

KISE-EXPO 2024 REPORT

The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE).

©2025

International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE) | ISSN 2518-2412

Received: 13th December 2024

Published: 9th January 2025

Full Length Research

Available Online at: https://iajournals.org/articles/iajsse_v2_si4_180_186.pdf

Citation: The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE). (2025) KISE-EXPO 2024 REPORT. *International Academic Journal of Social Sciences and Education (IAJSSE)*, 2(4), 180-186

ABSTRACT

Specialized learning materials, Assistive devices and technology have the power to transform lives, enabling individuals living with special needs and disabilities to access education, independence, and participation in society. With over 2.5 billion people globally requiring at least one assistive device, the need for innovative solutions is clear.

The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) organized the KISE-Expo 2024 on the 5th and 6th of September, 2024,

providing an essential platform for stakeholders manufacturers, users, and policymakers to come together. The expo promoted awareness, partnerships, and the development of inclusive solutions that enhance the quality of life for persons living with special needs and disabilities.

Keywords: Assistive Technology, Specialized Learning Materials, Inclusive Education, Policy and Advocacy and Networking and Collaboration.

INTRODUCTION

Specialized learning materials, Assistive devices and technology have the power to transform lives, enabling individuals living with special needs and disabilities to access education, independence, and participation in society. With over 2.5 billion people globally requiring at least one assistive device, the need for innovative solutions is clear.

The Kenya Institute of Special Education (KISE) organized the KISE-Expo 2024 on the 5th and 6th of September, 2024, providing an essential platform for stakeholders manufacturers, users, and policymakers to come together. The expo promoted awareness, partnerships, and the development of inclusive solutions that enhance the quality of life for persons living with special needs and disabilities.

Key Themes and Focus Areas

Assistive Technology: A key focus of the expo was the development and implementation of assistive devices that support individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive impairments. These technologies include screen readers for the visually impaired, speech-to-text software, hearing aids, and adaptive input devices. There was an emphasis on making these technologies more accessible and affordable in educational settings.

Specialized Learning Materials: The event showcased a wide array of learning materials tailored to different types of disabilities. These included tactile learning tools for visually impaired students, sign language resources, and curriculum adaptations for students with intellectual disabilities. The aim was to ensure that students with special needs have access to the same educational opportunities as their peers, using materials that cater to their specific needs.

Inclusive Education: A key message of the expo was the importance of inclusive education, which ensures that all students, regardless of their abilities, can participate in mainstream education. The discussion highlighted the need for collaboration between government

agencies, educators, and technology providers to create an inclusive educational system where learners with disabilities, can thrive alongside their peers.

Policy and Advocacy: Several speakers at the expo emphasized the need for stronger policies and government support for special needs education. They called for better funding, more teacher training, and the development of national strategies to integrate assistive technology and specialized learning materials into the mainstream education system.

Networking and Collaboration: The event served as a platform for stakeholders in special needs education to network and exchange ideas. Educational institutions, NGOs, private sector players, and government bodies were encouraged to work together to improve the learning conditions for people with disabilities. Collaborative efforts were seen as essential in overcoming the challenges of funding, accessibility, and awareness.

Event Highlights

Demonstrations of Devices: Various companies and organizations demonstrated new and existing assistive devices, such as alternative communication devices for students with speech impairments and mobility aids for those with physical disabilities.

Panel Discussions: Experts discussed the future of special education in Kenya and globally, identifying gaps in the current system and proposing ways forward. Topics included integrating technology into rural schools, overcoming cultural stigmas around disability, and the importance of policy reform.

Challenges and Opportunities:

1. *Access and Affordability:* While the technologies and materials presented were innovative, many participants raised concerns about their affordability, especially for schools in rural or underfunded areas. The expo highlighted the need for government and private sector involvement to subsidize costs and make these resources more widely available.
2. *Teacher Training:* Another challenge identified was the lack of adequately trained teachers to use assistive technology in the classroom. Speakers underscored the need for specialized training programs to equip educators with the skills to use these tools effectively.
3. *Awareness and Stigma:* The event also addressed the cultural stigma that often surrounds disability in certain communities. Many speakers called for increased public awareness campaigns to challenge stereotypes and promote a more inclusive society where the contributions of individuals with disabilities are recognized and valued.

Audience Expectations

The audience had high expectations for the event, primarily focused on:

1. *Assistive Technology*: Participants wanted to learn about the latest assistive devices for individuals with disabilities, particularly for autism, dyslexia, and intellectual disabilities.
2. *Inclusion*: There was a strong emphasis on how to integrate persons with disabilities into education and the workforce, and improve inclusive learning environments.
3. *Practical Solutions*: Participants sought actionable knowledge on acquiring, using, and adapting assistive devices in schools, and understanding government policies on accessibility.
4. *Networking*: Many hoped to build partnerships with experts and organizations to enhance disability support programs.

Panel Discussions

Panel One

The panel discussion on the sub-theme "Resourcing for Specialized Learning Materials, Assistive Devices, and Technology" focused on various important topics related to assistive technologies for learners with disabilities. The questions raised included the availability of national funds to support children living with disabilities, strategies for ensuring needs assessments, and how to provide affordable assistive devices such as hearing aids and speech aids. Additionally, participants discussed support for graduates with disabilities in finding jobs or starting businesses, as well as ways to incorporate assistive technologies into teaching, especially for learners with specific needs like dyslexia and intellectual disabilities.

One key issue highlighted was the need for comprehensive strategies to support economically disadvantaged families in accessing assistive devices. Questions were raised on how the government and stakeholders could provide free or affordable resources to ensure inclusive education and healthcare for all learners. There was also a focus on how to adapt teaching materials, especially for learners with hearing impairments, and the urgent need for establishing Educational Assessment and Resource Centres (EARCs) in sub-counties to ensure access to essential services.

Furthermore, participants explored the need for incentives for companies to hire individuals with disabilities. They also emphasized the importance of creating networks and partnerships to improve the distribution of assistive devices across the country. Issues such as tax exemptions for caregivers, access to medical services, and strategies to avoid exploitation of families seeking support were also discussed, underlining the need for both policy changes and practical solutions.

Panel Two

The panel discussion on "User Perspective on Specialized Learning Materials, Assistive Devices, and Technology" covered various concerns and suggestions from stakeholders. Key points included:

- **Accessibility for People with Disabilities:** A significant emphasis was placed on ensuring assistive devices are affordable, accessible, and available in schools, particularly in rural areas.
- **Assistive Devices for Autism:** There were questions about specific devices for learners with autism and dyslexia.
- **Government Support:** Queries on government efforts to fund assistive technology and cover costs under health insurance were raised.
- **School Infrastructure:** Concerns were expressed about limited infrastructure in special needs schools, with specific requests for funding, educational resources, and training for educators.

Other topics discussed were related to improving the procurement process, the role of the Ministry of Education in special needs education, and ensuring inclusive environments for learners with disabilities.

Panel Three

The panel on "Policy Perspective on Specialized Learning Materials, Assistive Devices, and Technology" addressed key policy-related issues surrounding assistive technologies in education. Discussions revolved around providing access to assistive technology for children in home-school settings, clarifying the roles of SNE teachers and EARC officers, and exploring caregiver involvement. There was emphasis on the need for collaboration between ICT authorities and EARC to support learners with special needs. The audience raised concerns about training for using assistive devices and the need for targeted assessments to help learners with disabilities.

Panel Four

The panel on "Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) for Persons with Disabilities" was centered around the potential for AI and IoT technologies to revolutionize support for persons with disabilities, particularly in education through initiatives like Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). Audience members praised the clarity and innovation in the presentation and raised questions about the integration of these tools for neuro-diverse learners. Other concerns focused on rural outreach and inclusion of persons with disabilities in tech-based internships.

Audience Feedback

Experience

Based on the audience feedback, the event was described using a variety of positive terms such as "educative," "excellent," "informative," and "inspiring." Many found it eye-opening and impactful, appreciating the discussions around assistive technology and AI applications for special needs education. Participants valued the presentations for their practicality and innovation, noting the event's resourcefulness in exploring specialized devices. Words like "game-changer," "transformative," and "inclusive" were common, reflecting the positive reception and the perceived relevance of the topics to the needs of persons living with special needs and disabilities.

Recommendations

The audience suggested several key topics and speakers for future expos:

1. **Technology and AI:** Bernard Chiira, and Fred Hagga were frequently mentioned, with topics including AI in education, emotional intelligence, autism support, assistive devices, and dyslexia.
2. **Inclusion and Accessibility:** Parental empowerment, vocational rehabilitation, mainstreaming learners with disabilities, and technology innovations for inclusion were recurring themes.
3. **Mental Health and Autism:** Specific attention to emotional and behavioral disorders, autism, and intellectual disabilities were emphasized.
4. **Sports and Universal Designs:** There was interest in expanding topics to sports, modern assistive designs, and AI's role in these areas.

The recommendations indicate a strong focus on practical solutions, accessibility, and AI's transformative potential.

Improvements

Based on the audience feedback, the key areas for improvement include:

1. *Time Management:* Extend the event duration, allocate more time for presentations, Q&A sessions, and networking.
2. *Meals and Catering:* Improve food quality, reduce long queues, and ensure meals are adequate for attendees.
3. *Accommodation and Space:* Larger venue needed to accommodate more participants, with better accessibility for persons with disabilities.
4. *Technology & Power:* Ensure a reliable power backup system and improve internet connectivity.
5. *Communication:* Enhance communication on event logistics, including schedules and invitations, and better facilitate interaction during sessions.

Memorable Moments

1. *Engaging Speakers and Presenters:* The keynote speakers, the MC, moderators and various panelists were praised for their insights, energy, and innovation.
2. *Technology Demonstrations:* The AI innovations and assistive devices, including those for people with disabilities, received high praise for their potential impact.
3. *Real-Life Experiences and Inclusivity:* The testimonies of people living with disabilities were highly valued, bringing authenticity and inspiration to the event.
4. *Organization:* The event's arrangement, security, and hospitality were positively noted, making it well-organized and accommodating for all.

Conclusion

The KISE-Expo on Specialized Learning Materials, Assistive Devices, and Technology was more than an event—it was a testament to the power of inclusivity and innovation. With every device showcased, barrier broken, and connection made, it reminded us that true

progress begins when we empower every individual, regardless of ability. As assistive devices open new possibilities, we are reminded of our collective duty to foster an environment where everyone can thrive. The future is inclusive, and the path forward is one of shared vision, diversity, and relentless dedication.

When talking about resourcing, we start with people... then technology – Gathenya

Parents with children living with disabilities are also limited in many ways.

Assistive devices don't just make things easier, they make things possible for people living with disabilities.

Poverty and disability go hand in hand. It is the most expensive lifestyle.

"We are all potential candidates for experiencing disability and may one day require assistive devices."

We all have a duty to perform in creating an inclusive society.

Assistive devices are breaking down barriers and creating pathways and connections that will drive progress.

Disability is not a person. It is an interaction with a barrier in an environment.

Inclusion is about giving everyone an equal opportunity to participate. Disability inclusion is being specific about it.

Nothing can be achieved without inclusion of people living with disabilities in coming up with solutions.

Diversity is the hallmark of an inclusive society