

**CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS IN ACCESS TO QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION BY  
PHYSICALLY CHALLENGED PUPILS IN KENYA****Bota K. N,****Lecturer, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya****Maiyo J. K .****Lecturer, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Kenya****Kunusia W****Lecturer, Teachers Service Commission, Kenya**

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**Abstract**

*One of the objectives hinged on and aimed to be achieved by the Special Needs Education (SNE) policy framework in Kenya is to promote quality, relevant and holistic education in ALL institutions for learners with Special Educational Needs (MoE, 2009). The study was aimed to investigate the emerging challenges and prospects of access to quality basic education by the physically challenged (PC) pupils in mainstream and special schools in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Kenya. The study adapted the descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. The study population consisted of 6 Head teachers, 36 teachers and 109 non-disabled pupils. Simple random and purposive sampling methods were used to select the study sample. Questionnaires, observation schedule and document analyses were used for data collection. Data was analyzed by use of descriptive and inferential statistics. Data was presented using tables, bar graphs and charts. The significance of the study anchored on the Kenya Government goal on SNE and as entrenched in the vision 2030 of providing a globally competitive quality education. The study established that the emerging challenges that hamper provision of quality basic education to the PC included inadequate physical facilities, inadequate special education teachers, poor learning environment, inadequate teaching and learning resources particularly text books in mainstream schools and negative attitude towards the PC. In terms of curriculum implementation, the use of individualized education programmes (I.E.P) was never applied. Further evidence revealed that teachers never prepared adequately. Head teachers placed a lot of emphasis on academic performance in terms of mean scores. Finally, the attitude of non-disabled pupils towards integration with their PC peers was established to be positive. The study recommends that greater emphasis should be placed on programs which aid the pupils in the transition from school to the world of work. The physical, social and learning environment should be improved and sensitization for attitude change should further be enhanced. Gender disparity need to be further addressed to enhance equality in access to basic education.*

**Key words:** *Special Needs Education, Physically challenged Pupils, Attitudes, Basic Education*

## **Background of the study**

Basic education is the primary object of any plan of development (Bishop, 1995). Education is a basic human need (World Bank, 1980). Education is a strong tool through which people acquire knowledge, enforce positive attitudes and perceptions, and help acquisition of necessary skills, while at the same time maintaining cultural identity and dignity. In Kenya, education is regarded as a critical human capital for national development. From a humanistic point of view education is a valued goal which on the grounds of equity should not be withheld from anyone (Sifuna and Karugu, 1998).

However, studies about the rates of enrollment in special schools and programmes for children indicate that children with disabilities are grossly under-enrolled (RoK, 1998). For example, a Study by Every Child Counts (ECC) a non-governmental organization indicated that even after the inception of Free Primary Education (FPE) programme in 2003 in Kenya only 22,332 out of 600,000 children with disabilities had access to primary education compared to non-disabled. Accordingly the enrolment has risen only to about 36,239 (RoK, 2009). This enrolment is still very low as the same source states.

The MOE (2008) cites a number of challenges it faces in its effort to address barriers to education for children with special needs. These are issues relating to access, equity, quality, relevancy, attitude among others (RoK, Ibid). Whereas this situation gives a general scenario of SNE in Kenya, it is the assumption of the researcher that remarkable improvement should have been made since the inception of FPE both in general education and SNE institutions. This is premised on the fact that every pupil through the schools receives financial support from the government (MEO, 2008). Western Province in Kenya has not been spared with the challenges facing SNE. Some of the challenges may just be perceived to be so. More particularly the challenges are assumed to affect all groups of learners with special needs in education. It is out of this background that this study was developed to establish the factors that affect access to quality primary education by the physically challenged in mainstream schools and integrated programmes in Kakamega and Bungoma Counties of Western Province.

The MOEST (2004) statistics just like the CESA report indicate that there are an estimated 750,000 children with disabilities. An estimated 90,000 have been identified and accessed according to the same source. It further states that only 14,614 are enrolled in Educational Programmes for children with disabilities; while an equivalent number are

integrated in regular school. This implies that over 90 percent of handicapped children are either at home or in regular schools with little or no specialized assistance as the same source further notes.

Many factors and challenges do exist that relate to access, equity and quality in the provision of Special Needs Education (RoK, 2005). These arise out of ignorance, attitudes, culture and poverty. The report further states that lack of clear policies and legislation, inadequate tools and skills for identification and assessment, inappropriate curriculum suitable for special needs learners and inadequate teachers' capacity are among other factors that affect access. Besides, the situation is exacerbated by the inappropriate home and school environment, poor co-ordination among service providers and inadequate and expensive teaching and learning materials (RoK, 1999). The International Conference on Education (1990) held in Jomtien (Thailand) identified resources for education both financial and human as being very essential for development of basic education. Among the identified resources, the most critical are finances.

Furthermore, the rigid curriculum characterized by the mean scores in examinations does not take into consideration the needs of the learners in this category (RoK, 1999). Architectural barriers also hinder and limit access. For many children, a disability leads to rejection, isolation and discrimination, hindering their psychological development. This is an aspect of attitude towards children with special needs (RoK, 2005). It is expected that the FPE programme has helped to alleviate some of the problems that might hinder access to quality education. It is out of this background that this study was developed to investigate factors that affect access to quality primary education by the physically challenged in mainstream schools and integrated programmes in Western Province of Kenya.

### **Objectives of the study**

The study focused to achieve the following objectives:

- i) To determine the enrolment of the PC pupils in the schools and integrated programmes.
- ii) To establish the emerging challenges of access to quality basic education by the physically challenged (PC) pupils in mainstream and special schools.

## **Research Design**

The study adopted a descriptive cross sectional survey method. According to Cohen & Lawrence (1995), a descriptive study gathers data at a particular point in time with an intention of describing the nature of existing conditions or identifying standards against which existing ones can be compared or determine relationships that exists between specific events.

## **Sampling techniques and research sample**

The research sample was drawn from six schools. The schools were purposively selected from the districts named. Three special schools for the PC and three mainstream schools that have integrated units for PC. Respondents included head teachers, subject teachers (Maths, English/Kiswahili and Physical education) and selected non-disabled PC pupils. A sample of three subject teachers in class seven and eight were purposively selected from each school, implying a total of thirty six (36) teachers.

This is presented in table 1

**Table 1: Target population**

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Target Number</b>	<b>Sample</b>
<b>Head teachers</b>	6	6
<b>Subject teachers</b>	106	36
<b>Pupils</b>	404	120
<b>Sample size</b>	516	142

Simple random sampling method was used to select ten pupils from class seven and eight in each school one hundred and twenty pupils were used for this study.

## **Instrumentation**

The study used the following instruments for data collection: questionnaires, observation schedule, and document analysis guide.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Enrolment of the PC pupils in special schools and integrated units**

For the purpose of this study the schools were identified in each category as follows: Special Schools A, B, and C; integrated units (programmes) D, E and F. The results are presented in table 2.

**Table 2: Enrolment of pupils in special schools and integrated units**

School type	No. of boys		No. of girls		TOTAL	
	(F)	%	(F)	%	(F)	%
Special A	42	24.6	36	24.0	78	24.0
Special B	73	42.7	67	44.7	140	44.7
Special C	56	32.7	47	31.3	103	31.3
Subtotal	171	100.0	150	100.0	319	100.0
Integrated D	18	47.7	10	29.4	28	38.9
Integrated E	08	21.0	16	47.1	24	33.3
Integrated F	12	31.6	08	23.5	20	27.8
Subtotal	38	100.0	34	100.0	72	100.0
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>209</b>	<b>53%</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>100%</b>

F - Frequency

From table 3 above, it can be observed that 209 (53%) of the total PC pupils enrolled in the schools are boys, while 184 (47%) are girls. It may also be observed that a majority, 319 (81%) of the total PC pupils are enrolled in special schools as compared to 72 (19%) PC pupils who are enrolled in mainstream schools with integrated units or programmes. It can be noted from the table that, generally, more boys than girls with PCs are enrolled in the schools. From these findings, it seems parents with or of pupils with PCs and others with SEN prefers taking them to special schools than mainstream schools with integrated units. This situation is evidently in agreement with Muuya (2001) who posits that three quarters of Kenyan pupils with SEN are in special schools with only a quarter in integrated special units within mainstream schools. Lynch (2001) cites access and enrolment of pupils with SEN as among the challenges of developments in theory, policy, and practice of integration.

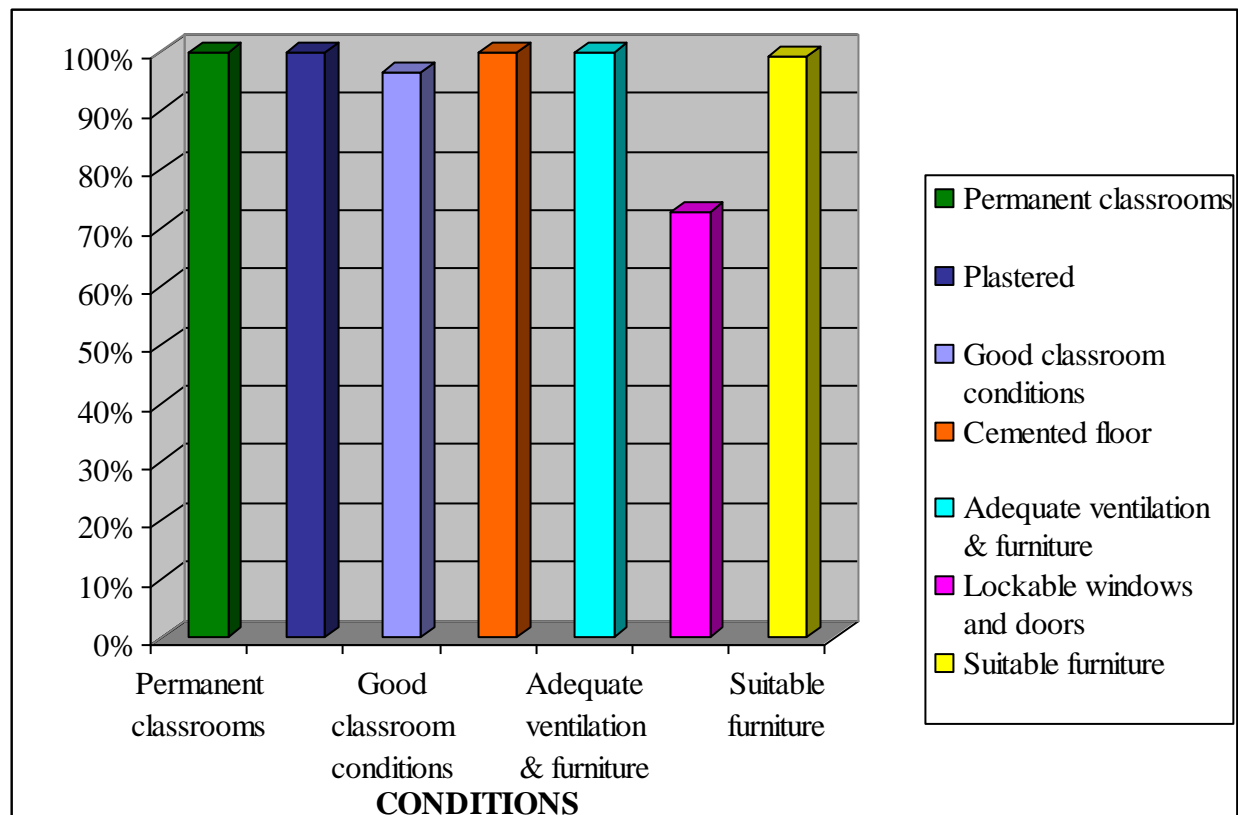
### **Emerging challenges**

#### **School challenges that affect planning, management and provision of quality primary education to PCs.**

This section presents findings under the following aspects and discussion: physical facilities, integration, school environment, teachers' preparation, para-professional support, curriculum and other factors that affect provision of quality education to the PC.

#### *Physical facilities*

Observations of the physical facilities were done. The findings are presented in figure 1



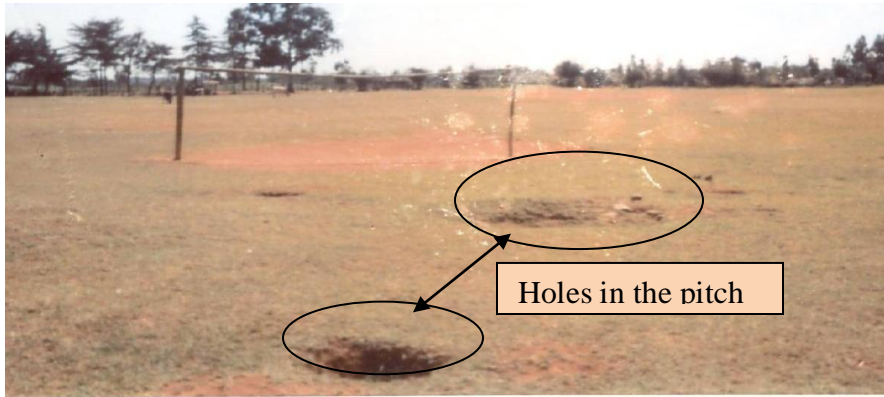
**Figure 1: Physical facilities available and their conditions**

One hundred and ten (100%) classroom observed were permanently built and have plastered walls. One hundred and six classrooms (96.4%) are in good condition. One hundred and ten (100%) classrooms have cemented floors. One hundred and ten (100%) classrooms have adequate ventilation and furniture. Eighty (72.7%) classrooms have lockable windows and doors. Furthermore, one hundred and nine (99.1%) classrooms have suitable furniture for use by the PC pupils, except in one case (0.9%) in which one of the PC classroom was made to lie flat on the floor due to her severe physical challenges. This is the position she remained in even while writing.

All the six schools (100%) had suitable and enough toilets for use by both boys and girls. For example they have wide doors which allow easy movement for those PC pupils who are wheel-chair bound and have suitable apertures.

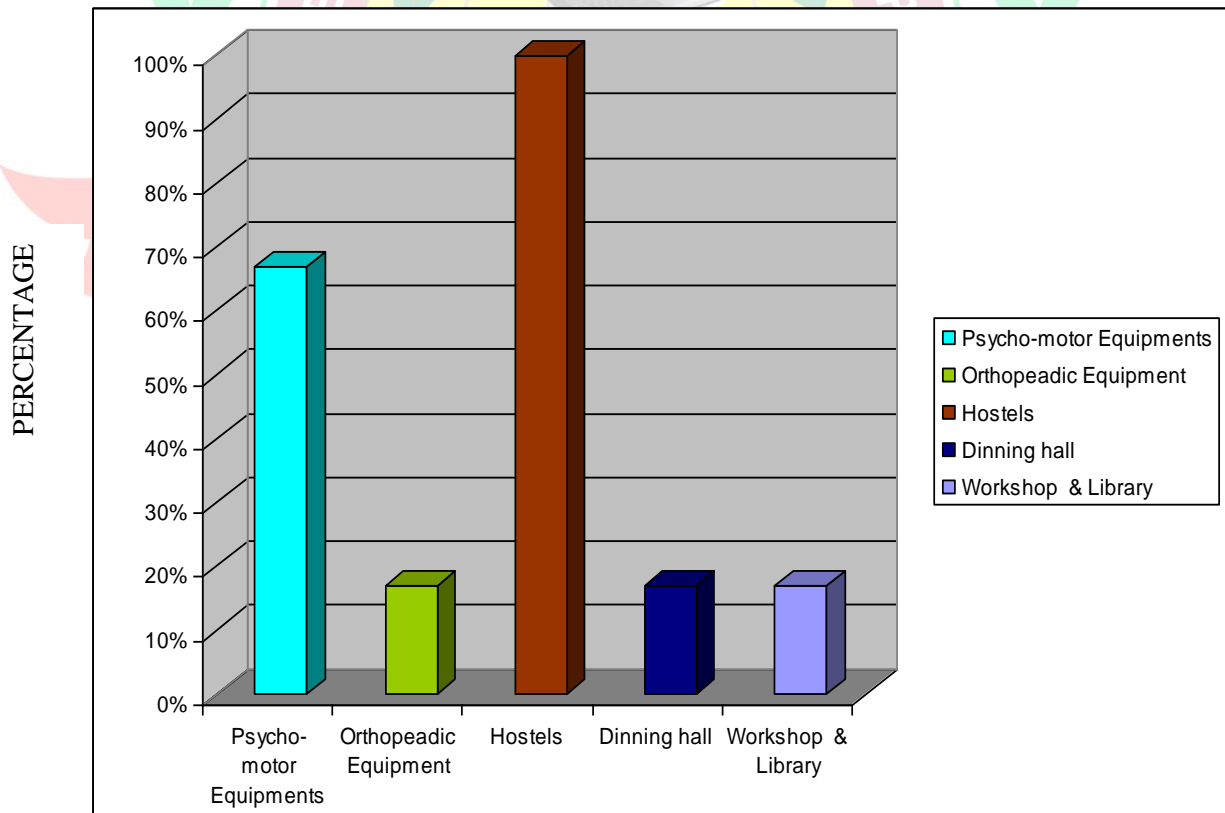
Observation of school playgrounds was also done. Four (66.67%) of the schools had enough playgrounds which were suitable for use by the PC. However, two ( 33.33%) of the schools had

playgrounds that were not suitable for use by the PC since they had deep holes and ragged surfaces, a condition that was not only risky but also dangerous to the PC, see figure 2.



**Figure 2: Playgrounds for School B**

Observation of other facilities and equipments was also made. The findings are presented in figure 3.



**Figure 3: Some Physical facilities in the schools**  
**PHYSICAL FACILITIES**

As regards physical equipments, as can be observed in figure 3, four (66.67%) of the schools had psycho-motor equipments available. These included comfort beds, swings, slides, parallel bars, static bikes among others. One (16.67%) school had orthopaedic equipments. Through observation, all the six (100%) schools had hostels for both boys and girls. Each school has a dining hall. One (16.67%) school had a workshop, library, resource room, computer room, and dispensary and physiotherapy room. Five (83.33%) of the schools did not have these facilities.

The assessment of the physical facilities and learning resources, physical surrounding of the school was also very important to the study because they have a part to play in the child's learning. Bennars, Otiende and Boisvert (1994) support this idea. They concur that the physical facilities include where the school is built and also the lay out of the classrooms. If the school is old and run down it will affect the pupil's learning. For instance, if there are leaking roofs, the pupils as well as the teacher are disturbed.

Additionally, learning facilities such as books, stationery, a library, workshop, equipments and tools, must be available to facilitate the pupil's learning. Bennars, Otiende and Boisvert (ibid) conclusively are of the idea that pupils will be motivated to learn when these facilities are satisfactorily provided.

One school (16.67%) had a resource room, library, physiotherapy room, computer room, workshop and dispensary. The rest of the schools (83.33%) did not have these facilities.

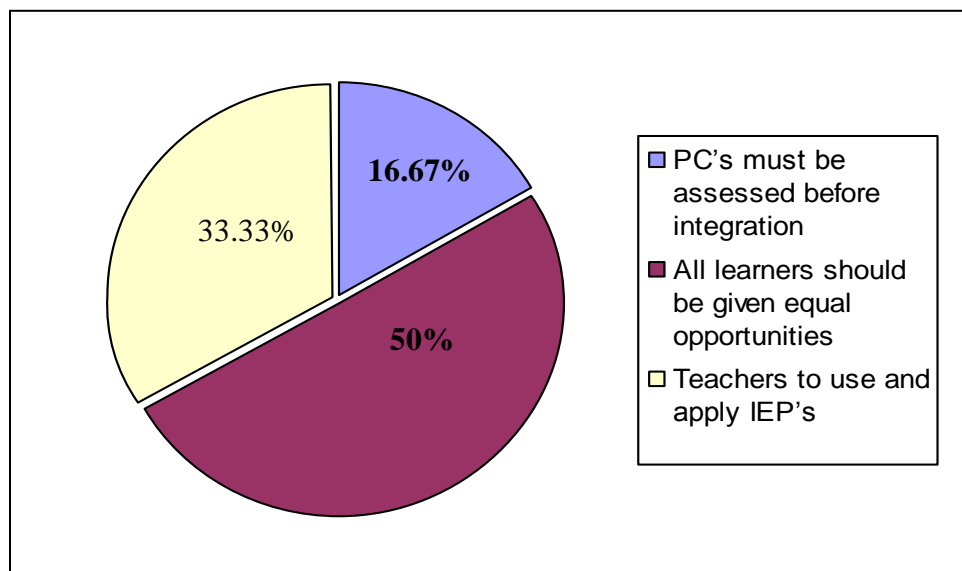
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### **Integration**

The school guidelines on the policy of integration were established. The data is presented in figure 4.





**Source: Survey Data 2009**

**Figure 7: School guidelines on the policy of integration Source: Survey data 2009**

**Figure 7: School guidelines on the policy of integration**

Analysis in figure 5 indicate that majority, three (50%) the respondents indicated that all learners are given equal opportunities in the process of learning, while two (33.33%) pointed out that teachers should use and apply the Individualized Education Programme (IEP). Only one respondent (16.67%) observed that the PC pupils must be taken to EARC for assessment before integration.

*School environment*

With regard to school environment majority of respondents, twenty six (86.67%), observed that the school environment is friendly and suitable for the learning of PC pupils. This was evident from some of the physical facilities observed which were available like permanent classrooms; dormitories for the case of boarding, dining halls, playgrounds, toilets among others. This may be in recognition with Farrant's (2002) assertion that a well built school is not a luxury but a necessity because the school provides an environment for all who use it which affects positively their tests morale and happiness. Tiedman and Faber (1990) as quoted in Bota (Ibid) agree that the school environment is seen as a social setting, its general success is enabled through the setting of sound learning aims, valuing of school performance, encouraging and guaranteeing self reliance among learners and working in close cooperation with parents. It is in this regard that the researcher also sought to investigate other aspects of school environment like teaching

strategies which directly affects the quality of education provided. Some of the teaching strategies as eluded by teachers are presented in table 3.

**Tables 3: Environmental factors that affect learning of PC pupils**

<b>Teaching Strategies</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Regular testing to determine academic performance	7	23.33
Encouraging learners to assist each other	5	16.67
Daily check up of pupils' work	5	16.67
Regular remedial lessons	2	6.67
Using teaching learning aids	3	10.00
Use of IEP	8	26.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100.00</b>

From table 3, seven (23.33%) respondents indicated regular testing to determine academic performance as their teaching strategy for the PC. Five (16.67%) indicated encouragement of all pupils to assist one another as their strategy. Five (16.67%) indicated daily checking of the pupil's work. Two (6.67%) indicated regular remedial lessons as their strategy. Three (10%) of the respondents indicated the use of teaching, learning aids while Eight (26.66%) indicated the use of individualized education programme (IEP).

As regards general treatment of the PCs, twenty teachers (83.33%) observed that there is no staff discrimination against PC children. However, four (16.7%) of the respondents claimed that there is staff discrimination against PC children. This is because they are not provided with physical education (PE) activities hence they remain as mere spectators during PE lessons. The respondents further noted that they are not properly assessed and placed as one teacher retorted. This was also noted from one of the teachers especially trained to handle the PC who said whenever the pupils failed to accomplish any tasks successfully, notably academic based, reference would be made to these pupils calling them "his pupils" had led them down again. In relation to this perception by teachers it may be worth noting that quality of education and enjoyment as a basic human right may be affected. Otiende and Njoroge (2001) agree with this notion that quality of education falls in schools and enjoyment of the same is reduced.

#### *Teachers' preparation and teaching process*

Another aspect of the environment which was very important to the study, was teachers preparation of lesson plans, schemes of work and other relevant records. To elicit information

regarding these records, the researcher observed practical lessons presented in class by teachers, with an aim of establishing how effective they were used and utilized. Data elicited from document analysis guide showed that twenty three (76.67%) of the teachers had schemes of work. Only one teacher (8.33%) out of the twelve teachers who taught physical education had schemes of work for adapted physical education are regards lesson plans, it was revealed that only six (20%) of the teachers had them and prepared them regularly for each lesson. Eighteen teachers (60%) of the teachers indicated and used the blackboard, chalk, pens, text books, and exercise books as their teaching aids.

It was evident from this scenario that teachers may have never thought of appropriate visual aids, audio or audio visual aids for use during the lesson presentation. Although some of the teaching aids displayed on the internal classroom walls they seemed not to be in use due to their bad conditions.

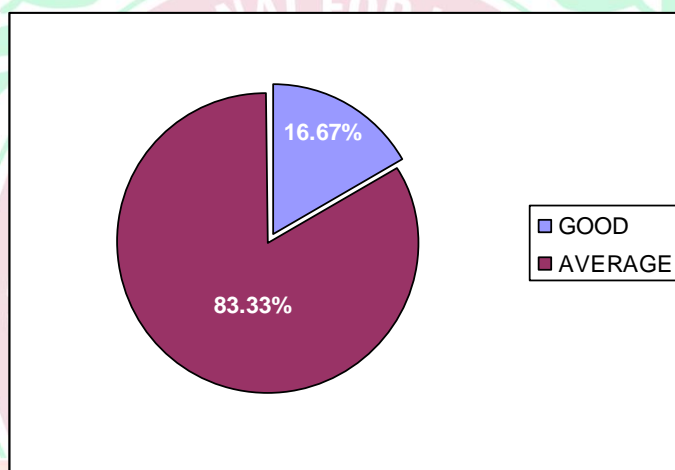
This is in sharp contrast with Bennars, Otiende and Boisvert (Ibid) teachers should not rely on the use of words only to explain ideas, facts and concepts. The use of teaching aids makes teaching/learning both lively and interesting to the students as they further argue. Nceeri (1996), Fuller (1992) and Atsenga (2002) agree that effective teaching methods impacts positively on learning.

#### *Para-professional support*

Under the internal school factors that affect planning, management and provision of quality primary school education, the study also sought to establish whether the schools had any para-professionals available to offer their services to the PC children. Data elicited indicated that none of the schools had any full time para-professionals. Only two schools (33.33%) had mobile physiotherapists (PT) who visited the school twice a week. One school (16.67%) had a clinical nurse employed by the MOEST. This happens to be the only school that had a dispensary as noted during observation schedule. PC participation in non-academic areas is in line with the state and federal special education laws that not only require students with disabilities to be educated appropriately with their regular education peers, but also participate in non-academic and extra curricular activities (Federal register, March 12, 1999). The same source agree with the idea that use of a para-professional is one support or service that may permit a student to achieve satisfactory progress and participate in a Less Restrictive Environment.

The aspect of curriculum implementation was also important to the study. As cited earlier in this study, SNE involves more than the processes of teaching and learning (ROK, 1999). Data accrued in the study from the teachers highly indicated that all teachers believed in regular testing and examinations. This was aimed at academic perfection. In line with this four head teachers (66.67%) had the respective schools mean scores in K.C.P.E displayed in their offices. In some classes too, class mean scores for the various evaluation tests that had been done were also indicated.

Academic performance, of PCs as is common practice in schools and institutions of learning was determined. These findings are presented in figure 5.



**Figure 5: Performance of PCs in National Examinations**

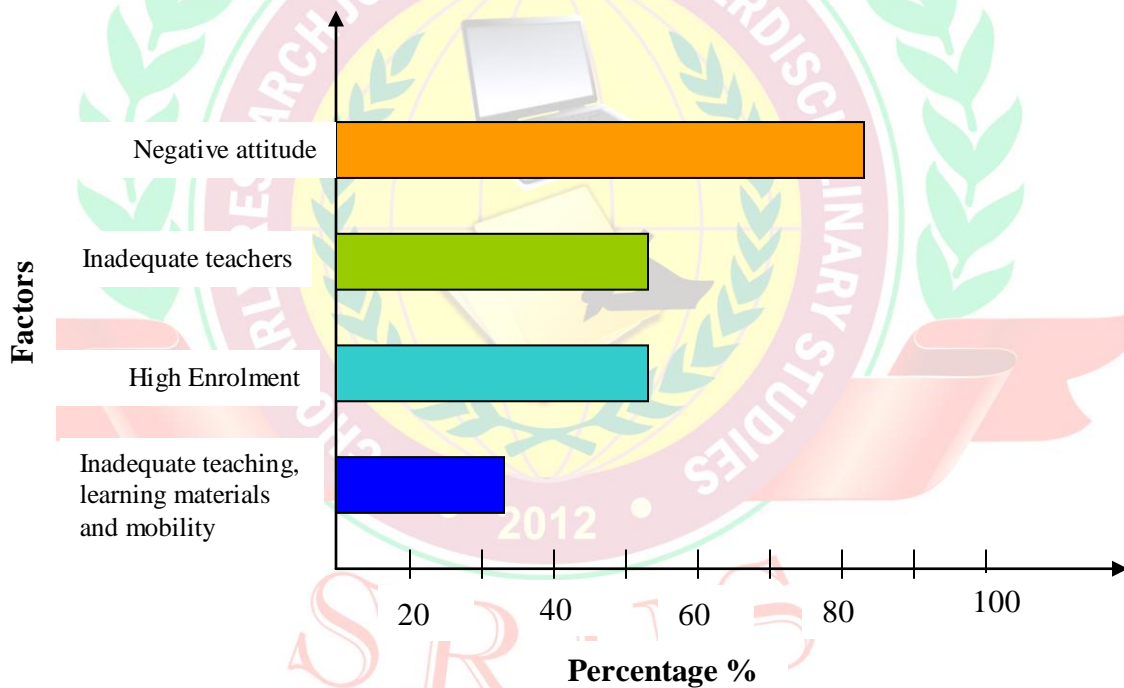
From figure 5, it can be noted that, five head teachers (83.33%) averred that the performance of PC pupils in national examinations in the past three years was average. One head teacher (16.67%) said the performance was below average. The aspect of using examinations as a measure of education quality is consistent with Muola (1990) who posits that examinations have been accepted by educationist and other stakeholders as an important aspect of an educational system. He further says that examinations have always been used as the main basis for judging students ability also as a means of selection for educational advancement and employment.

As regards non-academic areas that the PC pupils are involved in, five (83.33%) head teachers indicated that they do participate in co-curricular activities that majorly included ball games, athletics and music. One respondent (16.65%) whose school happens to have a sheltered workshop indicated that some of the PC pupils, who can fairly endure, are trained in carpentry, leather work and welding. This may be consisted with MoE's (2004) idea that a pupil who has

education on electrical installations, wood work or metal work would be expected to fit into the world of work upon completing school. However, the ministry reiterates that this can only happen if the right “quality and quantity” of education has been offered to the learner. Practical education offered in very little doses may not assist the pupil to acquire adequate skills to fully participate in the world of work (MOE, 2004).

**Other challenges that affect provision of quality education to the PC’s**

Determination of the internal school factors that affect planning, management and provision of quality primary education to pupils with PC was one of the pertinent objectives of this study. Besides the aforementioned internal school challenges, data elicited from head teachers’ responses cited other challenges that generally impact negatively on the provision of quality primary education to the PC (See figure 6).



**Figure 6: Other factors affecting provision of quality education to the PC**

It can be observed from figure 6 that five head teachers (83.33%) believe that parents, teachers and peers have negative attitude towards the PC. Three (50%) of the head teachers observed that there is inadequate teaching staff in the schools. Three (50%) cited high enrolment and two (33.33%) identified inadequate teaching/learning materials and mobility aids. Indeed, observations during the study, confirmed this dilapidating situation of overcrowded classes, inadequate teaching and learning materials, see figure 7.



**Figure 7: A learning session in school E**

Figure 7 shows an example of a class whose enrolment was eighty one (81) pupils. It can be observed from the figure that four or more pupils shared one text book; some were forced to stand in order to have a glimpse of what the teacher intended them to refer to in the process of teaching. This revelation is in concurrence with MOE report that states that Kenya is committed to the provision of quality education, knowledge, attitudes, skills and habits to its youth so as to achieve social inclusion. However, achieving social inclusion faces many challenges which include inadequate financial resources, culture, inappropriate curriculum, cost of education, policy set up for inclusion/integration, inadequate teachers, inadequate teaching/learning materials, worn out and obsolete equipments. As regards teachers in particular, studies by Oketch and Rolleston (2007), indicated that the education system faced a shortage of about 60 000 primary school teachers. According to the Human Resource Development Report 2011, the country needs 52,335 more teachers in primary schools. This scenario highly compromises the quality of education. This is a challenge that the government should continue to address.

### **Conclusion**

On the strength of the research findings, whereas observation revealed that most schools had major physical facilities, they lacked other specific and important ones like workshops for training of the PC in life skills. Lack of such facilities implied that and is an indicator that practically the primary school curriculum implementation is still academic oriented. Given this scenario and the nature of most of the PC pupils that are enrolled or may be enrolled, they are

likely not to access relevant and quality education. The existence of some physical facilities like play grounds that were barrier free is one aspect of internal school factors that affect provision of quality primary education. Teaching/learning resources especially text books were also found out to be inadequate especially in mainstream schools, hence making the teaching learning process difficult.

### **Recommendations**

In order to improve the provision of quality primary education with the PC the research study made the following recommendations:-

- 1) Sensitization on gender disparity of the PCs should be addressed. In particular, the education of the PC girl child should be emphasized.
- 2) The physical and learning environment especially in mainstream schools should be designed to meet the specific needs of PC pupils and subsequently pupils with other special needs in education.

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