

TEACHING METHODS AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED LEARNERS IN NGONG
DIVISION - KAJIADO, KENYA

BY

ODERO TERESA ANYANGO
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APPROVAL

This project has been submitted for examination with my approval as the supervisor.

Signature 

MR. MISAGO PAUL
SUPERVISOR

Date 21/08/09.

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ABSTRACT

This study was carried out under the topic teaching methods and academic performance of visually impaired learners in Ngong Division, Kajindo Kenya. The study was guided by three objectives; to find out how really teacher's management and involvement of visually impaired learners influence their academic performance.

Visual impairment means the loss of vision or total blindness. Vision is the first leading factor in academics henceforth some one who cannot see, cannot read or write well. Unless some supportive instruments are provided. The increased schools' enrolment, due to UPE has contributed to a rise in the number of disabled children in primary schools (Randiki 2002).

Being disabled in one way or the other, these learners could to perform quite well without teachers' special help. Thus this study specifically was carried out to investigate the teacher's ability to identify, manage and involve visually impaired learners in regular schools and classrooms in the inclusive education system.

They were believed not able to learn and made decisions to themselves and regarded as less beings (Muchari 1982).

Reviewed literature which showed in East Africa disabled were perceived as incapable of engaging in gainful employment. They were sitting idly on their family farms and watch helplessly (Anderson 1968).

Many people put immediate blames as a child was born with a disability. This was in ancient society and the modern one. Kandiki (2002) says that before the 17th century people with disabilities all over the world were considered socially and physically less capable but Salamanca Declaration 1994 which was formulated by representatives of 92 world conference on special needs education states "every child has a right to education" and every country had to activate declaration. Kenya was one of the signatories.

Nyewe and Green (1999) observe that a number of African countries' education authorities are working towards transforming their education system to an inclusive model. These efforts vary from country to country.

In Kenya the history of SNE is current. Traditionally the education system has been to divide education into regular and special provision. This was characterised by education for some with emphasis on teaching subject matter which was examination oriented and competitive to the disadvantage of children with disabilities and learning difficulties.

Special schools and units were set up on the basis of what has been the cause of learners' problems for example Salvation Army joy town special secondary school for the physically handicapped Rongai primary school. In such schools learners were trained by specialists

1.2 Objectives

The major objective of the study were to investigate the impact of teaching methods on academic performance of visually impaired learners. The minor objectives of this study included;

1. To find out teacher's ability to identify visually impaired learners in regular classrooms.
2. Effects of visual impairment on learner's performance.
3. To assess methods that can be used by teachers in regular classrooms with visual impairments.

1.3 Scope

The study was carried out in 24 selected schools in Ngong division in Kajiado District Rift Valley Province. The study looked at primary teachers in regards to their ability to identify learners with visual impairments, effects of visual impairment to the learner's performance and teaching methods that teachers could adopt to cater for visually impaired children in teaching learning process in regular schools.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions guided the study;

1. Are teachers able to identify children with visual impairment in their classrooms?
2. What effects does visual impairment have on academic performance of the children?
3. How are teachers adjusting their teaching methods to cater for children with visual impairments in regular classrooms?

1.5 Significance of the study

It is hoped that the findings of this study will assist.

In giving a clue to teacher educators, to give a wholistic training to student teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Comparison between teaching methods and performance of visually impaired learners does not seem to have constituted a research problem until the 1990s when some scholars began to venture into the field.

However, the specific question of how teaching methods influence the academic performance of visually impaired learners is minimally addressed which justifies the undertaking of this study to fill the gaps in the related literature.

The following literature will be reviewed considering the teacher's ability to identify visually impaired learners, impact of visual impairment on the learner's academic performance and relevant teaching methods that can be used by teachers to cater for the needs of visually impaired learners.

2.1 Identification of children with visual impairment in classrooms

Identification of children with visual impairment is important for their successful learning. Teachers therefore need to be able to identify children with visual impairment in their classrooms so that they can also appropriate approaches in teaching and use appropriate educational materials and assessment techniques. In this study visual impairment is defined as the impairment that interferes with a student's optimal learning achievement Barry (1976).

According to Mwaura S. (2002) children who are visually impaired is divided into two groups, the first category is the blind meaning children who have lost their sense of vision and only able to perceive

2.2 Impact of visual impairment on children's performance

No visual impairment in learners has a direct negative impact on the academic performance and classroom concentration of learners (Piaget 1994). Psychologically, a normal performing learner should contain all the senses to cope up with the learning situation.

Noriss et al (1957) and Fraibeg et al (1968) (1974) and (1977) made two major studies that made analysis of motor development using the Cattell infant intelligence test. They found out that blind children exhibited comparable motor development in areas like raising the head and chest and using fingers. The differences were found in areas where vision is vital such as grasping scissors, scribbling and putting pegs in holes, reading and writing which are some of the major components of excellence in academics.

A child cannot perform well without concept attainment. Harley (1973) states that the visually handicapped born blind may have restricted concept development because of lack of vision. This is because vision plays an important role in environmental input. What children see, they assimilate and integrate in the brain.

Speech and language development. Lowenfeld (1980) stated that congenitally and totally blind children experience difficulty in learning speech initiation, such children may learn better by having the sounds and by occasional touch. The development of speech may be slower than of sighted children.

However, it is evident that the most common methods used by teachers, while teaching is question and answer, discussion, hence with special difficulty it would be hard for blind children to engage in daily discussions and with their peers and could not sometimes raise questions in class when not understanding in classroom.

the child with visual impairment. When the chalk board is located in front of the classroom, the front row centre is usually a good seat for a child.

But it is ideal to find out where the child feels comfortable and let him / her sit in that place. While writing on the chalk board a teacher should say the notes loud as he / she writes.

Kimani (2002) argues that learning material to be used by learners with low vision will need to be modified according to the needs of the individual learners. The modification may be done to the size and colour of the material. The material that you adopt or modify should include teaching aid which must be appropriate in size for all learners, text books should be in large print for specific learners, desks should be adopted to have tops which can be brought closer to the eyes to reduce the reading distance and fatigue and the use of real objects should be advocated by manipulation.

Since the low vision learners may have difficulties in distance vision his / her reading material should be written separately in a work card to avoid the learners moving to the chalk board to read. However, preparing individualized reading materials would not be easy since the visually impaired are few as compared to normal students' regular classes.

Recorded tapes or talking books can be used to supplement such as hearing touch, taste and smell. This is known as sensory integration. The use of auditory sense supplements the loss of vision. It is important that the learners with low vision is encouraged to use his auditory sense well.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter presented a description of the research design, population, sample, the instruments that were used. The procedure of data collection, presentation and analysis.

3.1 Research design

The research was a cross sectional survey investigating the impact of teaching methods and academic performance of children with visual impairment in regular classrooms. This design enabled the researcher get self report data from subjects that were involved in the study.

3.2 Population sample

The population sample comprised of 60 teachers from 24 selected primary schools with visually impaired children. They were chosen using purposive sampling techniques because it required the researcher to get first hand data from the teachers experiencing the problems of visually impaired children in regular classrooms.

Interview was conducted to a population of 20 respondents and these included head teachers and teachers.

3.3 Instruments

Qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used in the study. They aimed at investigating the impact of teaching methods on academic performance of visually impaired children in regular schools. Specifically the researcher used interviews, questionnaires and observations.

3.5 Procedure of data collection

Letter of introduction was obtained from the institute of open and distance learning of Kampala International University to enable the researcher carry out research.

The researcher took the letters to the respective head teachers to seek permission and authority to conduct research in their schools. The researcher discussed the aim of the intended study with head teachers who in turn introduced and notified the researcher to the classroom teachers.

To fasten and ease data collection, the researcher delivered most of the questionnaires in person thus had chance to solicit acceptance and commitment of teachers to respond to the questions. Some questionnaires were sent to the schools through friends.

The researcher carried out interviews when picking the questionnaires because the interviews were guided by the responses from the teachers.

3.6 Data analysis

The data collected was recorded item by item according to the respondents. In some instances tables of responses were drawn. Data was presented qualitatively and analytically. Data presented in tables was followed by explanations, interpretations and analysis immediately. It was analyzed using percentages.

Table 2: Teachers with identified children with visual impairment

Identification	No. of teachers = 60	Percentage
Identified	56	93
Not identified	4	7

The findings to question two showed that majority of the respondents 93% confirmed having CL /VI in their classrooms while a few 7% did not. This indicates that children with visual impairment exist in regular classrooms.

The respondents were posed a third question requesting them to mention indicators by which they identified CWVI in their classrooms. Various indicators were given as summarized in table 3.

Table 3: Indicators of VI observed by teachers

Indicators	No. of teachers = 60	Percentage
Several headaches	4	4.4
Inability to see and read	5	8.3
Reddish, waterly eyes	10	17
Lack of eye interaction	5	8.3
Poor movement	9	15
Hand writing problems	1	2
Complaints of eyes / vision	4	4.4
Bending on desk	2	3.3
Use of spats / tenses	20	33.3

The findings in table 3 showed that majority of the teachers identified children with visual impairment when they put on spectacles / lenses hence may be they observed them at a later data, because most students use lenses when vision problems are severe. While 4.4% identified them due to severe headaches 83% identified them when they failed to read small point, 17% observed them by the reddish,

Table 5: Problems in C.W.V.I

Response	F = 60	Percentage
Some of them	15	25
All of them, yes	43	72
No	2	3

The findings above show that teachers observed problems / challenges faced by CWVI. 25% reported that some of the identified visually impaired learners are affected academically due to disability while the majority strongly agree that all of their students are affected while only 3% reported that their learners are not affected so they could perform like normal students.

The respondents were further requested to mention the major problems faced by visually impaired children and some of the problems given included; failure to read from a distance, complete blindness leads some to dropout, failure to complete assignments, lack of attention in class, inability to cope with the teacher's speed among others. These response shows that the CWVI are affected by the abnormality in their eyes.

Research question three. The third research question was stated as follows;

How are teachers adjusting their teaching methods to cater for children with visual impairment in regular classrooms? Items 8 – 13 of the questionnaire provided the data that was used to answer this question.

The first question required the respondents to indicate whether they were trained in special needs education. The responses are presented in table 6.

However, all the respondents mentioned child to child method which indicates that it would be the most appropriate since being peers there seem to be immediate and clear understanding of each other. Apparently these findings show that respondents were knowledgeable of various methods by which they could teach children with visual impairment.

The respondents were also asked to mention the educational materials they used in the teaching of CWVI. Their responses are indicated on the table below.

Table 7: Educational materials teachers used in teaching children with visual impairment

Materials stated	No. of teachers = 60	Percentage
Black board	31	52
Concrete objects	5	8
Charts	4	7
Models	3	5
Flash cards	2	3.3
Books	15	25

The findings in the table above indicated that 52% of the respondents mainly used chalk board, 8% concrete objects, 7% used charts and 5% used models to teach CWVI. While 3.3% mentioned the use of flash cards while 25% used books. The findings above implies that teachers are aware of teaching materials that would be helpful to the CWVI.

To further investigate this question, the respondents were also asked to enumerate problems they met in teaching children with visual impairment. The respondents expressed the problems like lack of skills in special needs education, large class enrolments, lack of teaching materials, planning individualised tasks, lack of motivation

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of teaching methods on the academic performance of CWVI in regular classroom. In this chapter the findings are discussed, conclusions and recommendations are given. Finally suggestions for areas of further research are proposed. The findings of the research questions will be discussed separately in three themes. Where applicable related literature has been used to support the arguments of research questions.

5.1 Discussion

Identification of children with visual impairment in regular classes

The researcher was interested to find out if the teachers were able to identify CWVI in their classrooms. Teachers needed to be able to identify CWVI in their classrooms so that they can use appropriate approaches in teaching and use appropriate educational materials and where necessary refer them for treatment. Results in table are shown that teachers are able to identify children with visual impairment in their classrooms.

On the contrary, findings from 7% of the respondents revealed that participants were able to identify only observable signs of visual impairment where some gave a trait like putting on lenses. Respondents consented not being able to determine the degree of visual impairment in individual pupils. The possible reasons that were given was that most of them had not been trained nor sensitized about identification and assessment of CWVI / SEN. Some respondents admitted having been sensitized but they felt they had not quite grasped well these concepts.

It was a need of the researcher to investigate the practical aspects teachers could initiate in their teaching as a result of identifying CWVI. The study shown that when the teachers identified CWVI in their classrooms she / he positioned them to suitable sitting place by this they meant they assigned them to take up the front seats in the class.

The finding is supported by the classroom observation where the researcher noted that all the children considered having a visual problem were positioned on front seats. Literature review indicates that this finding is consistent with the general rule. The CWVI should sit in front of the classroom so that he / she can see the teacher and black board illustrations. However, there is a possibility that the participants could have made such arrangements knowing that such children were the focus on the researcher's attention. More over the earlier findings showed that the teachers were not able to determine the degree of visual impairment of their pupils. This finding seems to suggest that some pupils could have eluded the teachers' notice thus assigned inappropriate seats where they were uncomfortable with their vision and uninvolved in the teaching learning process.

The findings showed that teachers realised the most effective teaching methods that management involve CWVI. They talked of methods like use of concrete objects in teaching yet it was noted that most of the teachers did not use those objects. However findings show that amongst the approaches, chalk and talk and question and answer ranked highest. On the issue of paying close attention to children with visual impairment the findings through observation revealed that some teachers over protected them implying that teachers concentrated on the impairment rather than on the abilities /potentials of children under study.

he was striving to read and lost the vision completely. As well the other problem mentioned by teachers of difficulty in movement was realised at this point when the child was forced to do what he could to do.

Teachers' adjustment of teaching methods to cater for CWVI

Omajor – Loican (1998) suggests that for successful inclusion of children with special educational needs in regular schools and classrooms. It is necessary to have well qualified SNE teacher to manage classes that have children with special needs. In this study it was found that 92% making majority of the teachers in surveyed schools had not been trained in teaching children with special needs. The validity of the finding is supported by Munyi (1983) who observed that Kenya lack teachers trained in special needs education due to the fact that teacher training institutions traditionally had no significant provisions for special needs on their training programmes.

As far as actual management and involvement of CWVI in teaching – learning process the teachers indicated that they used various methods. Among the methods teachers found that effective in teaching CWVI, child to child ranked highest, integrating this finding with observations made in the pilot study, the researcher noted that while the teachers agreed theoretically that they used alternative methods in teaching. In practice they used is method at a hire. The findings therefore indicate that the teachers are ill-equipped to support the learning process of visually impaired children.

Further still, in order to manage and involve CWVI in the teaching – learning process some teachers indicated that they provided remedial teaching to these pupils. On the whole 10 teachers interviewed 07 teachers agreed that they had limited time to attend to individual children's needs because they handle large number of students and the visually impaired are only a few. Again the teachers argued of

Another problem teachers reported was lack of teaching materials in schools that would facilitate the teaching and learning process of CWVI. While it is a fact that equipment and educational materials are in short supply in schools, the researcher observed that most teachers lacked self confidence. They thought that they could not provide materials themselves. They expected these materials to be provided.

Concerning planning and implementing individualized classroom tasks, teachers said as observed earlier that they found it problematic since the CWVI are a negligible number, compared to the sighted children in their classrooms.

However, the respondents put forward a number of suggestions for the improvement of teaching – learning process of CWVI in regular classrooms, amidst the above difficulties. Amongst the possible solutions mentioned the teachers proposed workshops, including SNE in the curriculum, provision of teaching materials, reduce teacher pupil ratio, need for provision of special classes in some schools, with children observed however that the question of which system or programme is better for educating blind and low sighted children has been asked again and again.

5.2 Conclusions

Having analyzed the data the following conclusions were arrived at; Teachers can identify visually impaired children but they seem not able to determine the degree of their impairment.

Most primary school teachers in Ngong division have not been trained in the skills of teaching children with disabilities hence teachers seem to lack confidence and knowledge in teaching – learning process of CWVI.

To improve and provide education to learners with Special Education Needs there is need to encourage learning of persons with learning needs and other disabilities.

5.4 Areas for further research

The following areas of research have been revealed by this study:

Management and participation of children with other disabilities and learning needs inclusive setting.

Attitudes of learners with learning disabilities towards inclusive education and its influence on their participation in regular classrooms.

Teaches socio-demographic factors and its influence on management and participation of children with other learning needs and disabilities in regular classrooms.

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SECTION B

(a). What effects does visual impairment have on academic performance of visually impaired learners?

6. Are students with visual problems finding problems in their academic performance?

Some

Yes all of them

7. Which problems do they normally face?

.....
.....
.....

SECTION C

(c) How do the teachers adjust their teaching methods to cater for visually impaired learners?

8. Are you trained in teaching children with special needs?

Yes

No

9. How do you manage children with visual problems in the teaching learning process?

.....
.....
.....

10. Which teaching method did you find most effective in teaching children with visual impairment?

Role play

Story telling

Demonstration

Chalk and talk

Child to child

Trial and error

Story telling

APPENDIX B: TIME FRAME

ACTIVITY	PERIOD
Proposal writing	January 2009
Plot study	February / March 2009
Consultation	March 2009
Presentation of proposal	April 2009
Data collection and analysis	May – June 2009
Writing report	July 2009
Submission and report	August 2009