour or feelings under normal circumstances, a general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression and a tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems. These characteristics persist over a long time, to a marked degree and adversely affects a child's educational performance.

In Germany, for instance, about 10 % of children and about 18% of adolescents are considered to have EBD related challenges (Clinic for Child Psychosomatics, 2005). Learners in this context, are remedied

through early interventions and specialized interpretations of their problems unlike confinements witnessed in USA.

Das and Shah (2014), in their study on Special Education today in India, points out that learners with EBD are mainly educationally deprived due to social and economic reasons. Das et al. (2014), observed that examples of educationally deprived children as those from street, rural areas, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, as well as various minorities and groups from diverse social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In Scotland, although educational experience of children with EBD was improved by increasing their self-esteem, other empirical strategies of behaviour change such as appropriate referrals and reintegration were lacking (Wengen, 2013).

In Uganda, according to Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development and UNICEF Uganda (2015), there are about 2.5 million children with disabilities and 10% of these are not in school. They are disproportionately vulnerable to violence and sexual abuse due to lack of access to educational services and appropriate socio-cultural beliefs.

In Kenya, EBD is the least supported category of learners with disabilities with only 2% support and the least assessed (Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE, 2017)). Thus, the question of behaviour change support and access to assessment and referral is at stake. Ndirangu (2010), in a study on educational outcomes of reintegrated child offenders in Othaya Rehabilitation School in Nyeri County, found out that children in Juvenile Schools (JS) had emotional and behavioral disorders that needed to be given the right professional assistance and that there was a missing link for their successful reintegration to the community. Similarly, in a case study in Nakuru County on effects of armed ethnic conflict on education of children and the implication for peace education (Ngundo, 2013), argues: that behaviour change in children and adults occurs over time and in an environment which favours the change and for behaviour change to happen, learners' environment should include; guidance provided by competent personnel, appropriate identification and referrals, appropriate reintegration and the right curriculum in context of each learner's needs.

Article 54 of the Constitution of Kenya (2010), stipulates that Persons with disabilities (PWDs) are entitled to access educational institutions and facilities especially those that are integrated into society to the extent compatible with their interests.

2. Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools

In their study on web based parenting support, development of the coping confident parenting programme entailing parenting interventions that address skill deficits and teaches positive principles based on social learning theory to treat EBD, Hutchings, Owen and Williams (2018), argue that when positive behaviour skills are taught to learners with EBD, a positive change is observed. They found that over 60% of parents who enrolled for coping confident parenting programme had their children score above average on child behavior inventory (a parent report inventory of challenging child behaviours). These coping confident parenting programs equipped parents with skills to teach their children positive behaviour change. Over 40% of parents who were introduced in the study, scored above average on the general questionnaire (a screening tool for behaviour disorders in adults). What is not clear however, is the effect of positive behaviour change training on learners.

Bezu, Dupuy, Halvorsen and Knudsen (2018), in a study on life skills in non-formal contexts for adolescent girls in developing countries, reports that in Ethiopia, majority of the programs use teachers to provide life skills training. These life skills are the combination of skills (what one has), knowledge (what one knows) and attitudes (what one believes and values) that constitute a set of abilities (what one can do) that enable a learner with EBD to adapt to, function and thrive in society lucidly (Bezu et al., 2018). Bezu et al. (2018) did not elaborate on the relevancy of various life skills in assisting one to thrive in society lucidly. This was despite the objective of their study being the scope, number, and curricula of training in non-formal contexts. For the current study, relevancy of life skills offered to learners with EBD in the selected juvenile schools with the aim of behaviour change was assessed.

In New Jersey, United States of America, a study by Phoenix Curriculum (2018), on comprehensive resources to combat gang involvement and other delinquencies, guides that learners with EBD should be taught problem solving and coping skills. This can be done through adapting core academic skills (in

literacy and numeracy) to increase individual self-efficacy (Phoenix Curriculum, 2018).

In Kenya, a report by KISE (2017), on national survey on children with disabilities and special needs in education indicates that at classroom level, academic subjects have to be adapted to suit learning needs at individual levels of learners with EBD. Quite often, Special needs education (SNE) teachers lack relevant skills to adapt key academic skills (KISE, 2017). Kenya Institute of Special Education (2017), in a National survey on children with disabilities and special needs in education found out that all the prevocational and vocational teaching learning equipment in the surveyed institutions were nonfunctional. However, KISE (2017) didn't establish the impact of the functional or non-functional equipment to acquisition of life skills. The current study, sought the impact of functionality and non-functionality of appropriate equipment in selected juvenile schools for behaviour change among learners with EBD. Similarly, a study by Gathua (2012) on analysis of interventions teachers use to manage learners with selected behaviour disorders in primary schools in Thika sub-county, Kiambu County, Kenya, argues that existing curriculum in JS do not address the needs of learners with EBD. This study established the curriculum in use and its suitability to change behaviour of learners with EBD in JS. Notably, Gathua (2012) used descriptive research design whereas the current study used cross sectional descriptive research design.

3. Research Design

This study used a cross sectional descriptive research design. This was so since they provide a "snapshot" of the outcome and the characteristics associated with it. This design helped to accurately capture the key variables of the study.

3.1 Locale of the Study

The study was carried out in selected juvenile schools (JS) in Kenya. These JS were in three counties namely Nairobi, Kiambu and Kirinyaga. They were selected due to; high population of learners and their heterogeneity (in terms of their backgrounds) and gender parity.

3.2 Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools in Kenya

This research objective on skills taught to learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools (JS), was established in two broad areas namely academic and vocational skills as discussed subsequently.

3.2.1 Academic Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in RS

The academic skills covered in RS is shown in Figure 1.

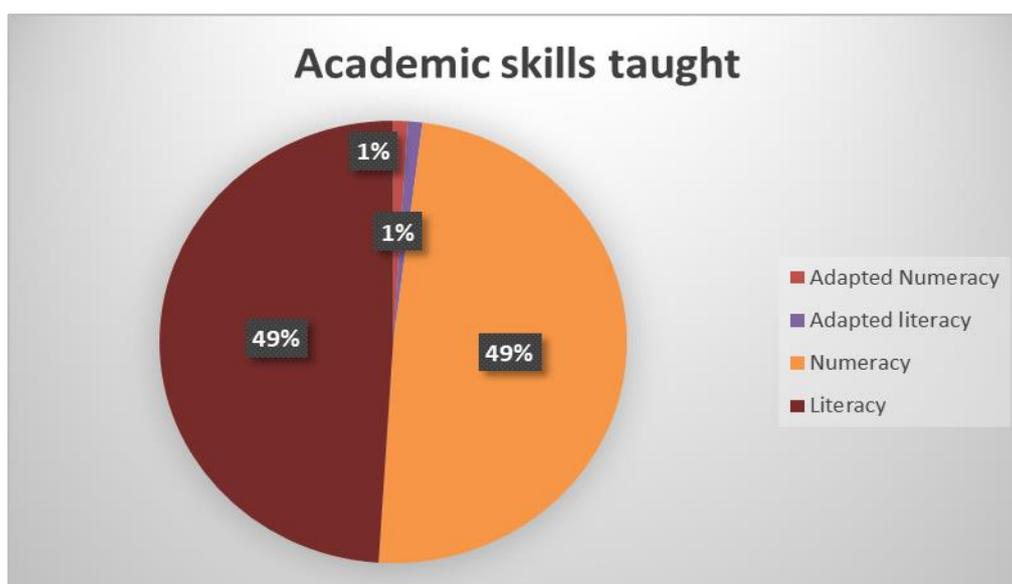


Figure 1. Academic Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in RS

Figure 1 on academic skills taught, non-adapted numeracy and literacy skills were the major skills taught in JS at a rate of 49%. The adapted literacy and numeracy skills to cater for the special needs of each learner, were insignificant (1%). This observation implies that learners with EBD in RS were taught on a general curriculum in terms of skills which are not adapted to suit their uniqueness in terms of their abilities, behavioural responses among other special needs attributes. This finding contradicts a National survey on children with disabilities and special needs in education done by the Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE 2017), which indicated that at classroom level, academic subjects have to be adapted to suit learning needs at individual levels of learners. Hence the research noted that KISE (2017), guideline was yet to be implemented in Kenyan RS and emphasized on its implementation for the benefits of academic skills to learners with EBD.

Another finding is that coping skills inform of adaptive literacy and numeracy skills were practiced in Kenyan JS at a rate of 1%. That is, the learners were not taught how to cope with challenging aspects of emotions. Emphasis was however laid on follow up of regular classroom activities rather than pointing on specific problem strategies and coping skills. The above finding contradicts recommendations of Phoenix Curriculum (2018), in a study on comprehensive resources to combat gang involvement and other delinquencies, in New Jersey, United States of America. Learners with EBD should be taught problem solving and coping skills through adapting core academic skills (in literacy and numeracy) to increase individual self-efficacy. Thus, from the above findings, it's clear that in Kenyan RS, adaptive skills (in numeracy and literacy), problem solving and coping skills were hardly practiced.

3.2.2 Vocational Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in JS

The relevancy, as regards to aiding behaviour change of learners with EBD and functionality (operationalization) of vocational skills offered, was established by use of the research tools as shown in the Figure 2.

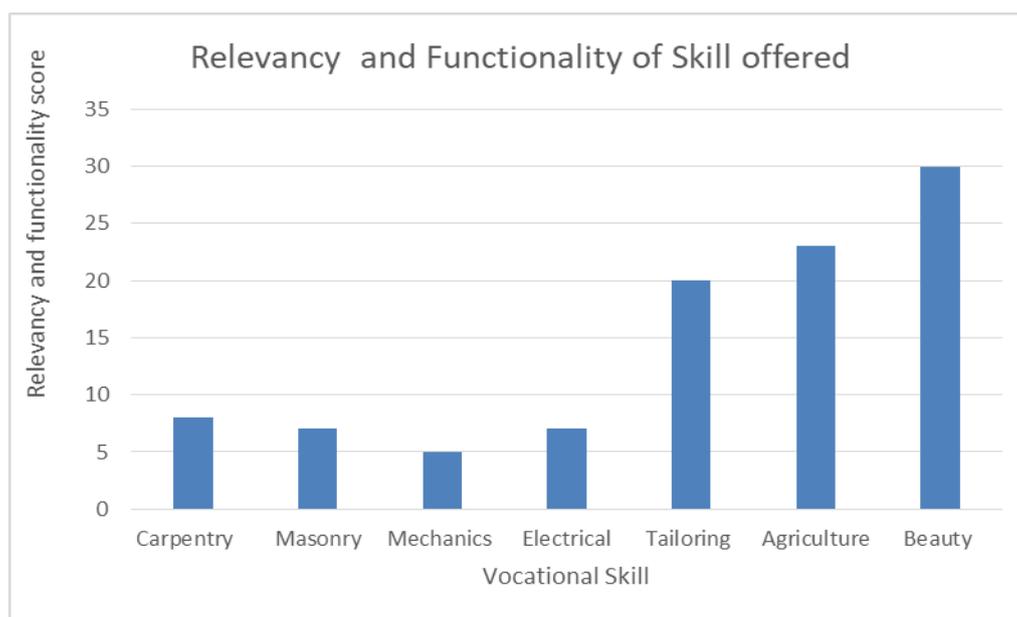


Figure 2. Vocational Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in RS

From Figure 2, the relevancy and functionality score was generally below average. Beauty related skills in hair dressing and Shaving were ranked highest (30%) followed by agriculture (23%), tailoring (20%), carpentry (7%), electrical (6%), masonry (6%) and mechanics (5%) with the least score. From the collated data, beauty, agriculture and tailoring scored high due to availability and functionality of learning resources, tutors and ready market within the school. The finding of low level (below 50%) of

functionality and availability of the vocational skills concurs with findings of Ergetachew (2016), in his study on teaching policies and learning outcomes in Sub-Saharan Africa, *Issues and Options*. There are too few teaching and learning resources that enable teachers to interpret the curriculum correctly. The low score of below 50% was interpreted to mean that learners with EBD had not mastered the skills taught. Probably due to inadequate instructional resources, avenue for practice and non-adaptability of instruction. This finding is in agreement with a National survey on children with disabilities and special needs in education in Kenya (Kenya Institute of Special Education, 2017). The survey did not find significant output by learners who had mastered vocational skills. This can be attributed to the low score in relevancy and functionality.

From the findings; academic skills and vocational skills, it can be concluded that academic and vocational skills were not adapted to suit the specific learner's needs and the resources used were not adequate nor fully functional to support skill development in learners with EBD. Thus, the end result of behaviour change through skill or knowledge acquisition in Kenyan JS is yet to be realized.

4. Summary of Skills Taught to Learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools in Kenya

The study established the skills taught (academic and vocational) to learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools (JS) as summarized below. On the academic skills taught, non-adapted numeracy and literacy skills were taught at an average level while their adapted versions to cater for the special needs of each learner, were insignificant. Thus, learners with EBD in JS were taught using a general curriculum with very minimal adaptations. However, this observation contradicts the expected outcome of adaptability to suit the learner's needs. This is likely to make the behaviour change process complicated.

Vocational skills taught to learners with EBD in JS, their relevancy and functionality scored poorly. Beauty (skills in hair dressing and Shaving), agriculture, tailoring, carpentry, electrical, masonry and mechanics were all not adapted to the needs of learners with EBD. There were too few teaching and learning resources to enable teachers effectively facilitate lesson delivery. In case the resources were available they were functionally inappropriate. Thus, academic and vocational skills adaptation, adequacy and functionality of resources were lacking.

5. Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to assess skills taught to change behaviour among learners with EBD in selected Juvenile Schools in Kenya. On this basis, the following conclusions were made:

1. Skills taught (academic and vocational) to learners with EBD in Juvenile Schools (JS) were not adapted to suit learners with EBD needs.
2. The behaviour change process was incomplete. Thus, chances of relapse were high.

5.1 Recommendation

Based on the study findings, the following recommendation is made. That the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should develop guidelines for adaptation of all the skills taught in JS to cater for each learners' special needs.

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