

**INFLUENCE OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION POLICY ON ACCESS TO
SECONDARY SCHOOL EDUCATION BY LEARNERS WITH HEARING
IMPAIRMENTS IN NANDI COUNTY, KENYA**

BY

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Education developed the Special Needs Education Policy document in order to provide a framework for the planning and implementation of Special Needs Education devoid of all barriers that inhibit access to quality and relevant education. It is therefore important to evaluate and find out whether the implementation of the policy is producing the outcomes that the Government envisages. This study therefore sought to examine influence of Special Needs Education Policy on access to secondary school education by learners with hearing impairments in Nandi County, Kenya. The study was informed by the Multiple Intelligences theory and the Dewey theory of Progressivism. The study employed a descriptive case study research design. Both primary and secondary sources of data were critical in this study. Primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires to a sample of 135 that represented 69.4% of the population using stratified and simple random sampling techniques while secondary data was collected using records and reports from special units/school for the hearing impaired and the Educational Assessment and Resource Centre coordinators within the county. The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research which was described using frequency distribution tables, means, percentages and themes. The findings showed that majority of the respondents were aware of the Special Needs Education Policy Framework of 2009 and believed that the policy was being implemented. In the same vein, majority of the respondents felt that the implementation of the policy had positively affected learners' enrolment in schools but recognized that there were still several challenges that were acting as barriers to school access by learners with hearing impairments in Nandi County. Majority of the respondents observed that the implementation of the Special Needs Education Policy had led to a slight improvement on transition of learners with hearing impairments from primary to secondary schools in Nandi County. The influence of the Special Needs Education Policy on retention of learners with hearing impairments was deemed to be marginally small in schools in Nandi County. The results also showed that there were cases of learners dropping out of school because of a number of reasons including financial problems, lack of motivation to be in school and cultural factors, among others. In order to improve access to school education by learners with hearing impairments, respondents gave their opinions on how the challenges could be handled including the need to train more teachers to teach learners with hearing impairments, provision of adequate learning materials and the need to fund the special units/schools for the hearing impaired in the county, among others. The study recommends that the Government needs to set clear guidelines on how the Special Needs Education Policy can be implemented and coordinated. The study also recommends increase of necessary support for the secondary and primary school/units for the hearing impaired in the county so as to improve access to school education by children with hearing impairments.