

American Journal of Recreation and Sports (AJRS)



**What Exactly Are We Teaching In Physical Education-
The Case of the Syllabus for the Learners with
Intellectual Challenges in Kenya**

Dr. Simon Munayi (Ph.D.), Benson Gathoni



What Exactly Are We Teaching In Physical Education- The Case of the Syllabus for the Learners with Intellectual Challenges in Kenya

Dr. Simon Munayi (Ph.D.)¹

¹Department of Physical Education and Sport, University of Nairobi

Benson Gathoni²

²Dedan Kimathi University of Technology: Department of Sports and Games

Purpose: Syllabi provide the guide on what is being taught at schools. In Kenya the main objectives of syllabuses are derived from the national goals of education. This allows for consistence so that a learner from one end of the country is taught the same basic concept as another learner from the different end of the country. It provides the teacher with direction on what should be taught when and how deeply the teacher should cover topics. Is this the case for learners with intellectual disabilities? This study went out to interrogate the syllabus for learners with intellectual disabilities.

Methodology: A descriptive research design was used in the study. Out of 44 schools that deal with learners with intellectual disability in Kenya, 35 schools were randomly selected for this study. Four schools were used for the pilot study while 31 were used for the main study. Once the schools were selected, the said questionnaire was administered to the principal of the school and one teacher from the final class who teaches physical education. One of the schools did not have the principal present hence only 30 principals were sampled. Once the questionnaires were filled, data from them was tabulated and analyzed.

Findings: It was discovered that 64.58% of the teachers though well trained did choose not to adhere to the syllabus. A look at the syllabus indicated that there were some major anomalies that led to this lack of adherence. The syllabus was created for recreation and leisure yet it is supposed to serve physical education and a host of other issues. The objectives set out for learners with intellectual disability take cognizant that these learners need to provide human capital for the society by being independent.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy recommendation: The study recommended that there was need to do basic editing of the document further there is need for the document to be evaluated. The training of the teachers is above average and the fact that they choose not to adhere to the syllabus by choice is an indicator that this curriculum need urgent review to meet the need national goals of education.

Keywords: *Syllabus, Intellectual Challenge, Physical Education*

INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching and learning is supposed to provide rich learning experiences for learners (Munayi, 2015; Becher & Grosu, 2016). To standardize these rich learning experiences for learners along the same year group there is need for a policy document that can be used as a bench mark to cater for all the learners at the same level. In the Kenyan situation this document is the syllabus and is prepared by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development on behalf of the Ministry in charge of Education. There is a curriculum for all levels of learning; this includes for learner with all forms of disabilities. This includes learners with intellectual disability (Republic of Kenya, 2009).

Physical education is considered education through the use of physical activity and is aimed at the individual getting physically literate (Clemente, 2017). The United Nations Organization declared 2005 the year for physical education (UNESCO, 2005). It was noted that every learner needed to be educated in the area of physical education (PE) which could then be used in the development of physical literacy (Osborne, Belmont, Peixoto, De Azeved, De Carvalho, 2016,). Varja(2018) notes that quality PE programme provides health benefit. This justifies the need for quality PE programmes through all levels. The person to provide that quality physical education lesson is the teacher. According to Pills (2016), the teacher occupies the central role of being the architect of the physical education curriculum. This implies the need to have the teacher recognise this crucial role (Gizachew, 2012; Munayi, 2015).

It has been noted that globally PE tends to be considered to have lower status than other subjects (UNESCO, 2014). This is indicated by the number of cancellations of PE lessons in preference for mathematic lessons. Though the same report by UNESCO(2014) notes that some countries have started to appreciate the relation between physical education and wellness. UNESCO points at the issues of curriculum as being of concern in the teaching of physical education. Osborne , Belmont, Peixoto, De Azeveds, De Carvalho(2016) noted that there was a general decline in the offering of physical education lessons world over . This reinforces the need for governments to play their roles in stepping in to change this anomaly. More so due to the relation between physical activity and wellness. Kougioumtzis(2014) stated that PE is associated with social and physical development of the learners . In Sweden and South Africa, it was noted further that PE is looked at in its relation to health, hence its significance in the curriculum ; It was concluded that there as a general decline in the offering of physical activity at school from childhood to adolescence leading to myriad of health issues(Kougioumtzis, 2014).

Nhamo and Muswazi (2014) noted that PE has lacked status in Zimbabwe. This was attributed to lack of teaching of PE, poor teaching training, and a faulty curriculum. Teachers due to the lack of training, lacked competence to deal with structured PE lesson. Schools lacked copies of syllabus. Further the syllabus in Zimbabwe was criticised for being non prescriptive hence not guiding the teachers well. Nhamo and Muswazi concluded by demanding that the current syllabus in PE must be reviews to make it easier to interpret. Munayi (2015) noted that the curriculum in Kenya also needed a review since too many teachers were opting not to refer to it. Oudat(2016) in a study in Jordan also found that teachers were finding the teaching of PE a challenge due to the formatting of the curriculum amongst other issues.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Persons living with Disability uses the term, “disability”, to describe anyone unable to ensure own necessities of a normal individual and or social life as a result of deficiencies either of physical or mental capabilities (UNESCO, 2005). The declaration further states that persons living with disabled are entitled to measures that will make them self-reliant. This includes access to schooling. The United Nations asserts that intellectual disability (ID) is a condition of arrest or incomplete development of the mind. This is characterized by skill impairment in areas of cognition, language, and motor functions. Usually this would lead to reduced levels of intellectual functions. Algahtani (2017) notes that learners with ID are perceived to have an IQ of 50 to 70 and asserts that; learners with ID could attain higher levels of life due to the experiences they acquire from school. The document emphasizes that this should not be construed to mean illness (United Nations, 1975).

The significance of the syllabus in standardizing the teaching and learning process has been variously document. According to Armstrong (2002) the syllabus in PE is considered the fulcrum in the promotion of physical activity. syllabus are set up by the relevant authority to point the teaching learning process for a group in the direction the authority would wish to lead the teacher. According to Harris, Cale and Leggett (2002) in England the syllabus has a statutory component on the health related exercises. Binder, Jubling, Mastura and Talbot (2003) noted values cannot be left to appear by accident but must be taught by design systematically and organized grounded in the syllabus. Laws (2002) suggested the product at the end of going through physical education process is pegged on what the pupil has learnt and the experiences gained which inkling on the curriculum has offered.

Problem of the Study

The problem in this study is to find out what exactly is being taught to learners with disability in physical education. Does this provide them access to rich experiences that make them better? Do teachers adhere to this policy document? Does this policy document meet the requisite standards expected of documents of this nature? This paper is an attempt to interrogate the syllabus used in the teaching of physical education to learners’ with intellectual disability. Algahtani (2017) notes that instruction for learners with ID must be structured towards individual learners.

METHODOLOGY

The discussion above points at the significance of any curriculum in the teaching of physical education. This study went out to interrogate the physical education curriculum for learners with intellectual disability in Kenya. A descriptive research design was used in the study. Four research questions were developed to guide this study, these include:

- a) Does the syllabus in schools for learners with intellectual challenge make sense?
- b) Is the situation created by the syllabus sufficient to allow for achievement of objectives?
- c) Does the current situation as it relates to the syllabus allow for the programme for learners with intellectual challenges run well?
- d) Is the programme for learners with intellectual challenges supported by stakeholders?

A syllabus interrogation tool was created using the Ralf Taylor model and embedded with an evaluation criteria based on Anderson and Arsenualt (2002). The four questions in Taylor’s model

were expended to sixteen and were juxtaposed against components of the programme in terms rationale, effectiveness, efficiency and relevance. In this regard, rationale entailed whether the question in the curriculum makes sense. Effectiveness entailed does the curriculum in the way it is currently structured meet the objectives of the programme. Efficiency entails administration of a programme, in this regard are the resources in place to allow for the set objectives to be achieved in meaningful manner. Finally, relevance entailed the sustenance of the programme. A questionnaire was created for the principals and another one for teachers. The necessary consents were sought to meet ethical considerations.

The syllabus for learners with intellectual disability was interrogated using the syllabus interrogation tool. Out of 44 schools that deal with learners with intellectual disability in Kenya, 35 schools were randomly selected for this study. Four schools were used for the pilot study while 31 were used for the main study. Once the schools were selected, the said questionnaire was administered to the principal of the school and one teacher from the final class who teaches physical education. One of the schools did not have the principal present hence only 30 principals were sampled. Once the questionnaires were filled, data from them was tabulated and analyzed.

RESULTS

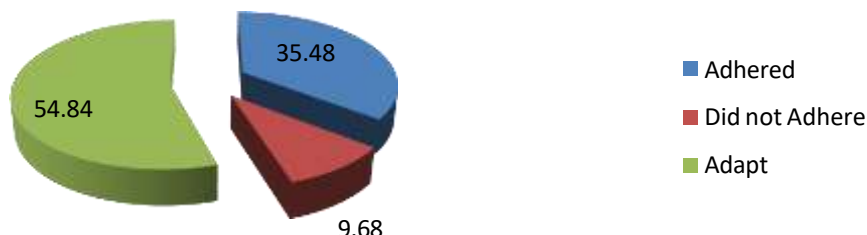
The results were demarcated into four cadres for ease of reference. This was done under the heading, rationale, effectiveness, efficiency and relevance. This was informed by the research questions developed to guide this study.

Research Question one on the rationale

In terms of rationale it was noted that:

- i. The syllabus for learners in schools for intellectually challenged contains:
 - a. National Goals which carry the inspirations of the Kenyan People. These are soundly stated and they make sense.
 - b. Objectives of Special needs education cascades from the national goals. These are stated in measurable terms. These too make sense.
 - c. Objectives for learner with intellectual challenges were also well stated these also make sense.
 - d. Activities set were for recreation and leisure and include concepts such as songs, stories, dance, play and cleaning pets. These activities were considered leisure activities and not physical education activities as such. In this regards the activities set out for learners with intellectual disabilities did not make sense.
- ii. On whether teachers adhered to the syllabus Figure 1 shows the results

Figure 1: Teachers Adherence to Syllabus



This indicates that only 35.48% of the teachers for learner with intellectual disability claimed to adhered to the syllabus for the teaching of physical, education the rest (64.52) did not. This implies that a majority of teachers of physical education in schools for learners with intellectual challenges did not feel the syllabus made sense hence chose not to follow the syllabus. This left the learners to the whims of the teachers. This has the danger of not meeting the requisite objectives that the architects of the curriculum had.

Research Question Two on Effectiveness

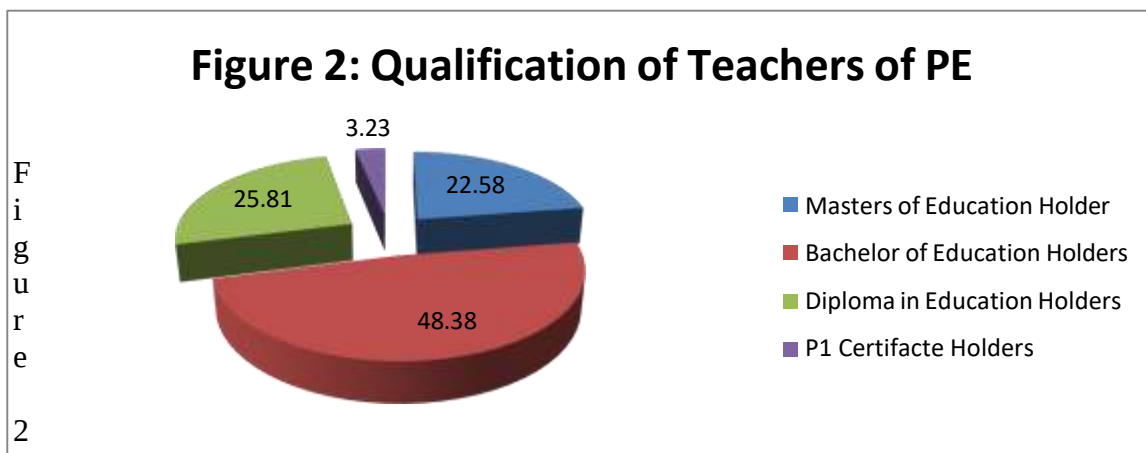
Effectiveness takes cognizance of the fact that syllabus are created to offer direction for the teachers. In this regards they must factor in the importance of achieving objectives that have been set up for the learners with intellectual challenges. In this regard the following was noted:

- i. The syllabus objectives based on the activities failed to provide an opportunity to teach physical education which is what is timetabled hence leading to physical literacy. The cleaning of pets and telling of stories may not provide an opportunity to teach physical literacy.
- ii. By virtue of the syllabus suggesting basic activities such as singing and storytelling, these are resource free actives and would be achieved with minimum effort.

Research Question Three on Efficiency

Efficiency entails how the programme was administered. It also entails who is administering it and whether they would be able to aptly interpret the bench mark which is the syllabus. In this regard the following was noted:

- i. It has been noted that most of the teachers chose not to adhere to the syllabus. This may have been due to the fact that activities cited in the syllabus were very basic.
- ii. The teachers were asked about their qualifications, this would be able to help gauge whether they would be able to interpret the syllabus. The results are indicated in Figure 2.



indicates that teachers involved in the teaching of physical education to learners with intellectual challenges were well trained. Indeed a majority, (96.77%) of the teachers have higher than minimum requirement required. This implies that these teachers would be able to comfortably interpret the syllabus.

- iii. The amount of cash allocated to PE by the principal has the trigger effect of creating a conducive atmosphere to achieve whatever the expectations of the syllabus are. When principals were asked what percentage of their financial allocation was given to PE their indications were captured Figure 3.

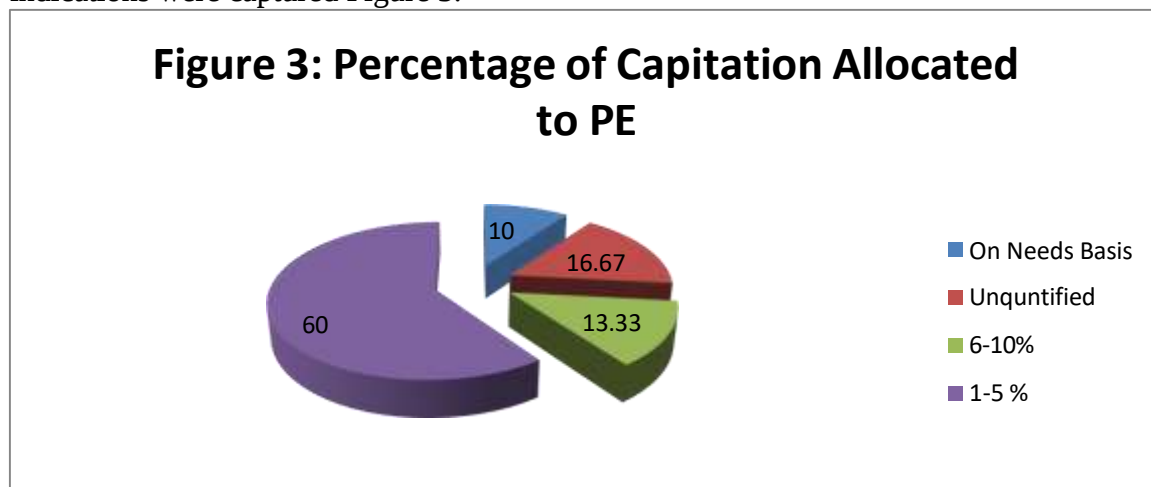


Table 3 indicates that a majority (60%) of the principals allocate less than 5% of the schools funds to the teaching of physical education. Technically this is a low percentage and may imply that physical education is not considered significant.

Research Question Four on Relevance

Relevance entails whether the programme is sustainable. In this regard the following was noted:

- i. According to the syllabus, the fact there they are objective set for the learners with intellectual challenges is an indicator that this programme is sustainable.
- ii. It was imperative to find out where the teachers sought their activities from. Figure 4 captures the results of where teachers claimed they derived the activities they taught from.

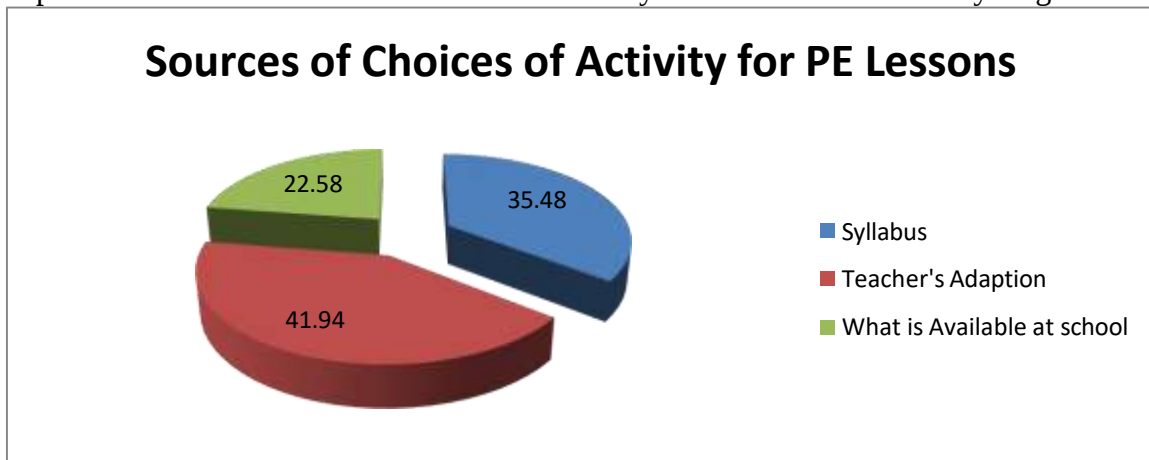


Figure 4 indicates only 35.48% of the teachers used the syllabus as a choice of activity. That suggests that the teachers may not feel sufficiently guided by the syllabus hence chose other sources for activities.

Discussion

The syllabus is supposed to provide a way for the authorities to standardize teaching throughout the country. To achieve this syllabus is created with the national goals of education as the first set of objectives. Indeed the national goals are embedded in the curriculum for learners with intellectual challenges. This is an attempt to ascertain that the national aspirations of the Kenyan people are part of the values that are taught to all citizens. This syllabus for learners with intellectual challenges also carries the objectives for learners with special needs and also that for learners with intellectual disabilities. All these three sets of objectives are well written and if implemented will meet the needs of education which includes the needs to create human capital out of those learners who go through this education set aside for learners with intellectual disabilities.

The activities set out in the syllabus for physical education are however simple and tend to suggest that learners with intellectual challenges are considered by the system as thinking at the concrete levels only. Indeed these activities which include song, play and dance are basic and may not require formal schooling to achieve. None of these activities are attuned to the development of physical literacy which is the essence of teaching physical education at all level (United Nations, 2005). In this regard while the national goals, the objectives for special needs education and the objectives for teaching learners with intellectual challenges are well written and may make sense, the activities isolated for physical education are basic and not aimed at achieving the universal

goals of teaching physical education which is physical literacy. The teachers of physical education have already noted this situation as noted by the fact that over two thirds of the teacher opted to ignore the syllabus by choice. Since the activities set out for physical education are the life line between the syllabus and the physical education lesson it may be said that the current syllabus does not make sense as far as physical education is concerned.

While the activities suggested in the syllabus are basic and affordable they are structured towards leisure activities. Physical education is the discipline that would teaches skills leading to physical literacy. The fact that only dance if structured correctly would fit in as a physical education activity implies that the current syllabus in its current form will not will not allow the teaching of physical education to achieve its objectives. The need to review this curriculum cannot be over emphasised.

The administration of the physical education programme for learners with intellectual challenges has the correct props. The teachers involved in this programme currently have qualifications that are above the basic minimum. Indeed the fact that 96.77% of these teacher are graduates and above is an indicator that they are cable of interpreting and justifying what needs to be taught. The fact that a majority do not use the syllabus is very telling about what they feel the syllabus has to offer. The cash allocation to physical education related activity is scant and not quite predictable crating a situation where the physical education programme may not achieve its objectives.

The sustainability of a programme is pegged on whether the props of this programme are created in a manner that suggests it is set for the long haul. While the national goals, objectives for education and objectives for special needs education are set for the long haul, this cannot be said about the activity set out for physical education. The fact that a majority of the teachers are not using the syllabus as their source for the activities they are teaching is an indicator that the syllabus the way it is currently set is not sustainable.

CONCLUSION

While a syllabus is provided for the teaching of physical education it has been noted that a majority of the teachers do not adhere to it. The national goals, the objectives of education and the objectives of special needs education are well documented and tuned to achieve set objectives for the learners with intellectual challenges. However the actives that have been suggested are not lined up to create a graduate of the system who is physical literate, which is the universal aim of physical education. The training of the teachers is above average and the fact that they choose not to adhere to the syllabus by choice is an indicator that this curriculum need urgent review to meet the need national goals of education.

REFERENCES

- Algahtani F., (2017) Teaching Students with intellectual Disability Constructivism or Behaviorism. *Academic Journal* Vol. 12(21), pp.1031-1035, Nov, 2017. DOI:10.5897/ERR2017.3366. Article number 118EAB166524
- Anderson, G., & Arsenault, N. (2002). *Fundamentals of Education Research*. Falmar: Routledge.
- Armstrong W., (2002) Promoting Physical Education Activities and Health in Youth: The active School in Physical Education. *12th Commonwealth International Sport Conference. Abstract book*. Pp.37-44
- Becher, I. and Grosu, E. F. (2016). Physical Activity and Intellectual Disability. The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Science.
- Binder D., Jobling I., Mstora I, and Tolbat M., (2002) Teaching Values through Physical education and Sports: Cultural Insight from the Classroom Trails of an International Curriculum development Project. *12th Commonwealth International Sport Conference. Abstract book*. Pp228.
- Clemente I. (2017) Barriers and Facilitators to Participation in Physical Activity for children with Disability- A Systematic Literature Review. Unpublished Master thesis. Jonkoping University.
- Gizachew, T. (2012). The Challenges and Current Prospects of Teaching Physical education in Arbaminich Secondary Schools. Unpublished MSc. Thesis. Addis Ababa University. Addis Ababa.
- Harris J., Cale. L and Leggett G. (2002) Health Related Development in the Physical Education Curriculum in England: An Improving Picture of Health. *12th Commonwealth International Sport Conference. Abstract book*. Pp 191.
- Kougioumtzis K.,(2014) The Experience Physical education Curriculum: A Comparative Study of Primary and Lower Secondary school Pupils in Sweden and South Africa. Unpublished Paper. Goteborgs Univesitet.
- Laws C. J., (2002) The Implementation of Physical Education Curriculum in Relation to an Understanding of what PE means to Children. *12th Commonwealth International Sport Conference. Abstract book*.
- Munayi S. P., (2015) Evaluation of the Teaching and Learning Process in Primary Schools for Learners with intellectual Disability. *Unpublished Ph D. Thesis* University of Nairobi.
- Nhamo E., and Muswazi T. M. (2014) Critical Barrier Impeding the Delivery of Physical Education in Zimbabwean Primary School. *Journal of Sports and Physical Education (IOSR-JSPE)*e-ISSN:2347-6745, p-ISSN:2347-6737
- Osborne P, Belmont S.R.,Peixoto De Azeveds I O. , De Carvalho (Jr) A. F. P. (2016) Obstacles for Physical Education Teachers in Public School. An Unsustainable Situation. *Motiz, Rio Claro, U22n. 4* p.310-318, OCY/ Dec 2016. DOI. [http://dx.Doi.org/10.1590/51980-6574201600040015](http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/51980-6574201600040015).

- Oudat M. A. (2016) Challenges Facing Physical education Teachers in Jordan from Perspective as Teachers Themselves. *Advanced in Physical Education*, 2016,6. 43-51 Published on line May 2016 in SciRes. <http://www.scip.org/sound/ope>
- Pill S.,(2016) Exploring Challenges in Australian Physical education Curricular Past and Present. *Journal of physical education and health*, 2016 Vol.5 (7), Pp5-17
- Udoba H. A., (2014) Challenges faced by Teachers when Teaching Learners with Developmental Disabilities. Unpublished Master's Thesis. University of Oslo
- United Nations, (1975). *Declaration on the rights of the Disabled Person-Proclamation of the General Assembly Resolution 3447(XXX) of December 1975*. <http://deccess-ddys-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/Gen/>
- UNESCO, (2005). *International Declaration of Physical Education and Sport*. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_DO=DO
- Varja E. (2018) The Importance of Quality Physical Education for Developing Country: Case Study of Physical education Teachers Training in Tanzania. Unpublished Master Thesis. University of Jyväskylä.

License

Copyright (c) 2022 Dr. Simon Munayi (Ph.D.), Benson Gathoni



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Authors retain copyright and grant the journal right of first publication with the work simultaneously licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution \(CC-BY\) 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) that allows others to share the work with an acknowledgment of the work's authorship and initial publication in this journal.