Inclusive Futures

Promoting disability inclusion

Current Practices In Early Childhood Development Education In Kenya And Other Low And Middle Income Countries In Sub-Saharan Africa

A Desk Review Commissioned by Sightsavers, Humanity and Inclusion, IDS, Leonard Cheshire Disability and Sense International

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ACRONYMS

BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BECF	Basic Education Curriculum Framework
BoM	Board of Management
CBM	Curriculum-Based Measurement
CDE	County Director of Education
CEB	County Education Board
CECEC	County Early Childhood Education Committee
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease, 2019
CS	Cabinet Secretary
CSO	Curriculum Support Officer
DID	Disability Inclusive Development
EARC	Educational Assessment Resource Centre
ECC	Early Childhood Care
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDE	Early Childhood Development and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
ECSA	East Central and Southern Africa
GPE	Global Partnership for Education
IEP	Individualised Education Plan/ Programme
KCPE	Kenya Certificate of Primary Education
KCSE	Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education
KICD	Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
KISE	Kenya Institute of Special Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
NACECE	National Centre for Early Childhood Education
NEB	National Education Board
NECEC	National Early Childhood Education Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PA	Parents' Association
RDE	Regional Director of Education
SBIT	School-Based Inclusion/ Support Team
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNE	Special Needs Education
TLR	Teaching/ learning materials
TSC	Teachers Service Commission
UK	United Kingdom
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USA	United States of America
WG-SS	Washington Group Short Set on Functioning
WHO	World Health Organisation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This desk review is an output of the Disability Inclusive Development (DID) UK Aid funded inclusive Early Childhood Development Education programme that a consortium of Sightsavers, Humanity and Inclusion, IDS, Leonard Cheshire Disability and Sense International, is implementing in Kenya. It is a review of 'current practices in early childhood development education in Kenya and other low and middle income countries in sub-Saharan Africa' commissioned by the consortium. It provides affordable, contextually appropriate inclusive Early Childhood Development Education approaches for children with disabilities in pre-primary education.

The review addresses the following ten specific areas: current education system in Kenya and how inclusive ECDE is placed within this; identification and assessment of children with disabilities; effective pedagogies in inclusive ECDE in low and middle income settings; practices and tools used in measuring academic progress and the well-being of children in early years settings; training of early year practitioners; raising community awareness about disability and inclusion; relevant teaching and learning materials; impact of parental/ caregiver involvement in early years education; good practices in including children with disabilities in early years education settings; and home-based education for children with disabilities in early years.

A non-systematic desk review design was employed to gather information. Besides the 10 guiding sections, the following additional key words and phrases were used across online and offline databases; 'disability-inclusive education in low and middle-income countries'; 'disability-inclusive education in early years'; 'education experiences of children with disabilities'; 'early intervention for children with disabilities'; 'inclusive education in Kenya and Africa'; 'inclusive pedagogy' and 'right to education'.

The review analysed; relevant international literature, including teaching and learning manuals and tools and articles in peer-reviewed academic journals with a focus on contextually-based literature in East, Central and Southern Africa. In addition, Kenya contextually appropriate literature from low and middle-income settings beyond East, Central and Southern Africa were reviewed. Documentation from within Kenya including documents that cover disability and inclusive education, the early years curriculum and how early years education is placed and functions within the Kenyan education system were scanned. Also, documentation developed by consortium partners was evaluated.

The following are key conclusions from the review:

- The application of the Washington Group/ UNICEF Child Functioning Modules is systematic and consistent in identifying and assessing children with disabilities. Through the Individualised Education Plan with support from the Educational Assessment and Resource Centres and the School-Based Inclusion Team, results from the 2 – 4 years module can be useful in determining entry, appropriate determination of learning level and the kind of adaptation and support that learners with disabilities in ECDE may require.
- When it comes to effective pedagogies in inclusive ECDE, child-centred strategies have proven to be effective. However, what is most effective are

contextual approaches that are inclusive and equitable, can be achieved in 'least restricting environments' and are appropriate to the full interest of the learner.

- Formative assessments are recommended as being the most appropriate way of measuring the well-being of all children including those with disabilities in early years settings. Continuous assessment can gauge learning levels in young children as part of their day to day work.
- There is some important learning around the training of early years practitioners. ECDE teaching is facilitated by teachers trained at diploma and certificate level because most of the teachers who undergo ECDE teacher training at higher levels do not end up teaching at ECDE. This is owed to low remuneration of practitioners in ECDE and the perception that teaching at this level is tedious and considered a menial job. This combined with negative attitudes on disability further reduces the interest to teach at this level. This raises a need to influence motivation of practitioners in early years and awareness on the importance of ECDE.
- Disability inclusive ECDE in Kenya can benefit from awareness interventions that have an intersectional and multisectoral approach in nature. It is noted severally in literature that inclusive education programmes have been successful through the involvement of the community that is essential in promoting awareness, which leads to ownership, support and sustainability of intervention.
- To ensure effective implementation of inclusive ECDE, adequate and appropriate teaching and learning resources must be provided. This can be achieved through provision of additional funding. It can be successfully done by organising for material making days in the ECDE centers in partnership with parents and community. Also, teachers need to be equipped with skills and to be encouraged to improvise locally available materials to ensure that learners appreciate and are stimulated to learn. The teachers need to put more emphasis not only in indoor activities but also in outdoor activities with coherent use of teaching, learning and play materials in both cases.
- The role played by parents, caregivers and community is pivotal in promoting quality and inclusive education in early years. This has led to their involvement in the management, provision as well as monitoring of education programs through legislation or education policy. For instance, their inclusion in Boards of Management and school multidisciplinary teams is a catalyst for disability inclusion in education, more so, in early years where learning and development intervention are critical.
- There is an absence of dependable data and information on inclusive education on good practices in including children with disabilities in early years education setting. This is a major drawback to showcasing good practices in early years' education. That notwithstanding, there are pockets of good practices across high, low and middle-income countries that can be of benefit to the ECDE project. For instance, Educational Assessment Resource Centres have become an integral part of the education of learners with disabilities in Kenya. Their capacity building to use the 2 – 4 years Washington Group/ UNICEF Child Functioning Module can be useful in determining identification and appropriate determination of learning level in ECDE.

- Though there is no study that has proven the effectiveness of itinerant support for home-based education, there are high possibilities that application of itinerant support can be useful in realising the benefits based on its successes with support to learners with disabilities across East Africa in school-based learning. Its application to home-based education can be bolstered by expanding the itinerant support team through the inclusion of members of the School-Based Inclusion Teams or incorporating support to home-based learning as a responsibility of the School Based Inclusion/ Support Teams. Further, the itinerant teachers and the teams need to be capacity-built on unique aspects of home-based education and facilitation with resources to enable movement.

KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Children with Disabilities: This research views children with disabilities from the definition of persons with disabilities in the CRPD but only includes those of the ECDE age. Therefore, in this context, children with disabilities are those below the age of 8 and include those who have long-term physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, which in interaction with various barriers in education may hinder their full and effective participation on an equal basis with others (UN, 2006).

Disability Inclusive Early Childhood Development and Education (ECDE): This is an approach where children with disabilities in ECDE are provided with appropriate educational interventions within regular institutions of learning with reasonable accommodations and support (Ministry of Education [MoE] Kenya, 2018).

Disability Inclusive Education: The 2018 Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities defines Inclusive education as an approach where "learners and trainees with disabilities are provided with appropriate educational interventions within regular institutions of learning with reasonable accommodations and support" (MoE Kenya, 2018). It is also about accessing education and learning that exists in an equitable manner by peers.

Early Childhood: Early childhood spans the pre-natal period to eight years of age (World Health Organisation [WHO & UNICEF], 2012).

Childhood Development and Education (CDE): This is a concept that depicts development and education for children under 8 years. (WHO & UNICEF, 2012).

Early Years Education: In Kenya, early years education is defined in the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) as comprising two years of pre-primary and three years of lower primary school education (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017).

ECSA Region: The East, Central, and Southern Africa region consists of 14 member states which are Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Lesotho, Seychelles, Botswana, Mauritius, Swaziland, and South Africa. According to WHO (2021), member states of ECSA have a combined population of more than 190 million people.

Preschool education or pre-primary education: This stage comprises the two years of learning before crossing over to grade one of primary education (KICD, 2017).

Special Needs Education: Inclusive education is distinct from special education, which places children with disabilities in specialist schools, excluding them from the community and mainstream education; and integrated education, which recognises the benefits of children with disabilities attending mainstream schools, but separates learners into specialist classes or units (Leonard Cheshire, 2017).

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

1.1. Introduction

This report is a desk review of 'current practices in early childhood development and education in Kenya and other low and middle income countries in Sub-Saharan Africa'. While this review is an output of the DID UK Aid funded project aimed at '**Promoting Inclusive Early Childhood Development Education in Kenya',** it also feeds into the project interventions.'

Promoting Inclusive Early Childhood Development Education in Kenya is a programme that is part of the Inclusive Futures portfolio, a Consortium of 11 organisations: Action on Disability and Development International, British Broadcasting Corporation) BBC Media Action, BRAC, International Disability Alliance, Institute of Development Studies, Humanity and Inclusion, Leonard Cheshire Disability, Light for the World, Sense International, Social Development Direct and Sightsavers.

1.2. Objective of the review

This review was aimed at identifying affordable, contextually appropriate, inclusive ECDE approaches for children with disabilities in pre-primary education in Kenya.

The review addressed the following ten sections:

- Current education system in Kenya and how inclusive ECDE is placed within this.
- Identification and assessment of children with disabilities.
- Effective pedagogies in inclusive ECDE in low and middle income settings.
- Practices and tools used in measuring academic progress and the well-being of children in early years settings.
- Trainings of early year practitioners.
- Raising community awareness about disability and inclusion.
- Relevant teaching and learning materials.
- Impact of parental/ caregiver involvement in early years education.
- Good practices in including children with disabilities in early years Education settings.
- Home-based education for children with disabilities in early years.

Though the objective of the assignment was on practices in ECDE, which is loosely used to refer to preschool, search and recommendations extended to encompass early years education that comprises two years of pre-primary and three years of lower primary school education, according to KICD (2017).

This approach is essential because disparities in educational attainment between children with and without disabilities start at the first grade (after pre-school), and the gap widens as they progress to higher grades and levels of learning (Howgego et al., 2014). Consonantly, the review also observed efforts that can sustain increased enrolment and promote retention post preschool.

1.3. Review methodology

A non-systematic desk review strategy was employed to gather information for each section. Besides the guiding ten areas in the Terms of Reference, the following key words and phrases were used in the search across online and offline databases; 'disability-inclusive education in low and middle-income countries'; 'disability-inclusive education in early years'; 'education experiences of children with disabilities'; 'early intervention for children with disabilities'; 'inclusive education in Kenya and Africa'; 'inclusive pedagogy' and 'right to education'.

In particular, the review analysed the following;

- Relevant international literature, including teaching and learning manuals and tools and articles in peer-reviewed academic journals with a focus on contextually-based literature in ECSA.
- Kenya contextually appropriate literature from low and middle-income settings beyond ECSA.
- Documentation from within Kenya including documents that cover disability and inclusive education, the early years curriculum and how early years education is placed and functions within the Kenyan education system.
- Documentation developed by consortium partners.

1.4. Review guiding principles

The analysis is guided by the 4As approach to inclusive education. According to Katarina Tomasevski, the former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, education must be **Acceptable, Available, Accessible and Adaptable** (Liliane Fonds, 2017; UNESCO & Right to Education Initiative, 2019). Figure 4.1 is a graphical presentation of the 4As approach.

Acceptability; this is about an education approach that is relevant, non-discriminatory, culturally sensitive and of high quality.

Availability*;* this concerns education approaches that can be easily availed because they are resource efficient.

Accessibility*;* this is about enabling environments, positive attitudes and disability friendly systems, structures and policies that enable education. Therefore, approaches must be least restrictive and most enabling.

Adaptability; tied closely to acceptability, perhaps this is the most essential quality of all as it speaks to the objective of this review to develop inclusive ECDE approaches that are contextually appropriate. It is about educational approaches that are child-cantered; flexible to the specific interest and individual needs of the child.

The Human rights principle underpins the 4As approach. Therefore, the recommendations are founded on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) to *'ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all'* (UN, 2015) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD, Article 24) (UN, 2006).

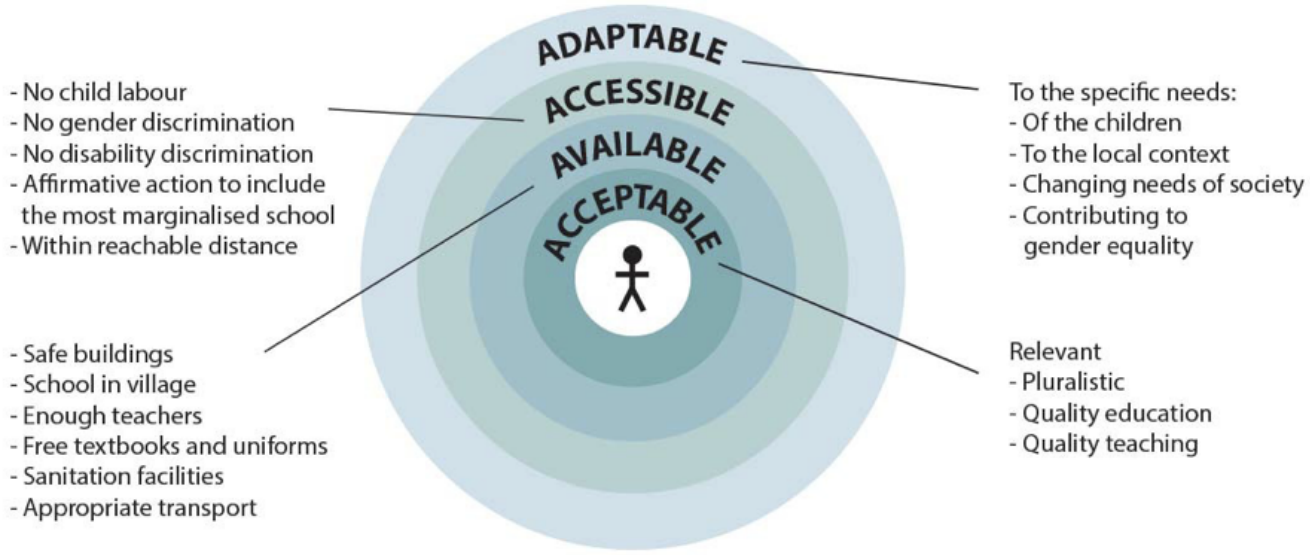


Fig. 1. The 4-A scheme; Education Rights Circle Diagram (*Source: Hajrullai and Saliu, 2016).*

2.0 E.C.D.E IN KENYA AND THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSIVE E.C.D.E

ECD is a general term that refers to the cognitive, emotional, physical and social development of a child. It is also used to refer to a range of interventions that aim at improving growth and development in various stages and aspects of life like education and socialisation, at the level of the individual, school, family and community (Indakwa & Miriti, 2010).

Different countries and stakeholders have different terms for these interventions. They include Early Childhood Care (ECC), Early Childhood Care and Education, (ECCE), Early Childhood Education (ECE), Early Childhood Care and Development or Early Childhood Care for Development (ECCD) (WHO & UNICEF, 2012). Early years education (EYE) is also a new synonym to ECDE that is beginning to gain popularity in the Kenyan education circles. Nonetheless, it is more than just ECDE.

As ECDE is in most cases loosely used to refer to pre-school – even in some literature and programmes, this review encompasses EYE that includes the first three grades of post pre-school, at least within the Kenyan context. However, this study adopted the term ECDE to refer to development and education for children under 8 years comprising two years of pre-primary and three years of lower primary school education (KICD, 2017).

Considering the early stages of primary school is critical because disparities in educational attainment between children with and without disabilities widen as learners progress to higher grades and levels of learning. The review thus observed

effort that can sustain increased enrolment and promote retention post pre-school (Howgego et al., 2014).

Early childhood is a critical period of human development because it is a stage of intensive brain growth. Even more influential than genetic factors, what happens at this stage and at pre-birth – that are environmentally oriented – plays an important role in laying foundations that determine success in emotional, health, physical, psychological and social fundamentals of the entire course of life. Secondary areas in life like education and economic empowerment are dependent of these aspects. Early childhood is an essential period that prepares all children for life-long learning and social integration.

With early intervention, successful EYE programmes have helped in early detection of barriers and gone ahead to put in place relevant measures to prevent possible developmental delays that are characterised by certain types of disabilities. “For children who experience disability, it is a vital time to ensure access to interventions which can help them reach their full potential” (WHO & UNICEF, 2012, p. 5).

“Compared to the other stages of human development, early childhood is a period of great mental elasticity and environmental adaptation. Unfortunately, this means that environmental deficiencies and negative experiences are more likely to cause “faulty” development with serious repercussions later in life” (Indakwa & Miriti, 2010, p. 11).

Bearing in mind that these fundamentals (of good emotional, physical, psychological and social health) are established at this stage (WHO, 2018), it is essential that maximum care and support is provided. Mediation after this stage may be ineffective and arrive late leading to wastage in the form of high dropout rates, and low retention and transition rates. Speaking of children with disabilities, who are left out in mainstream ECDE interventions, the disadvantages and losses are of unthinkable magnitude, according to Kiplagat et al. (2019).

Formal ECD learning started in Kenya in the 1940s, which was a take over from traditional learning that was provided by members of the extended family, more so grandparents (Indakwa & Miriti, 2010). The formal learning in ECDE centers, which is mainly provided privately by individuals and communities increased post-independence. Lately, the KICD indicates that there are about 37,312 ECDE centers positioned strategically across the country.

The exponential growth in ECDE in Kenya is due to its proven benefits in promoting physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual, moral and cultural development of the child between 0-8 years. However, that may not the case for children with disabilities as revealed by Kiplagat et al. (2019) in their study on learning challenges to disability inclusive learning in ECDE Centers in Kenya. The authors note drawbacks to disability inclusive ECDE like resistance to accommodations for children with disabilities, lack of facilities and support services, and negative attitudes by teachers and support staff.

Due to environmental stimuli that are not responsive to the diversities that most young children with disabilities bring to learning and life, they are prone to developmental risks. With most early childhood learning centers for children with disabilities in ECSA being part of the existing special primary schools, they are least included within mainstream educational programs in sub-Saharan Africa. Since

mainstream ECDE has not been supported to be inclusive, these children are ignored; they lack the necessary support required both as a need and right (Tesemma, 2011).

The new Basic Education Curriculum Framework (BECF) (KICD, 2017) highlights learning areas in the ECDE program including language, communication and literacy skills, physical education, child disability assessment, creative arts, emotional awareness, and health and nutrition. As the curriculum unveils, it is expected that finer strategies and plans at the level of the learner, classroom, family and community are inclusive of children with disabilities.

The benefits of inclusive educational experiences among children with disabilities cannot be overstated (for instance, see Catholic Relief Services, 2007; WHO & UNICEF, 2012; MoE Kenya, 2018; World Bank Group et al., 2019). Inclusive education is quality education, which fulfils the right to education and includes all children. This right is highlighted in several local, regional and international frameworks including the Revised Children Act (2010), the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Resulting from educational and social interventions that are inclusive, children with disabilities are empowered to accept themselves and act as self-advocates. They are also accepted by their peers, teachers and other members of their community within and outside the classroom. Accordingly, they become more active classroom, household and community members.

3.0 THE CURRENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN KENYA

Kenya is currently transitioning from the 8-4-4 system of education to the CBC education system. The 8-4-4 system was introduced in 1985 to replace the then 7-4-2-3 system.

The 8-4-4 education system is a three-tier system consisting of 8 years of primary education, 4 years of secondary education and 4 years of higher education. The goal of the education system was to prepare youth for self-employment. It aimed to emphasise on attitudinal and skills preparations for the world of work and especially self-employment. Further, it would improve the youth's employment potential and thus make them self-reliant.

One significant aspect of the 8-4-4 system is that it is silent on pre-primary education, which would otherwise have made the fourth tier. Despite its absence in the basic structure of the system, it was an integral component of the education system as it was a key requirement for admission to Standard One. Within the system, pre-primary education would last 3 years and targeted children from age three to five years. Pre-primary education was also called nursery school, pre-school, kindergarten or early childhood education.

In addition to pre-primary education, the 8-4-4 system is silent on middle level education. Middle level colleges are two or three year colleges that offer certificate, Diploma and Higher National Diploma qualifications. These colleges offer Technical hands-on skills in various fields such as Engineering, Medical Sciences, education, computer Science etc. They include Teacher Training Colleges, TTCs, Medical

Training Colleges, MTCs), Technical Training Institutes, TTIs and others. The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) falls under this category.

At the end of the eight years of primary education, learners sit for a national examination that allows them to progress to secondary education. In practice, not all learners who sit for this examination transition to secondary school. Likewise, at the end of four years of secondary school, learners sit for a national examination that enables them to transition to higher or tertiary education. Here too, not all the learners secure spaces at the higher or tertiary levels.

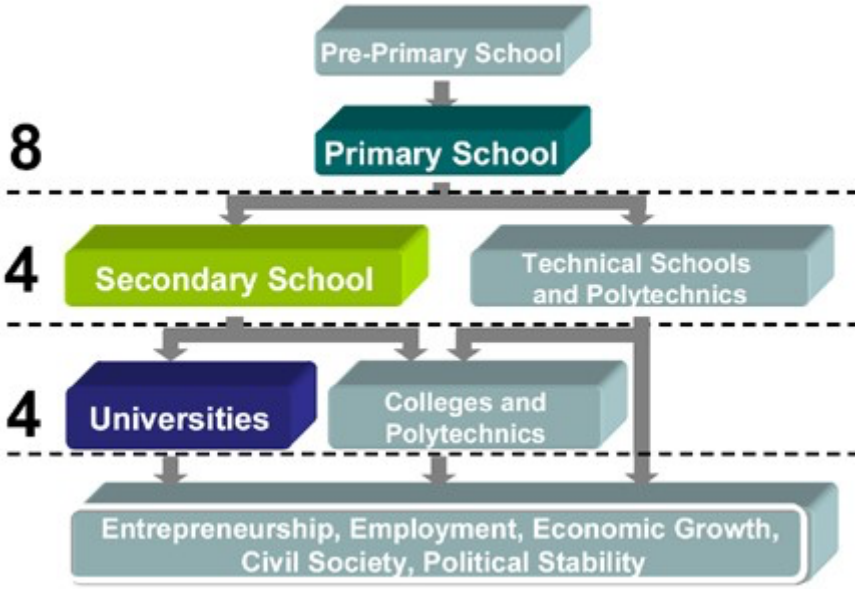


Fig. 2: The 8-4-4 Education system (source: www.education-international.org)

In the course of time, the 8-4-4 system became increasingly criticised as not achieving its goal of creating a population of Kenyans well equipped with skills for self-reliance. In addition, the system was criticised as being exceedingly theoretical and depending heavily on summative evaluation as a way of measuring learning outcomes.

Likewise, the national examination at the end of primary education was seen as a major barrier to 100% completion of basic education, which consists of both primary and secondary levels of education. This led to wide-sweeping educational reforms that led to the introduction of a competency-based curriculum. Today, the 8-4-4 system is progressively phasing out as the new Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) system is phasing in.

Kenya adopted the CBC in 2019 to address the gaps identified in the 8-4-4 system and the need to embed a national value system and enhance acquisition of pre-requisite competencies for the 21st century. The core competencies of the CBC are; communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving, imagination and creativity, citizenship, learning to learn, self-efficacy and digital literacy (KICD, 2017).

The rationale for Kenya adopting CBC was informed by need to align the education sector to the global trends in education and training that are now shifting towards programs that encourage optimal development of human capital. The CBC is designed with a view to help learners acquire knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that are likely to equip them with competencies that they can effectively use to serve the society. The young people are to develop competencies for work and to actively participate in the society.

Thus, instead of objectives, CBC focuses on competencies: instead of content, CBC focuses on outcomes; and learner activities will be based on the performance of the learner and accomplishment of competencies. Teaching activities are learner cantered and formative evaluation is necessary. In this regard, CBC is considered the leading paradigm for innovation since it emphasises the integrated nature of what students need to learn to face not only the labour market but also life in general.

The CBC system consists of two main levels of education, namely, Basic Education and Higher Education. Basic Education is organised into three levels: EYE, Middle School Education and Senior School. EYE comprises two years of pre-primary and three years of lower primary school education. Middle School Education comprises three years of upper primary and three years junior secondary education. Senior school comprises three years of Secondary education and lays the foundation for further education and training at the tertiary level and the world of work. It also marks the end of Basic Education.

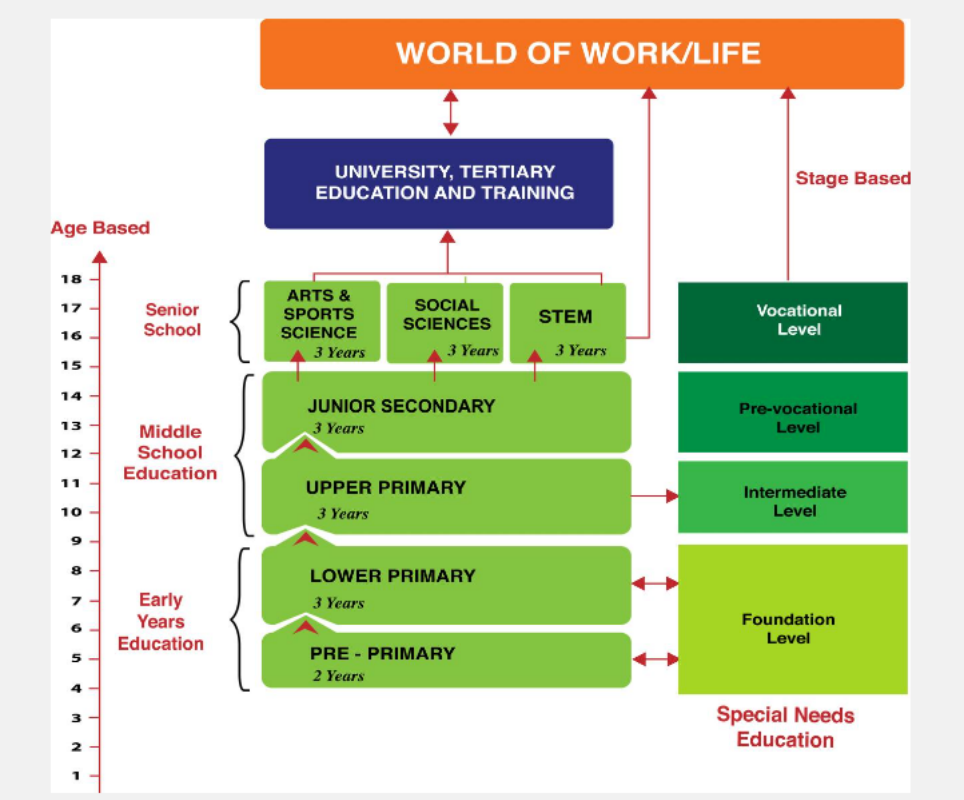


Fig. 3. Structure of the Competency-Based Curriculum (Source: KICD, 2017)

From the above figure, it is clear that the CBC integrates ECDE into the educational cycle and accords it due prominence within the educational system.

Another important feature of the CBC is its integration of special needs education into the broader educational system. CBC provides for two educational pathways – the regular pathway and the Special Needs Education (SNE) pathway. The special needs pathway is designed for learners who are not able to pursue the regular pathway. These are learners who have physical, sensory or intellectual conditions. It is perceived that this may not allow them to perform optimally within the milestones of the regular pathway.

The SNE pathway consists of four levels, each of which corresponds to levels within the regular pathway. The first level is the Foundation Level that corresponds to the EYE Level. The second is the Intermediate Level that corresponds to the Upper Primary Level: the third is the Pre-vocational Level that corresponds to the Junior Secondary Level while the fourth is the Vocational Level that corresponds to Senior School.

The CBC further provides for a two-way movement between the regular pathway and the SNE pathway. Learners in the regular pathway who are identified as having difficulties in acquiring competencies required for a given level can cross to the corresponding level within the SNE pathway. Similarly, learners within the SNE pathway that demonstrate performance beyond expectation within their levels can be transferred to the regular pathway. There are three cross-over points; between the Pre-Primary and Foundation Levels; between Lower Primary and Foundation Levels and between Upper Primary and Intermediate Levels.

In terms of measurement of learners' performance, the CBC emphasises two types of assessment: formative assessment and national assessment. Formative assessment is assessment that is ongoing and is carried out as part of the learning process. National assessment is carried out at the end of certain levels of education

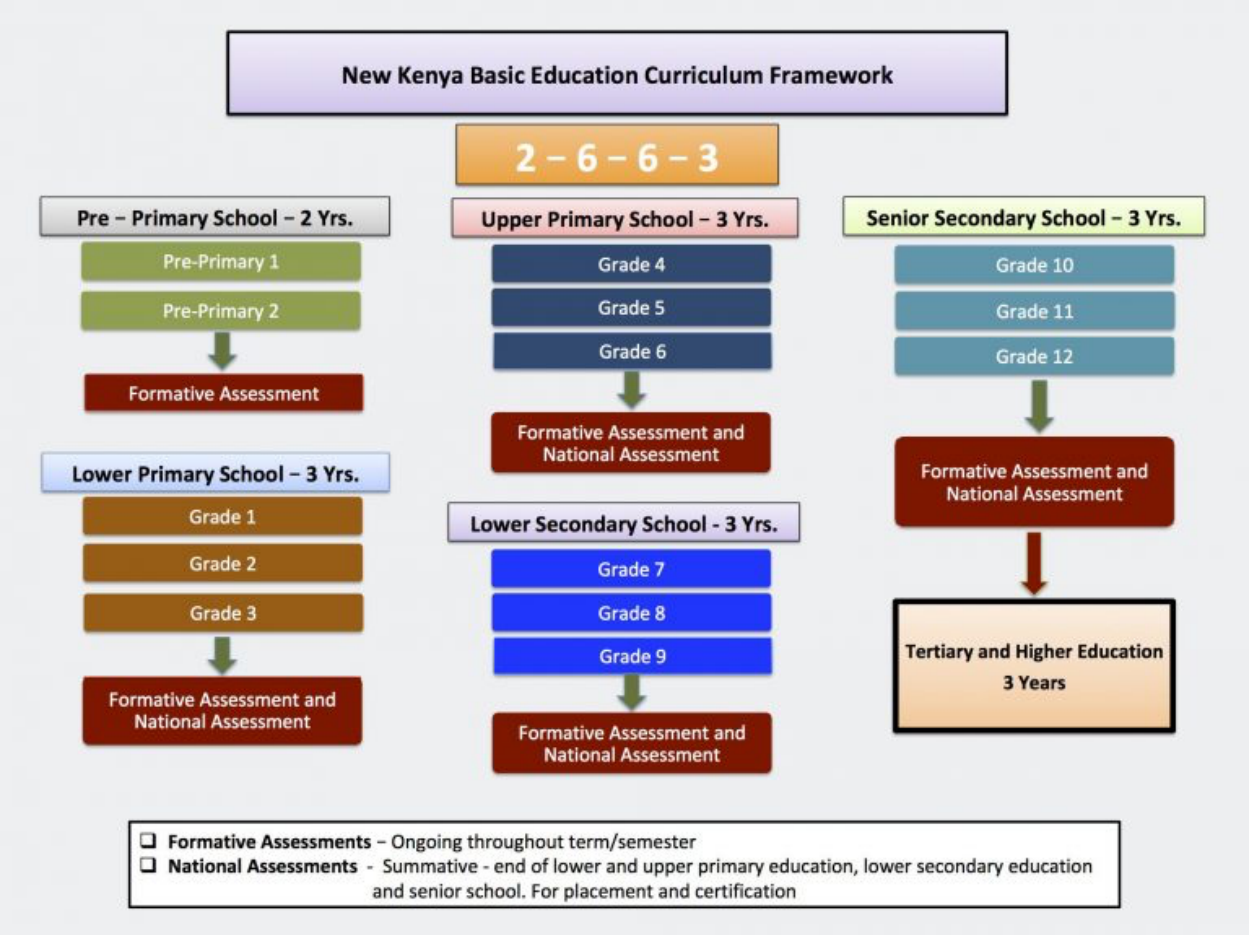


Fig. 4: New Kenya Basic Education Framework (Source: E-Books Kenya, 2018)

At the end of the pre-primary level, a summative assessment is computed to enable the learner to proceed to lower primary. Both formative and national assessments are administered at the end of the Lower Primary and Upper Primary levels as well as at the end of Lower Secondary and Senior School.

For learners with special needs, the CBC introduces a differentiated competency-based curriculum. This curriculum consists of four options, namely, the regular curriculum with adaptations, accelerated and enriched curriculum, specialised curriculum and intervention programmes.

The regular curriculum with adaptation shall be offered to learners with special needs who may follow the regular curriculum with appropriate modifications. The accelerated and enriched curriculum provides opportunities for learners who are gifted and talented to realise their full potential by providing educational programs that are responsive to their needs, abilities and interests.

Specialised curriculum shall be offered to learners with special needs who may not follow the regular curriculum, such as those with intellectual disability, deaf-blindness, autism, severe cerebral palsy, multiple and profound disabilities. Intervention programs are designed for learners with profound disabilities who are usually homebound, that require closer and continuous assistance and care or hospitalised.

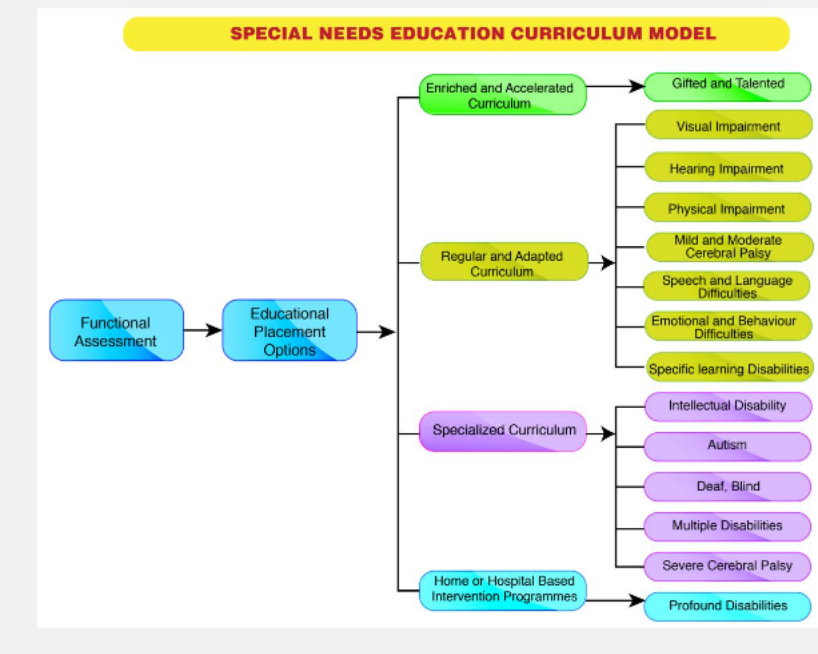


Fig. 5: Special Needs Education curriculum Model (Source: KICD, 2017)

In terms of competency assessment for learners with special educational needs, the CBC introduces an inclusive assessment in which all assessment policies and procedures support and enhance the successful inclusion and participation of all learners vulnerable to exclusion, including those with special educational needs. This shall be achieved through assessment accommodations that will involve the modification of existing standardised or summative assessment procedures, tools and methods so that they can meet the needs of learners with special educational needs. An assessment accommodation is an alteration in the way a test is administered.

4.0 THE ECDE ADMINISTRATIVE AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN KENYA

Since devolution of ECDE to county governments in Kenya, its administrative and governance structure is an area that is less clear (Odundo, 2018). This analysis sheds light on this issue.

The advent of the National Pre-primary Education Policy and Standard Guidelines of 2018 and the Early Childhood Education Act no. 3 of 2021 have helped allay conflict in ECDE teacher management, teacher capacity building, monitoring quality and enforcement of policy provisions as unveiled by Jaluo (2015). That combined with interviews with key informants from the MoE made the positions clearer.

The Kenya Constitution (2010) created a devolved governance system comprising the national government and 47 county governments. Among other objectives, this arrangement was meant to enhance efficiency by bringing services closer to the public. As such, several mandates were conferred to county governments, ECDE

and childcare services being one of them (Odundo, 2018). In clarifying the devolution of ECDE, the Basic Education Act of 2013 further confirms the responsibility of county governments to provide the necessary funding for institutions offering ECDE services.

In this respect, therefore, the national and devolved units are expected to be guided by the National Pre-Primary Education Policy Standards and Guidelines (MoE Kenya, 2018). In particular, the policy establishes the National Early Childhood Education Committee (NECEC), at the national level, whose members are appointed by the Cabinet Secretary (CS) for education. NECEC functions include; to provide policy direction on pre-primary education matters; coordinate stakeholders in pre-primary education sub-sector and mobilise resources for pre-primary education programmes. The Director at the Ministry headquarters in charge of Early Childhood Education and Teacher Education is the NECEC focal person. S/he establishes, operationalises and coordinates the national NECEC secretariat.

The policy also requires county governments to establish County Early Childhood Education Committees (CECEC). Their functions include to 'establish county-based governance structure to manage pre-primary education programmes that are equitable and inclusive' and to 'enforce effective implementation of National Pre-primary Education Policy and Standard Guidelines'. The County Director in charge of ECDE is the CECEC focal person. S/he establishes, operationalises and coordinates a national NECEC secretariat (MoE Kenya, 2018). The CECEC liaises with pre-primary centers or schools through Boards of Management (BoM) and Parents Association (PA), entities that the policy establishes.

There is a clear operational linkage between CECEC and NECEC. The National Pre-primary Education Policy and Standard Guidelines affirm the joint role between the MoE and county governments in 'developing and implementing a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework for pre-primary education institutions' and 'conducting action research to advise policy makers and other service providers in pre-primary Education'. Also, CECEC is required to 'submit termly reports to NECEC on status of pre-primary education'.

Additionally, the policy concurs with the Basic Education Act (MoE, Kenya, 2013) on the relation between county governments and national governments, which is concretised through the County Education Boards (CEBs) and the National Education Board (NEB) on pre-primary matters. For instance, the Act confirms the role of CEBs in 'coordination and monitoring of pre-primary education and training programmes in the county on behalf of the County and National Governments'.

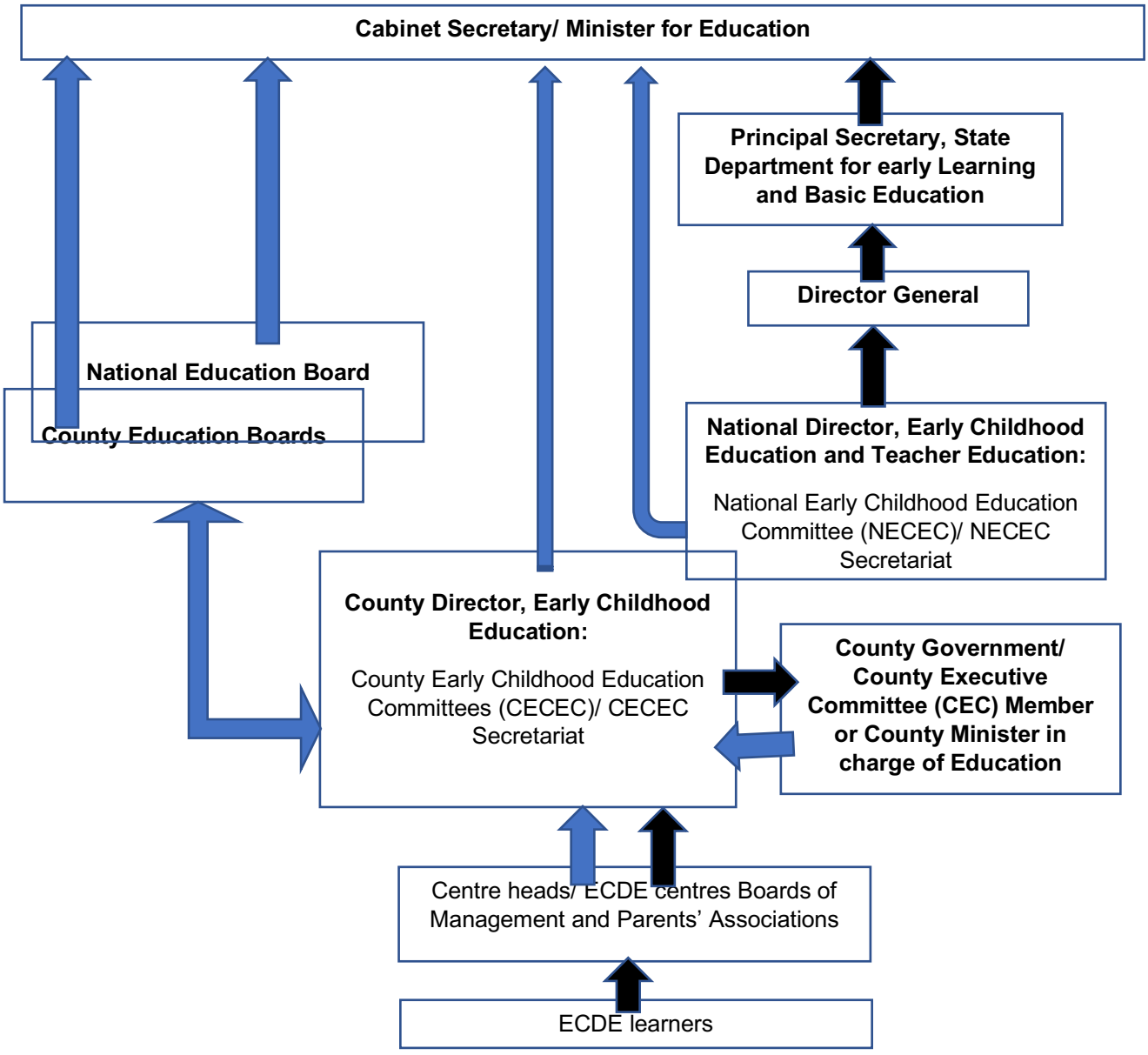
In consultation with county governments, one of the functions of CEBs is to oversee the operation and management of early childhood care and education programmes (MoE Kenya, 2013). The CEBs may appoint a committee to discharge the ECDE function and periodically issue to it progress reports. The County Director of Education (CDE) who report to the CS through the Regional Director of Education (RDE) is the secretary to the CEB. The role of the county government through the County Minister for Education also known as Chief Executive Committee Member (CEC), education and that is a CEB member is to provide funds for development of

infrastructure for institutions of basic education including pre-primary education and childcare facilities.

The CS appoints members of the CEB and those of the NEB. The linkage between the CEB and NEB on ECDE matters is in the function of the CEB to coordinate and monitor education and training in the County on behalf of the national government and county governments. Also, the CEB has the duty of interpreting national policies in line with needs at the County level. The CS may require the two boards to submit periodic reports on particular matters on education.

While several functions of management, supervision and accountability are clearer (see section 6.0 of the National Pre-Primary Education Policy Standards and Guidelines), the responsibilities of funding for ECDE as well as capacity-building of ECDE teachers by various actors (CEB, NEB, CECEC, NECEC and the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) are still amorphous. The would be complementary measures in the three frameworks (Basic Education Act, National Pre-Primary Education Policy Standards and Guidelines and lately, the Early Childhood Education Act) rather present a conflicting position. Generally, the plural administrative and governance structures at county and national level present potential strength as well as conflict in equal measure under different circumstances.

Fig. 6: is a graphical representation of the ECDE administrative and governance structures.



Key:

- Blue arrows represent the governance flow
- Black arrows represent the administrative flow

Fig. 6: Graphical Representation of the ECDE Administrative and Governance Structures ***(****Source: Authors****)***

5.0 THE IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Early identification and assessment of children with disabilities is paramount to their development. A major barrier to inclusive education for children with disabilities is the lack of early identification and intervention processes. Early identification and intervention are key to providing vital communication, sensory and mobility skills as well as basic life skills. Improper identification and assessment of learners with disabilities is a major factor that may impede effective enrolment of learners with disabilities in developing countries, where challenges are prevalent (World Bank Group et al., 2019). Consequently, it can impact negatively on the process of learning in ECDE, as identification and assessment occur primarily at this stage thereby resulting to weak childhood foundations that fail to foster development.

The challenges in identification and assessment in the developing world exist due to several major reasons. In most cases, the process is not given significant priority, and teachers only realise later after a child with a disability has been enrolled in mainstream programs that the child has some difficulties. A publication by Indakwa and Miriti (2010) states that about 79% of children with multiple disabilities and 58% of children with intellectual impairments are not registered at birth. The report further states that there is a serious shortage of early identification and rehabilitation services across Africa. For instance, in 2011, only 7.5% of public hospitals in South Africa could provide periodic screening to infants and children.

In order to address challenges that hinder the effective assessment of children, the use of itinerant teachers for assessment, especially for children with the so-called 'major disabilities' has been adopted by several countries. This practice has increased the enrolment and placement of children with disabilities with high ratings recorded in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia (Tesemma, 2012).

In Kenya, the Ministry of Health has developed guidelines that address early identification and assessment of children with disabilities that are incorporated in the Disability Act 2003. The Educational Assessment and Resource Centers (EARCs) were established in 1984 to carry out early identification, assessment, intervention and placement of learners and trainees with disabilities. These centres identify and assess the educational needs of children with disabilities and tailor the appropriate education services for the children. The centres have played a critical role in enhancing inclusive education delivery strategy through an increased placement of children with special needs into special schools and integrated programs.

The KISE, with financing from the Ministry of Education, is constructing the National Psycho-Educational Assessment and Research Centre that, once completed, will become a referral centre for assessment of children. KISE has also been conducting assessment in the areas of visual difficulties, hearing difficulties, speech-language and communication difficulties, physical and multiple disabilities, emotional and behavioural difficulties, and learning difficulties.

In South Africa, the Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment, and Support (2014) requires the assessment of learners to occur both within the school environment and at the learner's home. The Policy further requires that the

assessment must focus on both the intrinsic and extrinsic factors of a learner's needs.

In Namibia, four policies address the needs of children with disabilities. They include National Policy on Disability, National Policy on Orthopaedic Technical Services, National Policy on Mental Health, and Sector Policy on Inclusive Education. Despite these efforts, it has been observed[1] that the implementation of assessment services for disability is not optimal because of lack of awareness and knowledge on policy content, lack of qualified human resources, lack of monitoring and evaluation, budgetary constraints, and the existence of inconsistent models of disability programs that fail to address gender differences. In addition, though these four documents are central in the proviso of inclusive education in Namibia, it was observed that none of them directly provide for early identification and assessment.

In Malawi, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) have been in the forefront to advocate for inclusive education. During the 2018 UK Global Disability Summit (GDS18), the Malawi Government committed to improving early identification assessment and interventions for children with disabilities by 2021; to undertake capacity building of teachers on how to manage learners with disabilities at all levels by 2022; and to train caregivers in inclusive ECDE by 2022.

To ensure that these commitments are translated into practice and impact on the lives of persons with disabilities, OPDs are working alongside the Malawi government to provide support and hold it accountable. The Visual Hearing Membership Association (VIHEMA), for instance, is working on a project supported by the Disability Rights Fund (DRF) to advocate for the development of an early identification and intervention program for children with deafness and blindness in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

In Mozambique, 14% of children between two and nine years old are disabled[2]. It is further reported[3] that 17% of persons with disabilities in Mozambique have been refused entry into a school or preschool because of their disability. The Mozambican Association of People with Disability, the Mozambican Forum of Associations for People with Disability, the Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Action have joined efforts to necessitate early identification and assessment of children with disabilities.

In Uganda, it is reported[4] that the Ugandan government supports 47% of children with disabilities while non-governmental agencies support only 14%. This leaves a gap of 39% that is unsupported. The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development ensures the National Policy on Disability (NDP) is implemented effectively. The Ministry of Health in Uganda has employed resident medical officers at regional levels to identify and assess risks among children with disabilities. Other stakeholders such as *Associazione Volontari per il Servizio Internazionale* and Uganda Society for Disabled Children have established workshops to manufacture and maintain assistive devices that enhance early identification.

[1] Shumba and Moodley (2018).
[2] Khadiagala and Manhique (2019).
[3] Zachmann, Patrick, et al. (2013).
[4] African Child Policy Forum (2011).

In Tanzania, Mapunda et al. (2017) report that there are no functioning school-based systems of assessment for identification and intervention for children with disabilities in the country. The report further states that there are no policy implementation frameworks necessary to enforce inclusive education for these children. This has prompted civil society organizations, including OPDs from Zambia, South Africa and Uganda, to support local civil society organisations to advocate for the implementation of necessary programs that enable the identification and assessment of children with disabilities (Tesemma, 2011).

Several experts[5] have discouraged the use of identification and assessment approaches that focus on the medical characteristics of the learner and not on the corresponding educational barriers arising from the various aspects of the environment. Instead, experts[6] have strongly recommended the adoption of an approach where screening and assessment interventions address both individuals and on their environment.

This approach reflects the WHO ICF model (ref 2001) and the duo definition of disability in the CRPD as long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which, in interaction with various barriers, may hinder full and effective participation in society on an equal basis. This simultaneous approach to understanding the type and nature of the child's educational needs, the barriers, and enablers within the environment helps pinpoint and manage other appropriate needs and adaptations needed for the child to learn well.

There is an increasing global use of the Washington Group on Disability Short Set of Questions (WG-SS) to identify persons with disabilities in censuses and surveys. This form of assessment integrates the physiological and environmental impacts of disability and puts the emphasis on the type and level of difficulty without going into medical diagnosis. Though the WG-SS is generally used for demographic purposes, it is also helpful in determining the kind of adaptation and support that persons with disabilities need.

Leonard Cheshire in its girls with disabilities empowerment through the education (GEC) projects in the Nyanza region of Kenya uses the WG-SS/UNICEF Module on Child Functioning and Disability to identify functional difficulties among children aged 2 – 17 years. Within the context of learning, the Module on Child Functioning identifies functional difficulties and how they place learners at the risk of participation (World Bank Group et al., 2019).

The quality of data being gathered is highly consistent. There are ongoing trials to use the data to inform learner's Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) with support from EARCs in conjunction with the School-Based Inclusion/ Support Team (SBITs). This assessment intervention that considers early years together with the concepts of IEPs and SBITs is a very effective wholistic approach in supporting learning in an inclusive ECDE set up.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the educational assessment of children with disabilities varies from one country to another in terms of its policy frameworks and programmatic strategies. Several countries in the ECSA region have enacted

[5] Watkins (2007).

[6] Lebeer et al. (2011)

policies that guide educational assessment and placement of learners while a larger number have not. In the countries where such policies exist, the provision of assessment and placement seems to be much better though not optimal. Collaborative action is therefore required to ensure the enforcement of these policies. In Kenya, for instance, where educational assessment of learners is backed by strong policy and programmatic frameworks, collaborative efforts are still needed to ensure that all children receive timely assessment and are appropriately placed.

In countries where there are no policies for assessment of learners, it is necessary that stakeholders influence for the enactment of such policies. This will enable proper placement within the education system. Collaboration between health service provides, educationists, families and communities is important in creating educational assessment and placement pathways for every child during early years. This is an important step towards guaranteeing the right of the child to quality education.

6.0 EFFECTIVE PEDAGOGIES IN INCLUSIVE E.C.D.E. IN LOW AND MIDDLE INCOME SETTINGS

This section studies literature on appropriate pedagogies for learners with disabilities in ECDE. With scarce evidence in literature on effective practices for children with disabilities in ECDE across the globe and while the worst affected are low and middle-income countries, this section reviews contextually appropriate practices from both setups. The practices include Child-centred pedagogy, Multicultural approach, Peer-to-peer or Child-to-child support, Community and parent involvement in learning, Itinerant teaching, Play-based pedagogy, Application of appropriate extra curricula activities and use of Role models.

Pedagogy is knowledge and skills one needs to acquire and command in order to make meaning out of teaching and learning (Davis et al., 2004). Inclusive pedagogy views the learner from the dimension of their differences and aims to address the educational needs from the perspective of the environment that is classroom, school, home and the community as well as from personal characteristics and circumstances.

As noted by numerous authors, for instance Howgego et al. (2014); Dowd et al, (2016); Price (2018) and Global Partnership for Education [GPE], (2018), there is a dearth in literature on effective instructional practice and procedures for children with disabilities in ECDE. There is little evidence on inclusive early childhood education. More so, evidence on the utility of early intervention strategies for those children with more complex impairments or disabilities is totally lacking (Davis et al., 2004). Interventions are in silos; authors have either siloed information along disability lines without considering various levels of learning or have considered the stages and ages with too little direct considerations on adaptation of pedagogy for diverse groups including those with disabilities (Wapling, 2016).

There is very little evidence of the application of inclusive pedagogies in low and middle income settings at the ECDE level. This is confirmed by case studies from the Kenya Community Development Foundation programme implementation in the Eastern and Coastal regions of Kenya by Indakwa and Miriti (2010). The studies

paint a picture of economic deficiencies and weak investment in ECDE in Kenya and in similar low resourced settings across sub-Saharan Africa, for instance in Malawi Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) (2015). Generally, in both the global north and the global south, the position on inclusive pedagogy at whatever level of learning is still not yet clear. However, there is difference in opinion in other quotas; authors like Croft (2010) argue for common instructional strategies that suit all learners.

All that notwithstanding, efforts need to put in place in ECDE to increase enrolment and promote retention to reduce disparities in attainment between children with and without disabilities that start at the first grade and widen as they progress to higher grades and levels of learning (Howgego et al., 2014). Authors like Croft (2010) emphasise the need for studies to have a better focus on "the role of inclusive learning in early childhood education in preparing children for formal schooling and in preventing future difficulties in learning" (p. 24).

Dowd et al, (2016); Price (2018) and GPE (2018) among others stress the need for additional research into inclusive approaches for children with disabilities in ECDE programmes including detailing the linkage between learning outcomes and quality in low resourced backgrounds. Effective instructional practice and procedure is essential for an inclusive classroom. It involves accessibility and differentiation of lessons. For this to be achieved, adjustments need to be made to the pedagogy as well as learning spaces in accordance with the variety of intrapersonal and interpersonal needs of learners. In some instances, learners will require additional support like assistive devices and assistive services and technology to support learning.

Generally, literature suggests that learners with mild to moderate disabilities are exposed to the same content and subjects as other children. A lack of appropriate adaptation is even more disadvantageous when it comes to children with communication and complex disabilities. With limited options, consequently, children with disabilities who manage to attend school join the same classroom as other learners resulting in pedagogical difficulties for both the learners and the teachers. The learners are subjected to unsuitable pedagogical practices – for instance, the teachers not always speaking clearly or clarifying what they have written on the board to their classes (UNESCO & Sightsavers, 2020).

Across the globe, differentiation and adaptations are being implemented in varying contexts with reports of successes and challenges in equal measure. While the practices discussed here are popular in different proportions in the developed world, literature suggests they are more in policy or theoretical than practiced in low and middle-income countries. However, there are pockets of good examples in both setups that could suit the Kenyan context as discussed later in this section.

A popular pedagogical approach acknowledged severally in literature is the child-centred strategy. Several policies on ECDE in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, Guidelines for the Early Childhood Education Policy Implementation. 2013 (Ghana Education Services); Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities. 2018 (MoE Kenya) and the Early Childhood Care and Education 2018 (Ministry of Education and Sports, Uganda) advocate for child-centred instructional pedagogies.

Child-centred pedagogy is promoted as one that would benefit children with disabilities; it is useful in avoiding wastage of resources and loss of hope that is all

too recurrent as a result of low-quality instruction and a ‘one size fits all’ in education provision (UNESCO, 1990). According to Stubbs (2008) and as stressed by Tesemma (2011), schools that employ this approach are foundations and avenues for future citizens and a society that respects diversity.

Stubbs affirms that learner-centred pedagogy is core to inclusion as it can considerably reduce drop-out and repetition rates while ensuring better educational achievement. The CBC in Kenya supports this approach as one that exposes and supports learners in skills that are essential in proficiency in any discipline including ability to think, evidence validation and creative interrogation of arguments (KICD, 2017).

Multicultural approach to inclusive education is another effective instructional strategy that can be adapted to facilitate effective teaching of children with disabilities at the ECDE level. Impairments and disabilities present a myriad of learning needs. This creates an environment of plural and different backgrounds of barriers, needs and enablers, which the teacher ought to acknowledge. As such, the teacher has the responsibility of modifying instruction in a manner that considers all these differences that reflect equity pedagogy, which is one of the five dimensions of the Multicultural approach (Mugambi, 2017).

According to Hanley (2005), Multicultural approach aims at appreciating the individual learner besides diverse contributions of the group. It fosters self-confidence, promotes positive attitude and upholds exceptional identity despite individual differences and unique circumstances in the learner’s surroundings. Multiculturalism also supports recognition of the potential of every learner and encourages learner’s experiences and their contribution to learning while addressing different styles of learning.

In early learning for both learners with and without disabilities, peer-to-peer support (that has different names including buddy system, cooperative and child-to-child support) is also strongly recommended. Peer-to-peer support activities and strategies are encouraged due to their ability to maximise potential and participation contributing to increased learning outcome. Research has shown this form of learning nurtures positive social attributes like compassion, equality, optimism and positive attitude. Cooperative learning is bolstered through the peer-to-peer approach.

In Lao People’s Democratic Republic learning for mild to moderate children with disabilities was supported through additional learning support from teachers as well as promotion of peer-to-peer support and use of locally produced materials likes pebbles, sticks and cards with production support from the community and parents (Mariga et al., 2014). In this respect, it is evident that community and parents are an important pillar in the learning process in and outside the classroom to make peer-to-peer support effective.

In another study from India, teachers put in place a common practice where classmates with and without disabilities supported those with disabilities that encountered difficulties. This was conducted through pairing learners who grasped concepts and content quicker with those that were slow in learning to assist them. Nonetheless, the study revealed that there were high expectations of the ‘better’

learner and that such a system requires high quality of teachers and closer monitoring for it to be successful (Howgego et al., 2014).

Another overarching pedagogical approach that can bolster inclusive ECDE at school and in home-based education is itinerant teaching. In Kenya, Sightsavers introduced the model of 'itinerant' teachers in the 1980s to support children with visual impairments. The itinerant teachers are independent and mobile; they move from one school to another to provide specialist support.

This model was later introduced in Malawi and Uganda and the teachers have now expanded to support learners with other impairments (Le Fanu, 2018). In Malawi, the mobile instructors are engaged on a full-time basis supporting different learners in different schools. In Kenya and Uganda, they are attached to a particular school but have additional time to support neighbouring schools. The model is well developed and continues to be successful in Kenya.

"Trained in inclusive or special education, itinerant teachers aim to ensure that assistive devices are working, provide advice, support and resources to children, families and teachers about the importance of education for children with disabilities" (Howgego et al., 2014, p. 27). In Uganda, they also attend church and community meetings to raise consciousness on inclusive education and they act as a link between the school and the host community.

The teachers also provide Individualised technical support to learners like adapted physical education, Braille transcriptions, teaching math using the abacus, teaching sign language (Le Fanu, 2018). They also provide support in identification, screening, functional assessments, diagnosis and placement as well as in transition to school and in stages along the learning cycle. The itinerant teachers are important in the linkage with the EARCs and medical facilities in the case of Kenya, which is key in early intervention for children with disabilities.

A major challenge with itinerancy is sustainable funding from the government to facilitate movements from one school or home to another and the delicate balance of regular teaching and specialist support (Lynch et al., 2011). Additionally, "the itinerant teachers sometimes lack the pedagogical skills necessary for teaching braille reading and writing" (UNESCO & Sightsavers, 2020, p. 35).

Play-based pedagogy is a widely used approach in many countries with both children with and without disabilities alike. Several policies in ECDE (including in Ghana, Uganda and South Africa) are advocating for the pedagogy as being very useful to stimulate learning for all children. It is a form of early-childhood informal child-led learning approach of incorporating learner's play knowledge and experiences into learning as formal learning is progressively introduced. Play-based pedagogy is comprised of voluntary, open-ended and enjoyable activities with no specific goals and with minimal guidance and prompts from the teacher.

Proponents of this pedagogy argue that it lays firm foundations for a curious and outgoing learner now and going into their future. Though there is no direct correlation over its efficacies on performance of children with disabilities, the approach can be very useful to them (Ghana Education Services, 2013; UNICEF, 2019).

Howgego et al. (2014) front the following strategies that have proven to be useful in India for learners with disabilities in ECDE; access to appropriate specialist

equipment; interaction with positive role models like teachers who are visually impaired and frequent breaks for learners with intellectual and learning disabilities. In addition, the authors recommend the following:

> extra-curricular activities, including after-school and holiday clubs that have been found to be useful in supporting the learning and skills acquisition of children with disabilities, particularly in their pre-school years, and in the early stages of their enrolment in formal education. (p.36).

Extra-curricular activities are especially important for children with hearing impairments in language development to enable fluency as they transit from preschool to the initial grade. This was cited in community-based initiative in Uganda on inclusion of children who are deaf in primary school (Howgego et al., 2014).

According to Wanjiku (2014), the table below details successful teaching strategies used by teachers to enhance learning for learners with multiple disabilities in four selected counties in Kenya.

Impairment	**Preferred and useful instructional approach**
Deaf blindness	Tactile Kenyan sign language, use of real objects, use of sign language, use of speech paired with braille, deaf-blind manual alphabet, task analysis and activities of daily living.
Autism blindness	Pre-braille, braille, oral methods, songs, pre-vocational skills and real objects and use of recorded materials.
Cerebral palsy intellectual disability	Task analysis, activities of daily living and real objects.

Table 1: Teaching strategies used by teachers to enhance learning for learners with multiple disabilities. (Source: Wanjiku, 2014).

Yang and Rusli (2012) conducted a study on *Effective strategies for preschool children with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.* The research that involved 50 ECDE professionals from the United States validated 13 peer-mediated naturalistic instructional and interactional strategies for children with moderate to severe disabilities in interactions with other children. Table 2 outlines those that could apply in low-resourced settings.

Title of Strategy	**1.0 Definition and Descriptions**
Make interpretation	Adults interpret the nonverbal responses, vocalizations, sign language, or other non-symbolic communication forms from the child with disabilities in order to infer their communicative intents. Adults then teach peers to interpret these communication forms.
Prompt for direct communication	By directing peer's comments and questions directly to the child with disabilities rather than to adults or other peers,

Title of Strategy	1.0 Definition and Descriptions
	peers learn to treat the child with disability as an equal partner and interact more respectfully with a child with disabilities. By finding more opportunities for peers to interact the child with disabilities directly (e.g., “show him/her that”), teacher ensures that the child with disabilities has better understanding of the activity or a concept.
Invite participants	Adults suggest or encourage peers to select a new activity that includes the child with disabilities, or to engage in brief interactions such as greeting, short conversations, or providing assistance during transition when appropriate.
Follow through	Adults instruct and then re-instruct to improve the peers’ use of the strategy. This attempt is to ensure that the peers interact with the child with disabilities in a respectful and meaningful manner throughout the entire interaction.
Answer peers’ questions	Peers’ questions regarding the child with disabilities must be answered in an honest, straightforward, and simple manner at the level young children would understand.
Prompt for identifying peers/ activities	When greeting a child with disabilities (particularly a child with visual impairment), peers are prompted to give their names or/and what work/activities they are planning to do with the child with disabilities.
Help with movement	Adults teach peers to help the child with disabilities make movement in order to increase participation of the child with disabilities.
Provide acknowledgement	Adults acknowledge peers’ positive interaction behaviour by giving descriptive praise, or by giving peers verbal or gestural reinforcements (such as shaking hands) on behalf of the child with disabilities.
Environmental Arrangement	Using environmental arrangements to facilitate interactions, such as grouping, seating arrangements and material placements.
Fade from interactions	Adults step back physically and fade out of children’s interactions in order to allow spontaneous and natural interactions to occur.
Inform of Physical Assistance	Verbally inform the child with disabilities of any physical assistance before it occurs. Ask the child if they need help and how they like to be helped
Provide sensory input	Provide the child with disabilities sensory stimulation during the activity, such as different sounds, texture, and lights.

Table 2: Peer-Mediated Strategies: (Thompson et al., 1993; Yang, 2000: Source: Yang and Rusli, (2012)

The ECDE project should consider adopting the various pedagogies discussed as they can be effective in supporting learning for children with disabilities in early years as suggested in literature. While that is the case, what is more effective are contextual approaches that are inclusive and equitable that can be achieved in ‘least

restricting environments' and that are appropriate to the full interest of the learner (Tesemma, 2011; Hayes & Bulat, 2017).

The Education for All, EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNESCO, 2006) on early childhood care and education does not recommend any particular approach for ECDE. It rather encourages contextual approaches and essential features that are broad in nature as there is no 'one size fits all' instructional approaches for learners with disabilities due to the complex nature of interaction between impairments and the environment.

Therefore, planning for the project should take into account that children with disabilities are most importantly children; whilst they may require adjustments and differentiated pedagogical approaches, much of what they need should not be separate and specialist (Education Development Trust & UNICEF 2017). Furthermore, Howgego et al., (2014) emphasise the need to integrate gender-responsive teaching approaches "to ensure that the learning outcomes of girls and boys with disabilities are not adversely affected by gender-prescribed roles and expectations" (p. 25).

Such flexible and contextual strategies are detailed by Mugambi (2017). The author provides a summary from various authors of what entails inclusive learning that would otherwise boost effective teaching and learning for children with various learning needs including those with disabilities and at different stages of learning. The strategies include:

> valuing all learners equally; increasing the participation of learners; acknowledging the right of learners to a classroom; reducing exclusion of learners from their culture, curricula and communities of local learning institutions; reducing barriers to learning and participation for all learners, not only those with impairment; ensuring adequate teacher preparation; enhancing support services to learners rather than moving them to other services; developing a culture of acceptance by removing barriers to educational outcomes; providing adequate resources; focusing on collaborative role of parents; fostering mutually sustaining relationships between schools and communities; reducing class size based on the severity of learners needs and use of authentic assessment approaches as opposed to the traditional education where learners are assessed by standardised examinations. (p. 94).

From Mugambi's analyses, the following features of inclusive instruction procedures and practices would work well for children with disabilities; a classroom routine of activities that is sensitive to individual needs, inclusive classroom responsibilities, resources that are reflective of different needs of learners, an environment that fosters the feeling of acceptance, belonging and relevance, application of flexible approaches that counter barriers and adoption of differentiated teaching approaches for learners with communication and complex disabilities.

7.0 PRACTICES AND TOOLS USED IN MEASURING ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND THE WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

This section looks at relevant practices and tools used in measuring academic progress and well-being of children with disabilities in early years. It discusses various forms of learning assessments that are contextually appropriate as the main strategy employed across the globe in determining achievement. This is as shown in numerous studies that were surveyed.

According to the KICD (2016b, p. 35), assessment "refers to measuring leaning outcomes." Within the context of education, assessment "is the process of ascertaining whether students have attained curricula goals." According to Ghaicha (2016), assessment is the generic term for any of the various processes employed for collecting information.

Learning assessment has been identified by numerous authors as one of the most difficult areas in learning. The challenge deepens when it comes to assessment of and for learners with disabilities. Literature gets much greyer when it comes to learners with language and comprehension difficulties such as those with learning and intellectual disabilities or other communication difficulties and, more so, at the early years level. Generally, there is limited literature on inclusive assessments at the ECDE level from low- and middle-income countries and from Africa.

Hussu and Strle (2010, p. 5281) agree that "the assessment of children with special needs is already, and still is, a dilemma in the everyday school life either from the teachers' point of view to the pupils' and their parents'." As a problem that persists, this position is further asserted by Galevska and Pešić (2018) on the daunting task facing teachers to assess the learning developments of learners with disabilities. The authors emphasise the teachers' overwhelming task to ensure accuracy and precision in assessing these learners in an inclusive learning environment.

In the BECF that advances the new CBC in Kenya, KICD acknowledges that "all over the world, educators have taken notice of the fact that assessment is often overlooked when planning and implementing curriculum change" (p. 114). For instance, in the author's mediation strategies for pre-school learners with special needs, Zucker (2010) presents strategies notwithstanding in developmental stages, domains of early childhood learning and strategies for oral language acquisition and attainment of competencies in Math and Science. However, in the interventions, the author does not consider assessment strategies, which ought to be an important item in the order of the synthesis.

Similar observations are made in Wangila (2017) publication on *'Challenges Facing the Implementation of Early Childhood Development and Education Policy in Bungoma County in Kenya'.* The author does not consider assessment as a barrier. Indeed, for most researchers, monitoring in learning is an intricate process that should be practiced as an ongoing activity where the teacher employs relevant strategies, techniques and instruments (Galevska & Pešić, 2018).

Learning assessments are in two broader forms, namely formative assessment or assessment for learning and summative assessment or assessment of learning.

Assessment for learning occurs before and continuously in the process of learning (Bhat & Bhat, 2019). The teacher and the learner gather information – both formerly and informally – along the course of instruction to ascertain uptake of concepts and development of skills.

Data obtained is used to inform and improve ongoing teaching as well as learning in subsequent stages. Progress and gaps in acquisition of knowledge and skills, learner potential and adaptability constitute the information gathered and feedback (Baht & Bhat). In this case, the goal of formative assessment is continuous monitoring of learning and to provide feedback on an ongoing basis to the teacher and learner to bolster learning.

Assessment of learning takes place once instruction is complete. It is a summary of teaching and learning; synoptic evaluation of outcomes in various areas of learning (KICD, 2017). For pre-schoolers, the goal of summative assessment is to evaluate developmental level at the end of a predetermined learning period or instruction cycle.

The CBC introduces summative assessments at the end of upper primary, lower secondary and senior school. Following in the footsteps of the 8-4-4 system of education, the CBC does not recognise summative evaluation at ECDE and early years (KICD, 2017). It rather recognises and puts emphasis on formative evaluation.

Because of the culture of norm-referencing and the application of summative assessment as a transition marker, learners with disabilities especially those with language and comprehension difficulties, fine motor difficulties and those who are blind are disadvantaged due to meaningless grades that mean nothing concerning their development (World Bank Group et al., 2019).

Numerous authors like KICD (2017) recommend assessment for learning for all learners and at all levels. They place more emphasis on this type of assessment as it is an essential part in the cycle of instruction and acquisition of knowledge and competencies. It is also a critical way of evaluating effectiveness of the curriculum since it provides real-time information and feedback on performance progress to both the learner and teachers as well as other relevant stakeholders in education. Transition to CBC from content-based learning provides opportunity and room to set norms for measuring progress of learners focusing on their individual abilities, interests and talents, which is promoted by this assessment form.

As observed in the World Bank Group et al. (2019) literature review on *Every learner matters: Unpacking the learning crisis for children with disabilities,* a study in New Zealand by Bourke and Mentis (2014), discovered twenty-four different assessment approaches being applied in inclusive learning in the country. Teachers preferred approaches like observation and gathering samples of learner's work as opposed to conventional methods of assessment. The study also noted that teachers preferred criterion-referenced assessments as opposed to norm referenced assessments when it comes to learners with disabilities.

The 'learning story' is an effective approach identified by Bourke and Mentis that can support assessments for young learners with disabilities at the ECDE level. The strategy is applied for both assessment of and for learning and involves a collection of information of the learner overtime as evidence of learning. 'Learning story' involves the learner in the process of collating information from different

assessments – both formative and summative as well as from the classroom/ school external environment that is home and community.

According to GPE (2018), there are numerous new or proposed good practices in assessment for learners with disabilities in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa. For instance, the Inclusive Education Policy. 2015 (of Ghana) outlines measures for accessible assessment procedures for learners with disabilities.

In 2016, the KICD conducted a needs assessment research to inform the CBC on ECDE. The study that involved preschool teachers from both private and government managed ECDE centres was meant to enlighten the KICD and other stakeholders on needs at the ECDE level. It was also purposed to guide policy decision-making in the sector following the curriculum reforms. Learning assessment featured prominently in the review, where two of the seven study objectives; to *'determine desired pedagogical approaches for competency-based curriculum'* and to *'establish formative and summative assessment modes for competency based curriculum'* were related to measurement of academic progress (KICD, 2016b).

The ECDE review raised generic challenges in assessment in Kenya that are centred on the summative end of primary and secondary school; Kenya Certificate of Primary Education, KCPE and Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education, KCSE respectively. Despite their high-valued nature, these examinations are detrimental especially to learners with complex and multiple disabilities as they primarily serve as determinants for progressions to higher levels of learning (KICD, 2016b). Though this does not contain direct relationship with assessment at the ECDE level, the experiences are important for learning and review at this level.

Competition occurs at the expense of individualised and adapted learning at lower primary and pre-primary levels of education, at the same time disregarding learning areas and abilities at the level of the individual. "These assessments dwell on the cognitive domain at the expenses of other learner attributes and competencies" (KICD, 2016b, p. 86). Therefore, pupils with minimal cognitive abilities tend to be left out. Owing to this, "teachers dwell in these low level domains of the bloom taxonomy in their teaching because experience and routine has proved that this is all the national exams require; factual knowledge and repetition" (p. 86). While the examinations measure a limited range of competencies, preschool teachers are ill prepared to design tests and assess learning in a broader way.

From the KICD (2016a) review, ECDE teachers gave recommendations on forms of assessments that would contribute to successful measurement of learners at the pre-school level. The most recommended form is formative assessment. The respondents argued that formative assessment is efficient in gauging the level of acquisition of content and concepts early enough and amidst instruction. Formative assessment has two essential goals: supporting the teacher in planning for instruction and assisting the learner in areas of improvement (Hussu & Strle, 2010). This allows room for early detection of challenges as well as potential and supports in taking necessary action in good time.

Galevska and Pešić (2018, p. 4) reiterate that "research on formative assessment is compelling and shows us explicitly how formative assessment works to improve learning - by helping learners internalise the features of good work, by showing them

specifically how to improve, by developing habits of thinking and a sense of competency, and so forth."

In addition to the above forms of formative assessment, Galevska and Pešić recommend diagnostic testing as a form of formative assessment that is conducted at the beginning of a learning period. It is an entry assessment aimed at determining the level of knowledge acquisition from the previous level of learning. This test is important for learners transiting from pre-school to lower primary and can also be performed along the learning cycle before the introduction of a new stage, topic or concept.

Following the KICD (2016a) study, the agency developed a facilitator's training manual for early years education curriculum that – among other things – details tools for formative assessment that are emphasised in the BECF. The manual and BECF recommend the use of the following: Anecdotal reports, Assessment rubrics, Checklists, IEP, Journaling, Observation schedules, Portfolio, Progress report card, Profiling, Question and answer, Questionnaire and rating scales. A few of these are further explained in detail.

Assessment rubrics identify learning outcomes that are indicators of performance. They are important in measuring *product, progress* and *process* in learning and put the learner at the centre of decision-making of the evaluation procedures. Portfolios documents contain samples of a learner's work. They comprise average records of a learner's performance across various domains that can be used to understand areas for improvement and potential. Profiles comprise records of the learner with information obtained from various assessment instruments and can also include examples of work produced by the child in the course of their learning.

Anecdotal reports are brief accounts of words, letters, drawings and images that were done by the learner or prescribed to the learner by the teacher (KICD, 2016a; KICD, 2016b; KICD, 2017). For additional information on the assessment procedures and tools consult the BECF framework (KICD, 2017, p. 116 – 124).

Though there are useful recommendations for assessment for learning at the ECDE level, there exists a major gap; guidelines and policies that provide the effective forms of evaluation are operating in silos hence not integrated or intersecting to the benefit of learners with disabilities in pre-school. While the Facilitator's manual, the National Pre-Primary Education Policy. (2017), the National Pre-Primary Policy Standard Guidelines. (2018) and the BECF provide a raft of procedures and instruments for pre-school, the effectiveness of these procedures and instruments are not explicitly stated for learners with disabilities at the pre-school level.

Scholars including La Salle et al. (2013) have established a strong positive correlation between IEPs and access to curriculum as well as academic achievement for learners with disabilities in early years of learning. Such strong points of the IEP include involvement of parents in the IEP cycle; focus on the learner's knowledge, abilities and interests; criterion referencing and prediction of real time limitations. The National Pre-Primary Policy Standard Guidelines. 2018 acknowledge the role of IEP in "…monitoring the progress of an individual child with special needs and disabilities" (p. 24).

The use of IEPs should be the basis upon which teachers come together with other professionals to support learners with disabilities transit to subsequent levels of

learning within and beyond pre-school. As described by Bridge of Hope (2015) on the effective use of IEPs in Armenia in the transition of learners to high school or vocational training, it should be the effort to achieve their individual goals that determine their mobility to the next level and not success rate against other learners or societal standards and expectations. When it comes to learners with intellectual disabilities, Inclusion International (2017); UNICEF et al. 2021 recommend the application approaches that are centred to the learner against their own goals as written in the IEP.

Working in teams and continuous consultation both within the school and with other external relevant personnel is a practice that is identified in Macedonia, Slovenia and South Africa. When faced with challenges in the assessment process, teachers get help from school team members and associates within and outside the school environment (Hussu & Strle, 2010). Working through the IEP, Galevska and Pešić (2018) emphasise the importance of collaboration with parents or guardians and host community of the learner with a disability in various aspects of learning – including assessment – that is of great importance for progressive and participatory learning.

While rigorous and all-inclusive assessment should focus on the curriculum and evaluate how each learner can benefit from that curriculum, (UNESCO & Education 2030, 2017), various authors recommend assessments that go beyond conventional boundaries when it comes to learners with disabilities (World Bank Group et al., 2019). Besides tracking conformance to the curriculum, assessments should also focus on the emotional, personal and social development of the learner whose progress is also determined by impairment vis a vis the learning environment.

For learners with disabilities at the ECDE level, World Bank Group et al. (2019) citing the Division for Early Childhood (2007) in the United States recommends multiple methods of assessment “including repeated observation and rating skills and behaviour in play, social interactions, and caregiving routines” (p. 61). The Division for Early Childhood advises that young learners with disabilities need to be exposed to a wider range of opportunities for interaction and response in assessment.

While conducting assessments, whether of or for learning, it is recommended to make adjustments or accommodations according to the disability of the learner (Hussu & Strle, 2010). Common adjustments include providing extra time, administering oral tests, altering text size, space between lines and background colour, use of adaptive technologies and allowing accessible physical premises, facilities and workstations or desks. In addition, the necessary adaptations need to be made to enable the basement of learners on and with the use of play-based activities. However, it is important to note that learners with language and comprehension difficulties such as those with learning and intellectual disabilities may require extensive accommodations and reasonable adjustments or a total overhaul of assessment and curriculum altogether.

The ECDE project should consider embracing the philosophy put across by Hussu and Strle on assessment. The authors assert the main objective of assessment being one that is continuous evaluation; it should not be about knowledge evaluation but rather to support continuous learning and to encourage learners to bolster their relational skills that is supported by formative assessments.

The Hussu and Strle position speaks to assessment for learning. As supported by various authors as well as the KICD plural studies of (2016a, b, c) that informed the CBC, formative or continuous forms of assessment are very useful in determining the level of acquisition of content and concepts ahead of time and in the course of learning. Therefore, they serve two purposes; supporting the teacher in planning for instruction and assisting the learner in areas of improvement (Strle & Hussu, 2010). This allows room for early detection of challenges as well as potential and supports in taking necessary action in good time (UNESC-IBE, 2015).

An effective strategy for taking the assessment metrics is Curriculum-Based Measurements (CBM). It is a combination of approved and standardised tests of short period applied by teachers for learners in general and special classrooms. It was developed by Deno and Mirkin (1977); (Deno, 2003) in the mid-1970s.

Numerous studies from the global north, notably in the USA and Europe have shown strong correlations between CBM as an elaborate assessment method and tool for improving learning outcomes. However, evidence on CBM is lacking in sub-Saharan Africa. It is hoped that an ongoing study by Okiyo (2021) on Effects of CBM on Learning Outcomes for Children with Visual Impairment in Early Learning in Kenya will contextualise the strategy for the benefit of the ECD project and learning for children with disabilities in low resourced settings in general.

In view of the above, it is noted that though there is a lot of discourse on learning assessment, not significant literature is available to demonstrate how countries within the ECSA region conduct learning assessment in ECDE. An overview of several countries in the region reveals that learning assessment in ECDE is conducted almost entirely by the teacher. There seems not to exist in any policy frameworks for learning assessment nor are there any notable national programs for the evaluation of learning outcomes at ECDE level.

8.0 THE TRAINING OF EARLY YEAR PRACTITIONERS

Over the recent years, global attention to early childhood development and education has led to an increased focus on ECDE teacher training as a critical component of providing children with access to high-quality ECDE programs. This is a product of heightened advocacy, particularly by non-governmental stakeholders, with calls to improve ECDE teacher training in order to respond to the reality that many ECDE teachers receive very little training.

Unfortunately, despite the increased attention towards ECDE globally, many countries around Africa and within the ECSA region for that matter, have not yet attained a level of support to ECDE to match the desired demand and quality. In particular, many of these countries have not made sufficient investment in the preparation of ECDE practitioners. In many of these countries, there exist forms of policy on ECDE services and on teacher training which, read together, would imply a conducive policy environment for the professional development of ECDE practitioners. Unfortunately, in practice, this is not the case. In addition, very little information in the way of literature, is available on the training of ECDE teachers and other practitioners in these countries.

Moreover, the biggest shortcoming for disability-inclusive pedagogies as noted by several authors is in policy commitment and capacity of teachers. From the GPE's disability stocktake report on disability-responsiveness of Education Sector Plans from 51 low- and middle-income countries (GPE, 2018), nineteen committed to training on inclusive education pedagogy at the in-service level while only seven plans had a particular focus on building the capacity of teachers at the pre-service level.

Generally, while the general and inclusive classroom teacher is progressively aware and is supportive of the need to incorporate children with disabilities, they face numerous challenges (including overreliance on teacher-cantered pedagogy and rigid curriculum) in putting inclusion into practice (OECD, 2009; Wapling 2016; GPE; 2018; World Bank Group et al, 2019).

Despite the general and inclusive classroom teachers having been exposed to in-service training by the MoE, a study in Lesotho revealed limited instructional adjustments in big classrooms to meet the needs of learners with disabilities (Howgego et al., 2014). UNESCO and Sightsavers (2020) in their report that details Challenges and Opportunities of Learners with Visual Impairment in sub-Saharan Africa are in concurrence that "teachers in mainstream schools are often unable or unwilling to make even minor pedagogical adaptations to accommodate the impairment-related special educational needs of children" because of a variety of factors including "lack of access to appropriate training and continuous professional development" (p. 9).

Further, the UNESCO and Sightsavers findings are congruent with those of the GPE 2018 report; that trainings of teachers in inclusive pedagogy is not on the list of priority for many governments. In most countries, there is the misconception that such initiatives are the responsibility of special institutors or non-governmental organisations in disability and education work. Even where such interventions exist in the mainstream, they are treated separately in silos.

Since inclusion is treated as a 'special' occasion that comes and goes, it leads to business as usual practice in general teaching practice with no meaningful change. That notwithstanding, the Lesotho study showed that the teachers' attitude was positive and they allocated additional time to learners that encountered challenges (Howgego et al., 2014).

In Kenya, for many years, ECDE teachers were un-trained persons within the community who either had the passion for children or were employed and paid by the community to prepare children to join primary school. Later, in the 1980s, District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) were established with support from non-state development agencies. These centres offered in-service training for ECDE teachers in most parts of the country. As a result, many untrained teachers of ECDE managed to enrol for certificate courses and attended classes during school holidays.

Unfortunately, due to low prioritisation of ECDE within the education system, the number of trained ECDE teachers remained low. For instance, the 8-4-4 system did not prioritize ECDE in its structure, ECDE teachers were not employed by the TSC and there were no quality measures for ECDE services. In addition, the training was unregulated and uncoordinated and there was no accreditation system. The low

salaries paid by parents to their ECDE teachers were not motivating enough for the teacher to pursue professional training.

The situation improved with the establishment of the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) in 1984 as a national ECDE resource centre within the then Kenya Institute of Education, present KICD. It would be responsible for the development of pre-school curriculum, development of ECDE learning materials and training of ECDE teachers. It would also be responsible for the formulation of ECDE-related policy guidelines, funding, coordination of data collection and also the registration of pre-schools.

In the last ten years, Kenya has experienced an explosion in the demand and provision of teacher training in ECDE and there has been increased coordination and standardisation of training of ECDE teachers. Today, there are more than 100 institutions offering training in ECDE. These trainings are offered at Certificate, Diploma, Postgraduate Diploma, Higher and Advanced Diploma as well as Degree levels. All Certificate and Diploma courses are examined by the Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC) while Degree courses are offered and examined by respective universities. In addition, the cadre of ECDE teachers is now recognised by the TSC and negotiations for the employment and deployment of ECDE teachers by the TSC are ongoing.

The new CBC recognises ECDE and gives its prominence within the education system. The KICD is developing non-degree training courses for teachers of ECDE while several universities have started Early Childhood Education courses. Since the new CBC lays a lot of emphasis on special needs education, it is expected that SNE will be integrated into ECDE teacher training programs. The recent merger of the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Department of Special Education at Kenyatta University aims partly to strengthen the link between ECDE and SNE in teacher training.

In Malawi, though there is a level of commitment on the part of government towards policy direction on ECDE as demonstrated by its integration into the National Education Sector Plan and the development of an ECD policy that provides guidance on implementation of ECDE services in the country, the training of ECDE practitioners remains a major challenge. A study[7] commissioned by the CSEC (2015) noted that most ECD centres were run by unqualified staff and recommended that the government considers establishing a sound accreditation system of ECDE training for caregivers and educators in the country.

Currently, pre-school education in Malawi is delivered through Community Based Childcare Centres. The caregivers (pre-school teachers) are not paid by the government. The few established training services for ECDE practitioners include the Association of Preschool Playgroups in Malawi (APPM) that offers tailor-made training for ECD educators, the Association for Early Children in Malawi based in Blantyre and the University of Malawi, Chancellor College. These institutions are few and their reach is very limited.

[7] Civil Society Education Coalition (2015).

In Uganda, the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development identified[8] limited in-service training for teachers as a major contributor to poor teacher preparation in the country. Government funding for in-service training for teachers was stopped in 2012. As a result, many teachers are not sufficiently able to assist learners in an inclusive school due to limited in-service training and supervision on how to develop a child-friendly class that can accommodate the diversity among learners.

In Tanzania, available information points to significant shortfalls in the training and preparation of ECDE teachers. For instance, it is reported[9] that in 2013, only 40% of pre-primary teachers were trained to national standards, whereas almost 100% of primary school teachers had received adequate training. Another study[10] reports that as of 2017, 1.4 million children were enrolled in government preschool, but only 9,045 teachers served them. The study reports that the majority of pre-primary teachers have not completed specialised pre-service training. In addition, teachers who taught exclusively pre-primary education were more likely to hold ECDE certificates as opposed to teachers teaching pre-primary and a higher grade who were more likely to have diplomas.

The information discussed under this section highlights one important learning, namely, that the training of ECDE teachers has become an integral part of teacher education. Today, in many countries, ECDE teacher training is offered at different levels of teacher training, including at university level. Unfortunately, most of the teachers who undergo ECDE teacher training at higher levels do not end up teaching at ECDE units. The actual ECDE teaching is done by teachers trained at the lower levels.

9.0 RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS ABOUT DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

This section is about raising community awareness on disability inclusion. It looks at literature from policies and studies on ECDE, education and disability from Kenya and across sub-Saharan Africa and their positions on awareness creation. From that, relevant approaches are discussed and recommended for the inclusive ECDE project.

In Kenya, government agencies are on an annual basis required to conduct disability mainstreaming, a bigger part of which concerns disability awareness and sensitization (Republic of Kenya, 2017). While exploring the topic on disability mainstreaming, numerous authors are accustomed to begin with models of disability before delving deeper into other subjects while discussing disability awareness.

The models are lenses through which various stakeholders view and understand disability. They represent approaches, dimensions and perspectives on disability consciousness, some of which are archaic and retrogressive while others are modern and progressive While the former encourage discrimination, exclusion,

[8] Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (2018).
[9] Wilinski , B. et al., (2016).
[10] Rebecca Sayre (2019).

isolation and segregation, the latter represent the desired objectives and principles of the CRPD. The principles are full and effective participation in society, respect for difference and acceptance of persons with disabilities as part of human diversity and humanity and equality of opportunity (UN, 2006).

The popular models of understanding disability in literature are; Will of gods; Charity, Medical, Social and Human rights principle. The Social model and Human rights principle are regarded as progressive as they look at the environment as the source of disability and not the impairment of the individual. The Human rights lens affirms that persons with disabilities are also rights holders and deserve equality of opportunity.

In respect of education and children with disabilities, responsible stakeholders and partners like the MoE officials, teachers, Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), EARC officers, children services and welfare officers, local administration, parents/ guardians and the host community are expected to be disability conscious.

Kenya being a signatory to the CRPD, the various parties are required to uphold child-specific principles on “respect for the evolving capacities of children with disabilities and respect for the right of children with disabilities to preserve their identities” (UN, 2006, p.4) in their undertakings. While more awareness levels among teachers, parents, caregivers and class/ schoolmates can help increase enrolment rates of children with disabilities in a regular classroom (Wapling, 2016), a key characteristic and indicator of successful inclusive education programme is bolstered awareness levels on persons with disabilities (Catholic Relief Services [CRS], 2007).

While the World Bank Group et al. (2019) review of inclusive education shows that the number of children with disabilities identified across the globe is increasing because of awareness of invisible disabilities, that is not the case in low and middle income countries. Literature paints a grim picture on the status of consciousness on education for children with disabilities. There is general low awareness creation among the public on disability-inclusive education (MoE Kenya, 2018). Sensitisation is much lower for learning in early years (National Gender and Equality Commission [NGEC] (2016).

Generally, disability-inclusive ECDE is weak in a number of areas because of low consciousness levels. NGEC in its (2016) study on *Access to Basic Education by Children with Disabilities in Kenya* acknowledged the vitality of inclusive ECDE in preparing learners to join and pursue future learning, and in the child’s social, physical and emotional development. The study also identified possible causes of the low information levels.

The Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities. 2018 (of Kenya) agrees with NGEC over the existence of a common problem of insufficient awareness on issues concerning learners and trainees with disabilities. According to the policy, this leads to efficiencies among policy makers, service providers and the community to a larger extent.

Specifically, the Pre-Primary Education Policy. 2017 (of Kenya) attributes the low enrolment rates of children with disabilities at the ECDE level to low awareness levels across all players in education. Consequently, advocacy and influencing for the right to education is low by rights holders notwithstanding organisations of and for persons with disabilities (OPDs). If inclusive ECDE is not promoted and

recognised by key agencies in education like the KICD, MoE and TSC, then parents will inevitably not be aware of it as a possibility or as a right and so will not demand it.

The NGEC study exposed gaps in general knowledge on disability leading to neglect of children with disabilities by their families and communities. Whilst the responsibility to administer ECDE was devolved to counties, the study revealed that County Development Officers did not maintain data on number of learners with disabilities at the pre-school centres.

Additionally, the study exposed that a majority of children with disabilities were out of school while school heads and parents acknowledged presence of children with disabilities, more so those with severe disabilities, around the community and in homes than in school (NGEC, 2016). NGEC argues that this is due to several factors including unawareness, negative attitudes and stigma. The consequence is a community that accords minimal support to children with disabilities to access learning.

As a consequence of low awareness levels, studies cite negative perceptions on disability as another cause of low educational uptake among children with disabilities. There are numerous cases where children with disabilities are locked in bedrooms, backyards or tethered to trees, or their parents cast out of the community. In Isiolo, Kenya for example, the NGEC study revealed that children that are born with disabilities are tied to pens since they are considered bad omen.

Some parents, guardians or caregivers hide their children due to shame and stigma associated with disability while others will do so for fear that their children will get hurt or lost. Giving birth to children with disabilities is traditionally believed to be the woman's problem. As a result, the father joins uninformed members of his family and community to chase away the mother. This is a common case in Kisii County (NGEC, 2016) where, for instance, a woman that gives birth to such a child is dismissed from her matrimonial home. Some hide their children due to the perception that they are valueless and can never make it in classroom or world of life and work.

With awareness being an issue of concern and a key determinant to promoting education for children with disabilities, there is a general trend in policy and legal frameworks, in education and disability, starting the last decade, to address awareness raising as a key component in promoting disability-inclusive education. This is probably due to the impact of Article 24 on Education of the UNCRPD that most countries in sub-Saharan Africa are party to.

A positive example is the Inclusive Education Policy. 2015 (of Ghana), which aims to "collaborate with the community (community welfare groups, district assemblies, traditional authorities, and opinion leaders) to create awareness on disability issues, to foster attitudinal change in schools and communities" (Government of Ghana, 2015, p. 18).

In respect of awareness and children with disabilities, the MoE in Ghana will "engage the media in debating and helping to dispel myths surrounding children with disabilities or special needs or from minority groups (religious, ethnic, or linguistic) and promote the awareness of the rights of children and individuals with disabilities" (p. 8 – 9). The Ghana Guidelines for the Early Childhood Education Policy

Implementation have specific awareness objectives on children with special needs and those from disadvantaged backgrounds (Ghana Education Services, 2018).

The Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities. 2018 (Kenya) has a particular theme on advocacy and creation of awareness. In order to achieve this, the MOE will design an effective advocacy and communication strategy to bolster inclusive education and training. It will also distribute information, education and communication materials on the right to learning. Though the policy advocates for quality early childhood development, care and education with commitments to ensure smooth transition to primary education and other levels of learning, there are no particular pronouncements on raising consciousness to promote learning at the ECDE level.

On the other hand, the National Pre-Primary Education Policy. 2017 (of Kenya) has sound recommendations on creation of awareness on the right to education and for increased budgetary allocation at the ECDE level but does not mention children with disabilities. The same applies to the Early Childhood Care and Education Policy. 2018 (of Uganda). While the policy endeavours to promote equitable access and inclusion to early childhood care and education programmes to all learners including those with special needs, its interventions on awareness are silent on disability. Despite the sound pronouncements there is always a gap between policy and actual implementation so the examples that we have given here are of policy and not what we know happens on the ground.

Other examples in literature advance various proposals to bolster awareness for increased educational achievement at the ECDE level. They include development and implementation of an elaborate multisectoral strategy and action for young children with disabilities to address among several things community awareness and sensitisation; conduct advocacy at all levels and with all relevant stakeholders to underline the urgency to include children with disabilities in ECDE interventions; exploiting the range of communication mechanisms including community media like song and folklore, conventional media and mass media to alleviate stigma and to encourage acceptance of children with disabilities and their parents and caregivers (WHO & UNICEF, 2012).

The DID inclusive ECDE project could benefit from awareness programmes that have an intersectional approach in nature. This review reveals siloed approaches on consciousness for instance ones specifically on disability in the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities. 2018 and ones particularly on ECDE in the National Pre-Primary Education Policy.

The project interventions need to converge the different policy provisions as complementary to strengthen the project in awareness and other areas of programme work. Also, this information is important for advocacy for the enactment of all-round disability inclusive guidelines at the ECDE level on various provisions including in awareness.

It is noted severally in literature that involvement of the community is essential in promoting awareness leading to ownership, support and sustainability. Indakwa and Miriti (2010) demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing ECDE through the involvement of the community and local administration that naturally heightens awareness, ownership and sustainability.

By bringing on board the community in an ECDE programmes in Malindi (Kilifi County Kenya, for instance, “village elders were instrumental in creating awareness, reporting cases of neglect and abuse and supporting police and community trainers” (Indakwa & Miriti, p. 28). Though the program was not explicit on disability, the application of this practice could be beneficial to children with disabilities in ECDE. The project therefore needs to strengthen this approach in its interventions.

10.0 TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

There has been a big push by countries in sub-Saharan Africa over the past decade to improve early childhood education. One of the emerging areas of interest is that of teaching and learning materials for ECDE that has attracted in a range of studies. TLM has become a commonly used acronym that stands for "teaching/learning materials." Broadly, the term refers to a spectrum of educational materials that teachers use in the classroom to support specific learning objectives.

There are several varieties of teaching learning materials that can be used to assist the child to learn and acquire new knowledge, skills and attitudes. In a holistic education system, teaching and learning materials for ECDE are designed to enable the child to acquire linguistic, logical, mathematical, musical, spatial and environmental concepts. In addition, the materials enable the child to engage and enhance their kinaesthetic, visual, auditory, touch, tasting and smelling senses as appropriate and to develop interpersonal, intrapersonal and other social attributes.

Books remain the core teaching and learning materials within education systems in Africa. however, within ECDE, the use of books is very minimal as the learners have not fully acquired reading and writing skills. However, they still play an important role in introducing learners to reading and writing.

Modelling has, for many years, been used as a basic teaching and learning resource for early childhood education and remains very relevant in both high and low resourced communities. The use of modelling clay can be used by teachers to teach concepts, literacy and to stimulate imagination and creativity among early learners.

Manipulative objects are physical items that can be manipulated by learners as part of the learning process. Manipulatives are especially helpful in the early years learning, where learners can use them to learn the alphabet and basic literacy skills, arithmetic skills to solve subtraction and addition problems as well as creativity and intellectual stimulation. Since manipulatives are tactile in nature, they are very useful for learners with special needs.

Games are an important TLR in ECDE. Games can be useful in teaching learners basic language, arithmetic and social skills. Games can be enriched through singing, use of local language rhyme, storytelling, etc. Active outside games can help learners to acquire psychomotor skills and to learn social skills such as taking turns, sharing, working as a team and being a good loser or gracious winner.

Visual aids include posters, charts, graphs, pictorials and projected transparencies. They are teaching tools designed mostly for use by the entire classroom but can also be used to help learners individually, particularly visual learners. Visual aids are useful in teaching early learners literacy, numeracy and social concepts and can be

very useful in helping learners organise their work and thoughts. Though they are good tools for teaching special education learners, they may not be particularly useful for learners with visual disabilities unless they are suitably adapted.

In the current digital age, the use of digital technology in education has increased. Digital teaching and learning media includes audio content, video materials, animations, games, electronic toys, etc. Even as curriculum developers create digital learning media, a lot of teaching and learning content is freely available online. In addition, plenty of learning computer software is available online. Interactive software programs can help in language learning, mathematics and social skills. The use of digital learning media is however only applicable in areas with power supply and internet connection and by teachers who possess the skills in their usage. Digital schools programs that are now being rolled out in several ECSA counties can be leveraged to include ECDE learners with disabilities.

Even in this age of computers and internet-based learning materials, flashcards have been found to be particularly useful for learners with learning disabilities such as dyslexia. ECDE specialists recommend ways to use flashcards such as printing high-frequency words, also known as sight words, on the front of flashcards with short definitions to create a good learning tool for learners who have auditory or visual learning styles.

Despite the increased interest in ECDE in sub-Saharan Africa and the literature that has been generated on the subject, the development and provision of teaching and learning materials for ECDE remains a big challenge. In most countries in the ECSA region, no evidence has been found of substantive national programs to provide teaching and learning materials for ECDE through the reports of trainings on the creation of local teaching and learning materials in some countries.

Prior to the new CBC in Kenya, most of the work of NACECE was the coordination of ECDE teacher training. With the new Curriculum, which positions ECDE at the centre of the education system, teaching and learning materials for this level of schooling is expected to be developed centrally. Similarly, the integration of a special needs education pathway into the structure of the education system promises greater attention for the adaptation and provision of teaching and learning materials for ECDE learners with special needs.

In 2007, the Government of Tanzania adopted the Information & Communication Technology (ICT) Policy For Basic Education. One of its objectives is to facilitate the development and use of ICT as a pedagogical tool for teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education has established a curriculum for ICT in primary and pre-primary education, popularly known as TEHAMA. Unfortunately, its teaching and use is only limited to a few schools, located at district headquarters, which have ICT facilities. Likewise, there is no available literature to demonstrate its utilisation in pre-primary education. This may be the case because perhaps this is not a priority for most pre-schools in low resource settings.

Experts in ECDE are now concerned with the trends in early childhood education programs that are increasingly veering toward formal academic learning. They are concerned that young children are made to do things such as formal reading, math and computer instruction that they are not developmentally ready for, and that take precious time away from letting children be children. They argue that these formal

teaching and learning methods and materials that fill the young child's time with academic activities and other preparations for elementary school take away something that can never again be reclaimed.

UNICEF (2019) insist that every early childhood education program should have free play as its central focus. Anything less than this is developmentally inappropriate, threatens to deprive the child of a solid multi-sensory experiential foundation for all future learning, and reduces in brain connections that are related to art, music, nature, intuition, social interaction, physical expression, and a range of other culturally valued domains.

Several studies in the area of ECDE have revealed that there are inadequate teaching and learning resources at pre-school centers. One report further reveals that in addition to a lack of adequate teaching and learning resources, many ECDE centers also lack facilities suitable for ECDE in their learning environments. These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture suitable for small children, kitchen, safe clean water, play-grounds, toilets and play materials.

In the absence of centrally developed and distributed teaching and learning materials for ECDE, teachers remain the main source for creation, selection and utilisation of teaching and learning resources in their centers. This raises the question of quality and appropriateness of the materials used in different centers as it largely depends on the training and experience and motivation of the teachers. In addition, it also depends on the time and resources available to the teacher.

In the case of ECDE for learners with special needs, these factors pose even greater challenges in the availability and utilisation of teaching and learning resources. The cost of teaching and learning materials for learners with special needs is bound to be significantly higher. Teachers spend more time working with learners with special needs hence less time to prepare teaching and learning materials. And if they do not have adequate professional training in the education of children with special needs, then they will not have the right skills to provide appropriate teaching and learning resources for learners with special needs.

As a result of the above factors, teachers do not have adequate teaching and learning resources to enable them to implement ECDE curriculums effectively. This negatively affects the implementation of inclusive ECDE programs as the lack of sustainable learning environments hinders the full participation of children with special needs in learning.

It is therefore recommended that adequate teaching and learning resources be provided to ensure effective implementation of inclusive ECDE. This requires the allocation of sufficient funds for procuring teaching and learning materials for special needs education learners within ECDE programs and for provision of appropriate learning environments.

The management of the ECDE centers is encouraged to mobilise parents and the community on the importance of teaching learning materials to children. This can be successfully done by organising for material making days in the centers. In addition, ECDE centers management need to consider inviting stakeholders (NGOs, former pupils, early childhood education officers) to come and assist in making instructional learning materials that can be used in the centers.

Teachers need to be equipped with skills and to be encouraged to improvise locally available materials to ensure that learners appreciate and are stimulated to learn. (Stubbs, 2008). They need to be trained to improve their knowledge and skills on how to operate modern learning resources. They need to put more emphasis not only in indoor activities but also in outdoor activities with coherent use of teaching, learning and play materials in both cases. And since they are the main source of teaching and learning materials in ECDE, they need to be encouraged to initiate diverse ways of providing materials in their centers including the use resources easily found within the locality and the involvement of children and parents.

Local authorities, who are responsible for ECDE need to put more resources to improve learning environments in ECDE centers especially in procurement of teaching learning materials. In addition, they need to continually supervise activities in ECDE centers to ensure that children learn with teaching and learning materials and to advice the teachers accordingly. This could include organising in-service course and seminars for ECDE teachers on the usage of teaching and learning resources in ECDE centers.

Education stakeholders, especially those that are not part of the management, teaching or parents' community of the ECDE centers, have a responsibility to support the centers. They should ensure that teaching and learning materials are available in ECDE centers to enhance learning of children. They also need to support teachers in acquiring appropriate skills in the creation and use of appropriate teaching and learning materials, particularly for learners with special needs.

At the national level, it is recommended that policies on ECDE be strengthened, particularly to provide for inclusion of children with special needs. Guidelines on teaching and learning materials for ECDE need to be prepared and more systematic coordination and support to ECDE centers adopted. Core content for ECDE should be prepared at national or regional levels to enhance consistency and state-sponsored programs for provision of teaching and learning materials for ECDE.

11.0 IMPACT OF PARENTAL/ CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION

There is growing awareness on the role of parents, caregivers and communities in promoting quality education particularly at the early years levels. This has led to several countries in Africa and around the world ensuring the participation of parents, caregivers and even communities in the management, provision as well as monitoring of education programs through legislation or education policy.

The Basic Education Act. 2013 (of Kenya) lays the responsibility of compulsory basic education to the parent or guardian. Failure to do so constitutes an offense punishable by law either in the form of a prescribed fine or imprisonment. The act further accords the parent or guardian the right to participate in the character development of his or her child. The Act also provides for the inclusion of parent representatives in the boards of school management and in the County Education Boards.

The Education Act. 2008 (of Uganda) stipulates that the responsibilities of the parents and guardians shall include— (a) registering their children of school going age at school; (b) providing parental guidance and psychosocial welfare to their children; (c) providing food, clothing, shelter, medical care and transport; (d) promoting moral, spiritual and cultural growth of the children; (e) participating in the promotion of discipline of their children; (f) participating in community support to the school; and (g) participating in the development and review of the curriculum.

Unfortunately, within the ECSA region, only Kenya and Uganda have made strong legislative provisions for the involvement of parents and guardians in the education of their children. Other countries such as Tanzania, Malawi and Zambia, for instance, do not have strong and binding provisions.

Whereas much of this legislation and policy defines roles for parents and caregivers in basic education, few provide details on what this means in practice. Indeed, no legislative or policy documentation was available from the ESCA country to enforce the participation of parents and caregivers in ECDE. In the absence of clear guidelines, the role of parents, caregivers and communities in early childhood education becomes ineffective. Parents of children with disabilities need extra support and encouragement to enrol their children as they often believe that their participation is not welcomed and they are stigmatised by the community - including by other parents.

Apart from the legislative and policy gaps, there are additional reasons that hinder the effective involvement of parents in the education of their children. A number of surveys have revealed that shortage of time is the most common reason that parents and guardians give for their low involvement in the education of their children. Parents and guardians have to work to provide for their families. If they have more than one child in different schools, it means that they have to allocate more time to school and other education-related activities. If the parents are single for whatever reason, the pressure on time becomes worse.

Female parents have been observed to bear the greater ‘burden’ of attending school meetings. For instance, experience from the Sightsavers’ Pamoja Inclusive Education project (2016-2020) indicates that more than 60% of parents who attended parents/ teachers’ meetings were women (Gwynn & Kuligowska, 2021). This percentage is more likely to increase for children with disabilities.

Parents have also reported having bad experiences while trying to participate in educational activities for their children. Some have reported feeling unwelcome or uncomfortable at school meetings for instance, particularly if they have children with disabilities. These feelings discourage them from participating in such activities. Socio-economic factors are also attributable to this situation.

Lack of knowledge and awareness on the diverse opportunities available for parents and caregivers to participate in the education of their children similarly hinders their effective involvement. Many parents are not aware of the higher level processes, particularly within local government, where they have a right and a role to participate.

Holding governments to account is one of the pillars of democratic practice. There are many ways in which governments, at their various levels, can be held accountable. Within the education sector, parents, caregivers and communities can hold governments accountable for fulfilling their duty of providing quality education to

their citizens. For parents of children with disabilities, who are already struggling with the challenges of bringing up their children with disabilities, their role is not only more critical – they also need to be supported to exercise it.

Parents and caregivers of children with disabilities can hold governments responsible and accountable for the provision of a quality education for children with disabilities. This includes participation in the development and review of educational plans, policies and programs at national or local government levels. Within community-based ECDE programs, parents and caregivers can hold local authorities accountable for the provision of quality and inclusive education for their children with special needs. Appropriate capacity-building is however needed for parents, caregivers as well as communities to acquire the necessary skills to exercise this power effectively.

Many governments in sub-Saharan Africa have enacted laws that enforce compulsory basic education. These laws assign to parents the main responsibility for their children's attendance and behaviour in school. These laws are based on the general assumption that parents and caregivers are responsible for the attendance, effort and behaviour of younger students, while older students progressively take on these responsibilities for themselves. But this may be different for children with disabilities – especially those with severe disabilities.

To enforce this role, certain states have enacted truancy laws that hold parents responsible for the enrolment and attendance of their children in school. The enforcement of these laws becomes increasingly necessary in the education of children with disabilities. Many studies have shown that children with disabilities are the most left behind when it comes to enrolment into education (World Bank Group et al., 2019). The enforcement of laws to compel parents and caregivers to enrol and ensure the attendance of children with disabilities in school therefore becomes a critical component of an inclusive ECDE program.

Most educational institutions are managed by boards that are established by law. These boards represent the transfer of decision-making authority and responsibility for school operations from central government to local stakeholders to better reflect local priorities. Thus, the constitution of these boards includes parents and community representatives, including parents and caregivers of children with disabilities.

At the level of ECDE where most programs are community-based, the involvement of parents and caregivers in school governance can help in the shaping and monitoring of school policies and practices. It can also increase efficiency, enhance transparent financial management and hence reduce wastage. Where school boards and communities are responsible for the employment of ECDE teachers, this can act as motivators for the recruitment of good teachers and provision of educational materials.

In certain countries, Parents and Teachers Associations (PTAs) are encouraged and promoted. Other initiatives such as Open Days or Interactive Days offer opportunities for parent-teacher meetings to discuss the educational progress of children. With the involvement of parents and guardians of children with disabilities, the welfare of both the parent would improve in a number of ways.

Parent–teacher meetings are the most basic avenues for the involvement of parents and caregivers in the education of their children. However, these meetings are often infrequent and offer limited opportunity for the parents and caregivers to provide meaningful contribution to the education of their children. Their usefulness becomes especially poor for parents from disadvantaged backgrounds, who might not have the knowledge or skills to follow their child's progress. It is therefore of profound importance that inclusive ECDE programs promote greater interaction between parent/ caregivers and teachers of children with disabilities to ensure that they are fully supported.

Teachers have a primary responsibility for providing high-quality instruction to their learners. At pre-primary level where, in most instances, there do not exist formal curriculum and means of evaluating the performance of learners, determining the quality of the instruction that children receive is not easy. The involvement of parents in the evaluation of teachers' performance has been adopted in several education systems and has been reported as enhancing the quality of teaching that children receive.

Within community-based ECDE programs, especially those that are inclusive, the participation of parents and caregivers in the evaluation of teachers of children with disabilities can significantly improve the quality of education for these children. Such evaluation needs to be expanded to focus not only on teachers 'academic' teaching but also on their sensitivity and adaptability to children with disabilities.

12.0 GOOD PRACTICES IN INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN EARLY YEARS EDUCATION SETTINGS

Good practices in inclusive education are identified interventions that facilitate desirable outcomes for children with disabilities regarding improved education provision. Such practices are also based on research that showcases how improved and strengthened education delivery systems have benefited children with disabilities in early years' education settings and increased learning whilst reducing dropout rates.

Over the years, the gaps in the relationship between effective policies and best practices have started to reduce, and stakeholders are experiencing some success in their endeavour to impact the lives of children with disabilities. Part of this success is also attributable to the fact that policymakers have aligned their objectives and goals to the SDGs and sought to remove existing barriers that hinder children with disabilities from accessing education easily. These good practices are based on policy and legal framework, structures and types of program and services, human capacity development, and effective monitoring and evaluation systems that assess early year education settings.

One major impediment to showcasing good practices in early years' education is the overwhelming lack of reliable data and information on inclusive education among ECSA states. Specific data on the number of children with disabilities included in inclusive education settings is often not available. Parental and caregiver involvement has not been fully utilised. Good practices are also heavily hampered by scarce financial and human resources, lack of political will by governments, as well

as their differing priorities in education reform, and the absence of clear strategic planning for inclusive education implementation. Nevertheless, this section will highlight some good practices in ECDE for learners with disabilities. Discussed in the section on 'identification passement', efficiency in the work of EACRs will play a critical role in early identification and enrolment of children with disabilities in early years.

a. The Kenya Educational Assessment and Resource Centres

EARCs were established in 1984 to offer assessment and placement services for children with disabilities. Today, EARCs have become an integral part of the education of learners with disabilities in the country. By policy, no learner with disability can be enrolled into school without an EARC assessment report.

EARCs are managed by the MoE and are staffed by teachers posted by the TSC. The personnel, known as Curriculum Support Officers or CSOs provide additional support to the surrounding schools that have learners with disabilities. The uniqueness and impotence of EARCs lies in the fact that it is a service driven by government and in its involvement of a variety of stakeholders including educational specialists, development agencies, parents and the community.

The DID project is developing a standardised assessment tool for use by Assessment Officers (AOs) in EARCs. The tool will be tested and once completed and administered at local level, will provide a low-cost solution to strengthen the entire EARC system with potential to be scaled up throughout Kenya.

b. The Uganda Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group

The Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) is a Ugandan non-profit organisation that was founded in 2004 to bring together Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) at national and district levels with the view of influencing government decisions on resource mobilisation and utilisation for equitable and sustainable development. Since its inception, CSBAG has influenced the budgetary process in Uganda by ensuring that both local and national budgets incorporate views of the poor and that they are gender sensitive. Despite a strong regulatory framework, CSBAG and its members have achieved substantive progress in championing for the rights of children with disabilities. CSBAG is a classic model of how collaborative advocacy action can influence government budgeting and financial accountability in the education of learners with special needs, including at the ECDE level.

c. Tanzania National Strategy for Inclusive Education

Tanzania, in its quest to adopt good practices in early years education, has developed a National Strategy for Inclusive Education 2018-2021. In its report on the same dated 2017, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2017) outlines actions that the Tanzanian government undertakes to ensure inclusive education such as equitable access and participation in at least one year of pre-primary education enhanced for all five years old children with particular attention to vulnerable groups, equitable access and participation in quality basic education for children with disabilities, and improving school systems and learning environment to minimise dropouts among vulnerable children. These objectives form a small part of its overall strategic planning process, captured in the Education Sector Development Plan 2016/17 – 2020/21.

Despite such efforts, the ministry acknowledges that a lot needs to be improved to ensure the early identification and enrolment of children with disabilities. Enrolment rates are low while dropout rates have remained high in the country, and inequity of access and learning outcomes presents a major challenge. Therefore, improving access and learning achievement for children with disabilities and other special needs requires more attention and resources.

d. The Florida Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education (BPIECE) For Directors Tool

This self-assessment tool was developed by the Office of Early Learning to identify direct practices that can be used to support practitioners in creating a high quality early childhood environment that meets the needs of diverse learners and their families.

The tool helps persons in charge of ECDE programs to evaluate their performance in promoting inclusive ECDE within seven core areas, namely, Administration, Environment, Family, Collaboration and Interaction, Professional Development, Screening and Assessment and, Transition. Under each section, there are a set of statements and a corresponding scoring system with four levels, namely, Always, Usually, Occasionally and Not Yet. In addition, for each statement, the tool provides a column for 'How I do It' and a final column for examples.

The tool can be used for ongoing self-reflection to identify strengths regarding inclusive practices and specific areas for growth over time. The results can also assist directors in developing a plan to improve the quality of services and support to practitioners as well as to children and their families in promoting inclusive ECDE.

e. The NAEYC Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Action

The Guidelines for Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP) were first developed in the mid-1980s by the National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and have since evolved into a widely accepted approach in promoting learning in early childhood education.

NAEYC defines[11] "developmentally appropriate practice" as methods that promote each child's optimal development and learning through a strengths-based, play-based approach to joyful, engaged learning. Educators implement developmentally appropriate practice by recognising the multiple assets all young children bring to the early learning program as unique individuals and as members of families and communities. Building on each child's strengths and taking care to not harm any aspect of each child's physical, cognitive, social, or emotional well-being, educators design and implement learning environments to help all children achieve their full potential across all domains of development and across all content areas.

Developmentally appropriate practice recognises and supports each individual as a valued member of the learning community. As a result, to be developmentally appropriate, practices must also be culturally, linguistically, and ability appropriate for each child.

[11] https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/dap/definition

DAP is now being applied to the early childhood education of learners with special needs and, particularly, in enhancing inclusive ECDE. It is proving to be a good practice in promoting inclusive EDCE where teachers and children practice positive interaction, enjoy being with each other and demonstrate respect for one another.

13.0 HOME-BASED EDUCATION

This section reviews literature on home-based education as a holistic approach and alternative, or as a combination with school-based education to bolster learning among children with disabilities in ECDE. Suggestions for its application are provided where evidence of practice is contextual to low and middle-income countries.

Home-based education occurs when parents or guardians decide to educate their children replacing what is provided in formal or traditional schools (Zakaria et al., 2016). The parents and guardians assume the responsibilities of teachers or facilitators. It is important to note that this approach is not a transfer of the school environment to home; it is a unique learning culture with limited controls of formal learning (Nana et al., 2020). It is characterised by non-structured to semi-structured curricula and pedagogies, and it is parent/guardian led.

The Kenya Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities (2018) views the purpose of home-based education as "a strategy that employs both community-based rehabilitation and provision of education from neighbourhood schools to persons with disabilities in preparation to attend or to transition to school-based learning and to persons with severe multiple disabilities who would otherwise not attend school and thus receive education within their homes." This lens of home-based education is one of a stopgap measure to transitional shortfalls that learners with disabilities encounter at hence the need for support away from school including at home.

Traditionally, learning took place at home within the context of the host family and community. At the height of industrialisation and urbanisation, there was transition to institutional and formal learning with some countries declaring home schooling illegal. Formal ECD learning, which started in Kenya in the 1940s was a transition from traditional African learning that was provided by members of the extended family, more so grandparents (Indakwa & Miriti, 2010).

While advanced economies in North America and Europe accepted and legitimised this approach several decades ago, the resurge in its demand in low and middle-income countries is fairly recent (Nana et al., 2020). In the USA for example, it re-emerged in the 1960s after public schooling was made mandatory during the industrial era of the late 1800s and early 1900s (Cook et al., 2013). Home-based education away from school was largely tested across when the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

Home-based education across the globe is growing at lightning speed; "its rebirth after about a century of quiescence has surprised many educators, sociologists, political scientists, historians, and theologians, and has captured the imagination and engagement of hundreds of thousands of families" (Ray, 2017, p. 85). However, it is important to note that the sudden increase in its demand is not necessarily because

of the need to support children with disabilities and in pre-school but for other major reasons.

The choice for home-based education for children with disabilities does not guarantee an inclusive and quality education. As NGEC (2016) study revealed, it seems the only option and the bare minimum that parents/guardians can provide for when school-based education is not accessible or parents think that schools cannot cope with children with disabilities. Generally, there is lack of literature on home-based education for children with disabilities in pre-school and from low and middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2017, Sense International conducted an external evaluation of education for deafblind people in East Africa. The report showed improvement in communication, orientation and mobility, and personal care among deafblind children aged 5 – 16 years as a result of home schooling. While this is so far the closest study to the scope of this review, it is limited in range in terms of impairment and does not cover the age spectrum of ECDE.

Indeed, Delaney (2014) confirms limited studies oriented towards home-based education for children with disabilities from low and middle-income countries with much of the existing literature being from developed countries (Cook et al., 2013). Against this backdrop, the remaining part of this section looks at home-based education practices across the globe including those for learners with disabilities from the global north that can suit the Kenyan context.

There are several motivations for recognition of home-based education. Ray (2017) argues the benefits of home-based education as demonstrated in studies across the globe: “There is solid evidence that Homeschooling has made notable gains in absolute numbers and percentage of the school-age population in nations as diverse as Australia, Brazil, Canada, England, Japan, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, Scotland, and Russia” (p. 85). For instance, caregivers, guardians and parents in South Africa detail reasons for their desire for home-based education including:

- “Education of a child at home under parental guidance fulfils a parent’s prime responsibility for the upbringing of the child within the family;
- A child’s education must be embedded in the parent’s religious world view and values, in contrast with secular school education;
- Socio-economic, health and psycho-social issues;
- Home education offers optimum conditions for a child’s learning;
- Provision of a nurturing learning environment for a child with physical or learning disabilities;
- Home-based education provides a more affordable option for parents than school enrolment;
- Preference for home-based education rather than boarding school when suitable schools are too distant from home;
- Enabling itinerant families to maintain the continuity of a child’s education by educating the child at home rather than transferring from school to school;
- Flexibility in accessing educational resources such as field trips, visit to museums, nature reserves, libraries; and
- Geogra*phical location”*(Basic Education Department, 2018, p. 14).

Nana et al. (2020) study on *Experiences of families engaged in home-schooling in Accra, Ghana* revealed several motivations for preference to this model of learning including "a concern about the school environment, a desire to provide a strong moral foundation, dissatisfaction with academic instruction provided in traditional schools and the provision of religious instruction to home-school children. Families also chose from a variety of curricula and resources" (p. 91). It is important to mention that this study was silent on children with disabilities.

Cook et al. (2013) cite inspiration from the global north for the desire for home-based education by parents for their children with disabilities. They include the perception and reality that schools are excluding children with disabilities, inability and unwillingness by teachers to provide assistive support like assistive and support services like orientation and mobility, occupational and physiotherapy services, avoiding disability-related bullying and the labelling and stigma associated with disability.

The authors also detail what most parents and their children with disabilities across several studies have achieved from home-based education. They include effectiveness in providing specialist or specialised instruction as well as assistive services like orientation and mobility and occupational and physiotherapy. There is also the freedom of choice of curriculum as well as mode and pace of learning and learner's education needs tied to a daily routine (Cook et al., 2013).

Kenya's inspiration for home-based education is effective management of certain disabilities that are otherwise severe and require special care and closer supervision in the process of learning. Additionally, the essence of having children with disabilities educated from the onset of disability, within a home setting rather than from when they enrol in an institution of learning is to ensure they do not miss out on incidental learning opportunities due to the drawbacks caused by late or slowed learning. "This will ensure that they obtain requisite entry behaviour to allow them to fit in and continue with school learning activities alongside their peers" (MoE Kenya, 2018, p. 5).

Lately, the emergence of COVD-19 that resulted in closure of institutions and made home-based education a necessity in most parts of the world, even in countries like Nigeria where it is forbidden practice (Awofala et al., 2020; Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, Uganda, 2020). Indeed, owing to the pandemic, several countries like Kenya have put in place learning management measures that include preference to distance, online and leaning at home.

While there were attempts to consider learners with disabilities, like in the case of the Kenya Basic Education COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan (MoE Kenya, 2020), numerous studies indicate extreme exclusion of learners with disabilities. For instance, a 2020 study on The Hidden Impact of COVID-19 on Children and Families with disabilities by Save the Children involving 31,683 caregivers and parents 13,477 children from 46 countries revealed that 60% of children with disabilities indicated not having someone to assist them with home learning while 38% of caregivers or parents were not able to support their children with disabilities (Orsander, et al. (2020).

The challenges that existed before were only compounded by the pandemic. Nana et al. (2020) in their study on Experiences of Families Engaged in Home-schooling in

Accra, Ghana revealed several drawbacks to home-schooling including lack of supportive policy frameworks. True to their word, this study cited effort by limited countries from sub-Saharan Africa for instance Kenya and South Africa where there exist particular policies that encourage disability inclusive home-based education.

The Kenya Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities recognises home-based learning. While the policy is perpetuating inclusive education as opposed to the previous 2009 Special needs policy, it cautions that this move does not totally disregard "…the important role of other approaches such as … home-based education in providing education and training specifically for learners and trainees with severe disabilities and those under vulnerable circumstances" (MoE Kenya, 2018, p. 5).

South Africa has an exclusive Policy for Home-based education. It details common reasons by caregivers, parents and guardians for the desire to have their children learn at home. Support to education for children with disabilities is an objective that it shares with the Kenya policy. With this minimal yet promising progress, it is reported that some countries like Nigeria forbid home-schooling especially at the basic education level (Maigida, 2020).

Besides the challenge with policy that is predominant in sub-Saharan Africa, Nana et al. (2020) also cite scarcity of learning resources and stereotyping of home-based education. Though the authors' study is neutral on children with disabilities, it is highly likely that the labelling and stigma is heightened when it comes to children with disabilities and their parents (MoE Kenya, 2018). Additionally, home-based education seems the default option for learners with disabilities when school-based education is not accessible.

The available options at home and in the low resourced settings are not always adequate. Tesemma (2011) explains a case of girl with physical disability who was forced to study at home due to lack of a wheelchair and long distance to school. The available education to the girl did not meet the quality provided in school. This tells that the home option is not always the safest as emphasised by the author that both at home and in school, "children with disabilities are often subjected to mental and physical violence and sexual abuse and are also particularly vulnerable to neglect and negligent treatment" (p. 86) since the level of preparedness to include them is always low in school and outside.

With effective capacity-building of parents with support of the itinerant teacher, EARC officers and a team of medical staff of orientation and mobility, and occupational, speech and physiotherapists etc. the successes can be attained in the ECDE project. As promoted in policy in South Africa and Kenya, the joint team is required to make regular home visits to impart teaching and learning to the learner and trainee who is at home (Basic Education Department, South Africa, 2014; MoE Kenya, 2018).

The project may consider adopting the concept of SBITs that is already institutionalised in policy to strengthen the team. One of the shifts of the Sector policy is the recognition of the value and importance of active participation and engagement of stakeholders in promoting teaching and learning. This is particularly pronounced in the policy's commitments on engagement, collaboration and coordination. This is further operationalised in the policy Implementation Guidelines

through recognition of the need to establish 'inclusion monitors' in all schools in which learners and trainees with disabilities are enrolled, and the formation of multi-disciplinary teams (MoE Kenya, 2018).

Working in teams and continuous consultations both within the school and with other external relevant personnel is a practice that is identified in countries like Macedonia, Slovenia and South Africa. When faced with challenges in the learning process, teachers get help from the support (Hussu & Strle, 2010).

Working with itinerant the teacher who is a member of the SBIT is another approach that the project may consider incorporating. The strategy has worked well in supporting learners with visual impairment initially in Kenya and later with other disabilities in Kenya Malawi and Uganda through school-based learning (Le Fanu, 2018). Learnings from that can be borrowed for home-based education for younger children across a range of disabilities.

14.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The identification and assessment of children with disabilities: Across the globe, there is an increase in application of WG-SS to identify persons with disabilities in censuses and surveys. The assessment integrates the physiological and environmental impacts of disability and puts the emphasis on the type and level of difficulty without going into medical diagnosis. As depicted in the Leonard Cheshire girls with disabilities projects in the Nyanza region of Kenya, WG-SS is helpful in determining the kind of adaptation and support that learners with disabilities aged 2 – 17 years require. As the age range includes learners in early years, results from trials by Leonard Cheshire on the use of WG-SS data to inform learner's IEPs with support from EARCs in conjunction with the SBITs may be instrumental for ECDE. Compared to most ECSA countries, the provision of assessment and referral to learning of learners with disabilities seems to be much better though not optimal in Kenya. In the country, functional assessment is backed by strong policy and programmatic frameworks. However, collaborative action is still required to ensure the enforcement of these policies so that all children receive timely assessment and are appropriately placed.

Effective pedagogies in inclusive ECDE in low and middle-income countries: Most suggested pedagogical strategies in the section are worth considering for the ECDE project as they have proved to be useful for children with disabilities at various levels including in EYE. While that is the case, what is more effective are contextual approaches that are inclusive and equitable, that can be achieved in 'least restricting environments' and are appropriate to the full interest of the learner. Teachers are encouraged to contextualise approaches and essential features since impairments and disabilities are diverse and complex and there is no 'one size that fits all'. Additionally, planning for the project should take into account that children with disabilities are first and foremost children; whilst they may require adjustments and differentiated pedagogical approaches, much of what they need should not be separate and specialist.

Practices and tools used in measuring academic progress and the well-being of children in early years settings: Formative assessments appear to be most

appropriate for learners with disabilities at the ECDE level. This is because of their efficiency in gauging the level of acquisition of learning early and as part of daily instruction. This supports the teacher in planning for and assisting the learner in areas of improvement. KICD recommends the use of the following tools in conducting the assessment; Anecdotal reports, Assessment rubrics, Checklists, IEP, Journaling, Observation schedules, Portfolio, Progress report card, Profiling, Question and answer, Questionnaire and Rating scales. Besides the tools, it is recommended to make adjustments or accommodations according to the disability of the learner. CBM is an elaborate and systematic strategy and tool for gathering assessment data for children with disabilities popularly applied in the USA and Europe that can be contextualised locally. However, there is a ned for evidence on its efficacies for learners with disabilities at the ECDE level from low resourced settings.

The training of early year practitioners: An important learning is gained from training of practitioners in early years; preservice and in-service capacity-building of ECDE teachers has become a fundamental part of teacher education. While in many countries the training is provided at different levels of teacher training including at university, most of the teachers who undergo ECDE teacher training at higher levels do not end up teaching at ECDE. The teaching is done by teachers trained at diploma and certificate level. This is owed to low remuneration of practitioners in ECDE and the perception that teaching at this level is tedious and considered a menial job. This combined with negative attitudes on disability further reduces the interest to teach at this level.

Raising community awareness about disability inclusion: This study revealed siloed approaches on awareness for instance ones specifically on disability in the Kenya Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities and ones particularly on ECDE in the National Pre-Primary Education Policy. This is at the expense of children at the ECDE level and with disabilities that risk being left out. Therefore, the ECDE project could benefit from awareness and advocacy interventions that have an intersectional and multisectoral approach in nature. On the other hand, it is noted severally in literature that inclusive education programmes have been successful through the involvement of the community that is essential in promoting awareness leading to ownership, support and sustainability.

Teaching and learning materials: Several studies have exposed inadequacies in teaching and learning resources in ECDE centers. They lack facilities suitable for ECDE in their learning environments. These include lack of properly ventilated classrooms, furniture suitable for small children, kitchen, safe clean water, playgrounds, toilets and play materials. In the case of ECDE for learners with special needs, these factors pose even greater challenges in the availability and utilisation of teaching and learning resources. It is therefore recommended that adequate teaching and learning resources be provided to ensure effective implementation of inclusive ECDE. This requires the allocation of sufficient funds for procuring teaching and learning materials for special needs education learners. The management of the ECDE centers is encouraged to mobilise parents and the community on the importance of TLM to children. This can be successfully done by organising for material making days in the centers. Also, teachers need to be equipped with skills and to be encouraged to improvise locally available materials to ensure that learners appreciate and are stimulated to learn. They need to be trained to improve their

knowledge and skills on how to operate modern learning resources. The teachers need to put more emphasis not only in indoor activities but also in outdoor activities with coherent use of teaching, learning and play materials in both cases.

Impact of parental/ caregiver involvement in early years education: In recent times, there is increased awareness of the pivotal role played by parents, caregivers and community in promoting quality and inclusive education in early years. This has resulted to their involvement in the management, provision as well as monitoring of education programs through legislation or education policy. For instance, the Parents Associations and school support multidisciplinary teams are now recognised in the Kenya Basic Education Act and the Sector Policy for Learners and Trainees with Disabilities respectively. Parents are central in the multidisciplinary teams. As discussed under community awareness and disability inclusion, the participation of parents, caregivers and the community in the teaching and learning of children with disabilities can significantly improve their quality of education.

Good practices in including children with disabilities in early years education settings: The overwhelming absence of dependable data and information on inclusive education among in East Africa is a major drawback to showcasing good practices in early years' education. That notwithstanding, there are pockets of good practices across high, low and middle-income countries that can be of benefit to the ECDE project. For instance, EARCs have become an integral part of the education of learners with disabilities in Kenya. By policy, no learner with disability can be enrolled into school without an EARC assessment report. Far away from home, the Florida Best Practices in Inclusive Early Childhood Education for Directors is an effective tool from a developed context that can be replicated in a low resourced setting. The practices are effective in identifying direct practices that can be used to support practitioners in creating a high quality early childhood environment that meets the needs of diverse learners and their families. The tool helps persons in charge of ECDE programs to evaluate their performance in promoting inclusive ECDE within seven core areas, namely, Administration, Environment, Family, Collaboration and Interaction, Professional Development, Screening and Assessment and, Transition. Under each section, there are a set of statements and a corresponding scoring system with four levels, namely, Always, Usually, Occasionally and Not Yet. In addition, for each statement, the tool provides a column for 'How I do It' and a final column for examples.

Home-based education: Though evidence is still not robust across high, low and middle-income contexts, literature from a few countries suggests benefits of home-based-education for children with disabilities. They include effectiveness in providing specialist or specialised instruction as well as assistive services like orientation and mobility and occupational and physiotherapy. Home-based education is also associated with freedom of choice of curriculum as well as mode and pace of learning and learner's education needs tied to a daily routine. Though there is no study that has proven the effectiveness of itinerant support for home learning, there are high possibilities that application of this model (itinerant support) could be beneficial in realising the benefits based on its successes with support to learners with disabilities across East Africa in school-based learning. Its application to home learning can be bolstered by expanding the itinerant support team through the

inclusion of members of the SBIT or incorporating support to home-based learning as a responsibility of the SBIT. Further, the itinerant teachers and the SBITs need to be capacity-built on unique aspects of home-based education and facilitation with resources to enable movement.

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