

Title: Vocational Education and Community Integration of Young Adults with Mental Retardation in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to investigate how vocational education and transitional services offered in vocational institutions helped young adults with mental retardation attain full community integration. The study objectives included to; investigate the extent to which vocational education equip young adults with mental retardation with skills of community adjustment and identify different avenues through which they were integrated in the community. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative approach. Quantitative analysis was applied for the purpose of clarification, strengthening, explaining and supporting qualitative information. The research design was a descriptive case study. The target population comprised all young adults with mental retardation in Kiambu County. The sample of the study included 10 young adults with mental retardation. Other respondents were a headteacher/employer, 2 vocational teachers and 9 parents. Data collection was done by use of interview guides, note taking, audio recording and observation checklist. The actual data collection took 30 days. Data from interviews and observation text were coded and codes created according to the themes of the study. Qualitative data analysis was by use of Atlas ti software computer programme. Quantitative data analyses were manually through tallying the frequency of segmented responses. The study established that community participation of young adults with mental retardation is very minimal. Further, the findings revealed that in as much as young adults with mental retardation were offered vocational skills in the special school, what they were engaged in was not relevant to the skills they trained in. This led to some of them disliking the kind of jobs they had as avenues of community integration. It was also found that there lacked a well-specified vocational curriculum for persons with mental retardation. The societal negative attitude towards young adults with mental retardation participation was found to be the major barrier to their community integration. To address these challenges, it was recommended that special educators and trainers should be involved in policy- making so as to put in place what is needed as far as persons with mental retardation are concerned in areas of vocational training and their community integration. It was also recommended that the government through the Kenya Institute of Education should implement special education vocational curriculum in order to facilitate job market- oriented courses to these individuals with mental retardation. Finally, the researcher is of the opinion that the government should empower young adults with mental retardation with kits to start their self-reliant businesses to facilitate effective community integration.