

This study examined the teaching of the special education component that was introduced in the regular primary teacher training programme in 1987. Special attention was given to how this component relate to the total teacher training programme, with a view of establishing whether the objectives of the course were being met.

The purpose for this study was to find out how the teaching of the component is conducted, the methods used and their suitability in facilitating the necessary attitude changes, the experiences the trainees are exposed to, besides routine lectures, that have the potentiality of increasing their competency in handling exceptional learners in ordinary classrooms. Finally the study sought to establish hindrance if any that prevent the realization of the objectives of the component.

The population of the study sample comprised a total of 46 respondents. 16 of the respondents were teacher trainees drawn from 8 teacher-training colleges in the country. 5 respondents were special education curriculum specialists from the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), 2 others were inspectors of special education from the inspectorate headquarters, while 24 of the respondents were recently graduated teachers who completed their training room the eight colleges between 1988 and 1992.

Six research questions and related sub questions were developed to guide the data collection. The investigation proceeded on the basis of the established formal primary research techniques, using questionnaires and personal interviews. The resulting response were analysed and summarised. All the responses were then discussed and presented descriptively, making use of tables and percentages.

The major findings were as follows:

1. The special education component is taught under educational psychology.
2. The lecturers teaching the components have not been specially trained or inserviced to teach the component.
3. Basic teaching/learning resource are lacking in all the colleges.
4. The time allocated to the teaching of the component is very limited.
5. No exposure to exceptional children are organized for teacher trainees besides limited lectures.
6. Assessment of the special education component is not given due attention. At the moment the section does not receive any special attention, during the college or national teacher assessment.
7. The objectives of the special education component are so far not being met as the necessary preparations for teaching the section have not been met.

In the light of the above findings, recommendations were made that would help strengthen and improve the teaching of special education in all the colleges. More specifically, it was recommended that:-

- (i) Qualified personnel, including lower cadre trainers like KISE graduates should be identified and posted to all colleges, to teach the special education component.
- (ii) All high institutions that train teachers should start special education departments to train special education teachers.
- (iii) Those tutors currently teaching educational psychology in colleges should be inserviced in special education so as to handle the component appropriately.
- (iv) Special education component should be up-graded to a full subject status and be taught and assessed separately.
- (v) Basic teaching/learning resources in special education should be made available to all colleges.
- (vi) A special fund aimed at the promotion of special education activities in all colleges should be created.
- (vii) The special education component should be periodically evaluated to ensure that it is in line with the latest trends in special education.
- (viii) The government should come up with clear policies that govern special education provision.

It is hoped that if these recommendations are adopted and implemented, they would enable the objectives of special education to be realised to the benefit of our handicapped community.