

EVALUATIVE STUDY ON HURDELS OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN AL-MUKTOUM SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Visual impairment is defined as the limitation of actions and functions of visual system. Visual impairment referred to both blindness and low vision. A qualitative study was conducted to examine the barriers to of visually impaired students, teachers. The purpose of the study was to create awareness and motivation in teachers of the schools, parents and community and the intellectual development of visually impaired children. The objectives of the study were to find out problems of visually impaired students. Barriers related to students in curriculum, confidence, in use of technology or lack of cooperation of parents or teachers. Researchers limited the population to one school. Total population was 200 students and 15 teachers. 20 students, 8 teachers and a head of institute were selected as the sample of the study. Data were collected by personal visits of school by conducting semi-structured interviews from students and head of the institute and questionnaires from the teachers. Random sampling Technique was used. Data were analyzed through percentage. Students with visual impairment are encountering great barriers. Majority of the students confirmed that they face hurdles in present curriculum, exams there are limited co-curricular activities. They face transport problem, scholarships, and parents usually don't cooperate with the teachers. There is lack of awareness among the society. There may be changing in the curriculum and separate papers. Students may be provided by the

all modes of taking exams. Scholarships, transport may be provided to the students. Parents may communicate with teachers.

Key words: *Visually impairment, hurdles, students, teachers, Braille, technology, barrier curriculum*

1.INTRODUCTION

“Impairment is defined as “any loss or abnormality in an anatomical structure or a physiological or psychological function.” Visual impairment is defined as the limitation of actions and functions of the visual system. Low visual acuity means vision between 20/70 and 20/400 with the best possible correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Blindness is defined as a visual acuity worse than 20/400 with the best possible correction, or a visual field of 10 degrees or less. Legal blindness in the US means visual acuity of 20/200 or worse with the best possible correction, or a visual field of 20 degrees or less. Visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/400 (inclusive) is considered moderate visual impairment or low vision (Mandal, 2012) Visual impairment is a term that is used to describe all problems involving effective use of the human eye. The World Health Organization (2012) estimated that 19 million children are visually-impaired worldwide. Visual impairments referred to both blindness and low vision. Visual impairment can be defined legally and educationally. Educationally, a student with low vision is the one who has some vision, and 5 therefore can read enlarged prints. On the other side, an educationally blind child is the one with very limited vision and thus relies on reading and writing by using the Braille system or by using audio tapes (& Scruggs, 2010). Education provides

opportunity for all children with and without disability they should be educated together. Disabled children have basic right to receive education in main stream school (Govt of Pakistan, 2009). If visual impairment occurs during early childhood, cognitive and language development is impaired but if the loss of vision is after five years, below which visual memories cannot be retained, then there will be some visual memories. This visual memory will be helpful in the learning process through construction and formation of images, and concepts later by relating the new concept and experience acquired earlier in the life (Webster, 1998). Parents and peers are therefore important partner in provision of information about the learning of students with visual impairments. This is because parents know the needs and interest of their children better than other people. On top of that they know much about their children’s learning problems and therefore can suggest better educational intervention (Hastings & Johnson, 2001). No single teacher can have all the skills necessary to meet student’s diverse needs in classroom (Ipsky & Gartner, 1997).

1.1 Statement of problem

There are many hurdles faced by students like less motivation and cooperation of teachers and parents, they face problem related to curriculum, transport, technology.

Parents have less awareness and there are some communication gap between parents and teachers of the students. The purpose of this study is to create the awareness and motivation in teachers of school, parents and community and intellectual development of the visually impaired children. This study will high light the problems and hurdles faced by the students in society, school, from teachers.

1.2 Objectives of study

Objectives of the study were:

1. Find out the problems faced by the visually impaired students.
2. Find out problems of visually impaired students in the use of information technology.
3. Find out problems faced by students related to with school curriculum

1.3 Research questions

1. What are the problems of visually impaired students in the use of information technology?
2. What are the problems related to school curriculum that students have to face?
3. To what extent parents take interest in education of visually impaired children

1.4 Significance of the study

Education is the basic right of every child without any discrimination. This study will help the teachers to collaborate with the visual impaired students. This study will help teachers to identify the hurdles they face during teaching. The study will benefit the students in every way; the Students will

come to know about their problems. And this study will give awareness to parents and society. Parents will come to know that visually impaired children are also have right to get education. Teachers will try to engage with students more and will understand their problem and solve them. In our country there is lack of funds for the special children and education for visually impaired children is not affordable for all children. This study will help the researcher in future to take help for further research. This research will help to give the awareness to the people about the need of education for visually impaired students.

2.LITERATURE REVIEW

"Visual impairment including blindness" means impairment in vision that, even With correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. This term Include both partial sight and blindness. This impairment refers to abnormality of The eyes, the optic nerve or the visual center for the brain resulting in decreased Visual acuity.

2.1 Types of visual impairment

According to the CDC and the World Health Organization the classification of visual acuity and impairment includes .Low visual acuity means vision between 20/70 and 20/400 with best possible correction or a visual field of 20 degree or less. Blindness is defined as visual acuity worse than 20/400 with best possible correction or a visual field of 10 degree or less. Legal blindness means visual acuity of 20/200 or visual field of 20 degree.

2.3 Hurdles in Use of technology

Students with visual impairments have unique educational needs which are most effectively met using a team approach of professionals, parents and students. In order to meet their unique needs, students must have specialized services, books and instructional materials in appropriate media (including Braille), as well as specialized equipment and technology so they can have equal access to the core and specialized curricula, and to enable them to most effectively compete with their peers in school and ultimately in society. Provision of insufficient institutional materials like Braille papers, Braille text books to special units to suit the special learning. Sometime students don't have enough instruments because they are expensive and some teacher are not well trained to use those equipment's (Lieberman & Wilson, 2001)

2.4 Physical needs

Many students with disability have mobility limitations. . Cost of special transport is a difficulty. Parent availability to transport students is not always possible, particularly where both parents work. Some education providers say transport. Schools are not within the reach. In rural areas, transport is still a big obstacle.

2.5 Inferiority complex

Blind kids have to either feel like a burden or figure out a way to get around on their own. They think they do not fit in the society like other able bodied children do. This is visible in self pity, loss of self esteem and non- reporting of human rights violations against them. The situation is made worse by the service providers. (L.

Taylor, 2000) Psychologically and socially, people who are more sedentary tend to have negative effect, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, low confidence, and poor self-efficacy (Morgan, 1994).

2.6 Problem related to Curriculum

It is important to remember that education goals for students with visual impairments are essentially the same as those for all students. Students need specific explanation, demonstration, physical guidance, and feedback regarding skill or activity performance (Lieberman & Cowart, 1996). These students are often at a disadvantage in science because of the ubiquity of important graphical information that is generally not available in accessible formats. It is not possible for students to do all the topics such as practical geometry (Bernhard, 2007) A solution to removing this barrier would be to change teaching styles from a more teacher-directed (i.e., command style) to a more student-centered teaching style (i.e., problem solving, cooperative learning, and guided discovery (Panjabi, 1995). This is one of the largest areas of difficulty for education providers and their students. There are areas where not enough has been done or curriculum needs and curriculum adaptation is too little understood. A separate problem is when courses for qualification (vocational, pre-employment or academic) contain particular segments which a student with a disability cannot complete or cannot access (A. Ricco Bono, 2007)

2.7 Relationship of teachers and parents of students

Teachers cooperate with the students and parents of the students so that both can overcome the barrier and solve the problems of the students. Teachers tell about the progress and the weak point of the students to the parents so that they can focus on it. Parents understand the problems and share the difficulties of the students with their perspective teachers. Persons with disabilities can make their life better through innovations taking place in technology. Furthermore, now the people with disabilities can have same livelihood as that of persons without any disability which is due to digitalization of a number of public services such as education, library, banking etc. They can live a self-governing life and achieve social acceptability (Williamson, 2001). Gill (2009) conducted a case study bearing results that students with visual impairment were encountering a number of difficulties in education including unavailability of materials.

2.8 Learning problems faced by students with visual impairments

Visual impairment can be defined legally and educationally. Legal definition describes visual impairment by considering the visual acuity of a person. It describes a blind person as the one having visual acuity of 20/200 or less than that, even by using optical devices. This means that, a person with blindness can see an object at 20 feet whereas a sighted person can see at 200 feet. A legal definition considers a person with low vision as having visual acuity of 20/70 meaning that, a person with low vision can

see an object at 20 feet whereas a person with normal vision can see at 70 feet (Spungin, 2002). Before imposing any teaching to a student with visual impairment it is important that a teacher knows how the loss in vision influence the learning process (Sacks & Silberman, 1998). Visual information is crucial in helping children observe and interpret what happens in the environment. It is also an important prerequisite for conceptual development in a student's learning. Malformation and destruction of this part of the body, brings about a reduced amount of sensory data to the learner, leading to deficit or delay in various skills learned through watching and imitation from others. This impacts language development, reasoning skills, problem solving abilities and abstract thinking. This finally causes great impact on the individual's learning and performance, because a student cannot observe and use visual information to interpret various learning situations happening in the environment (Bishop, 1996; Fraser & Maguvhe, 2008; Webster & Roe, 1998). The cognitive abilities of learners with visual impairments will vary independent of their visual impairments. Learners with visual impairments may reach developmental milestones at different rates than other learners due to their lack of sensory input and restricted interactions with the environment. This contributes to their incomplete concept development. This can later affect their ability to infer, comprehend, predict, and create during learning activities (Bardin & Lewis, 2008). Learners with visual impairments may lack concepts such as positioning the body;

object characteristics (short, long); time; spatial awareness; actions (throw); quantity; environmental awareness; and certain symbols (for example, green means go) (Marilyn, 2008). As a result of this, teachers should make their lessons as concrete as possible.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This is descriptive type of study for which the data were collected through questionnaires and interviews. Simple random technique was used. The populations of study were consisted of 200 visually impaired students and 15 teachers and the head of institute. Simple random sampling technique was used and 20 out of total population of school students were taken as a sample for this research. 8 teachers and head of institute were selected. Questionnaires were developed to find out the problems faced by teachers and Semi-

structured Interviews were conducted for students and head of the institute. There were different questions in questionnaires which were developed to find out the hurdles of visually impaired students and teachers. Questions were related to the barrier faced by students with visual impairment in academics, orientation and mobility transport, technology interaction with teachers, exams, provision of material in brail and other technology. Instruments were developed by the researchers after reviewing the related literature. The data were collected by researchers by personal visits of the school by conducting interviews from students and head of institute and questionnaire for teachers. Researcher took permission for the interviews of the students. Data collected through interviews were analyzed by the thematic analysis. Frequencies of responses of different items under questions were obtained. The data present in percentage.

3.1 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Data analysis through percentage

Table 4.1: Every child regardless of disabilities has the right to be educated.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	25%	75%

Table 4.1 shows that 75 of participant responded that every child has right to be educated. Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.

Table where 4.2: It is difficult to teach some subjects to students.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	87%	12%

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	75%	25%

Table 4.2 depicts that 75% of participant responded that it is difficult to teach some subjects to students. Teachers said that math is the subject which is not easy to teach students. Students are unable to understand it.

Table 4.3: Teachers are interested to support students in class.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	37%	62%

Table 4.3 demonstrate that 62.5% of the participant responded that they are interested to support students in class because they thought that they are very intelligent students. They have sharp memory. They need same education that of the normal children gaining.

Table 4.4: Teachers feel comfortable to teach visually impaired students.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	63%	37%

Table 4.4 identify that 62.5% of the participant responded that they are comfortable to teach students. If the teachers are teaching by taking interest then there will be more learning of the students.

Table 4.5: Students with visually impairment are better in class.

Table 4.5 depict that 87.5% of the participant responded that students are better in class. They obtained good marks. They are good in class participation and other activities.

Table 4.6: Teachers encourage visually impaired students to participate in co-curricular activities.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	37.5%	62.5%

Table 4.6 confirm that 62.5% of the participant responded that they encourage students to participate in curricular activities. Students have music teacher in their school for music class. Students participate actively in extra activities.

Table 4.7: Teachers communicate openly with parents and concerned bodies about the progress of students.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree
0	0	0	75%	25%

Table 4.7 Reveal that 75% of the participant responded that they communicate openly with parents and concerned bodies about the progress of students. It is very important for parents get in touch with school to know about the progress of their child.

4., FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Summary

This study is expected highly significant as it was conducted to find out the hurdles of visually impaired students. The study was delimited to the al Makhtoom School in Islamabad. Population size was 200 students and 15 teachers. 20 students, 8 teachers and a head of institute were selected as the sample of the study. The random sampling technique was used to select the students and teachers. Percentage and thematic content were used for the analysis of study. Closed ended questionnaires were developed for teacher and interviews were developed for students and the head of institute that was related to the hurdles of visually impaired students.

4.2 Findings

75% of the teachers considered it difficult to teach some subjects to students. Teachers said that math is the subject which is not easy to teach students. Students are unable to understand it. 62.5% of the teachers are interested to support students in class because they thought that they are very intelligent students. They have sharp memory. They need same education that of the normal children gaining. 62.5% of the teachers agreed that they encourage students to participate in co curricular activities. Students have music teacher in their school for music class. Students participate actively in extra activities. 75% of the teachers agreed that they can communicate openly with parents and concerned bodies about the progress of students. It is very important for parents get in touch with school to know about the progress of their child. 75% of the teachers agreed that present curriculum is

not suitable for students. Visually impaired students learn the curriculum similar to all other students. There must be some changes in it. Curriculum needs to be revised. 50% of teachers agreed that students become comfortable while doing activities in groups likewise rest of the participant responded that students don't feel comfortable while doing activities in groups..

4.3 Conclusion

In nut shell, the students with visual impairment are encountering great barriers in education. Students and teachers have problem with the present curriculum. Students also suffer because of lack of communication between parents and the teachers. There is transport issue for the visually impaired students. There are limited co-curricular activities in the school. Students are not awarded by any scholarships in the school.

4.4 Recommendation

Present curriculum is not suitable for visually impaired students. Some topics of mathematics are not easy to solve by these students so there may be changes in curriculum to make it easy for the visually impaired students. The students with visual impairment are only allowed to take exams in only one way by the writers but it is not possible for the students to tell them everything to solve. So there may be four modes to take the exams through audio recording, Braille, writer and computer. Papers for the visually impaired students are same as the other students and that is unfair because visually impaired students are unable to solve some question like

mathematics. There might be separate papers for the visually impaired students. There are no scholarships for the outstanding students or needy students. Scholarships may be awarded to deserving and outstanding students with visual impairment to help and motivate them.

Transport is the basic need for the students and there is deficiency of transport staff that can help them while entering in bus and to manage it. Transport and staff facility may be provided to all students with disabilities and helper in the busses also provided to the school so that they can help the students while traveling. There are less sports facilities in the school and there are no sports or games for female in the school. Visually impaired students may be provided with opportunities of taking part in sports and games both for male and female. Co-curricular activities might be arranged in school to make the students confident and active. Study trips might be arranged to refresh the students. It is important to help them develop recreational activities which they can enjoy.

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Appendix I

TOPIC: AN EVALUATIVE STUDY ON HURDLES OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED STUDENTS IN FEDERAL AREA

Questions for visually impaired students

Which subject is difficult for you and why?

You have proper technology and instruments for learning?

Are you provided with reading material in Braille?

Do you have proper transport in your school?

Do you participate in co-curricular activities?

Are you provided with opportunities of taking part in sports and games?

Are you given any training for personal grooming in school?

Do your teachers cooperate with you?

Do you have good interaction with your teachers?

Are computer lab assistants helpful to you?

Do you have proper facilities in the hostel?

Are you being awarded any scholarship?

Professional writers are provided to you for exams?

Do you find any problems while interacting with your sighted peers and teachers?

Appendix II

Questionnaires for teachers

Respected teachers,

We are students of BS (Education) in International Islamic University Islamabad. We are doing research on hurdles of visually impaired students. It is to ensure you that your reviews will kept entirely confidential and data will be used only for research purpose. To what extent do you agree with the statements below? Please rate the appropriate answer using the response scale given below:

1. Strongly disagree (SD) 1. Disagree (D) 3. undecided (U) 4. Agree (A) 5. Strongly agree(SA)

	Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
1	Every child regardless of disabilities had the right to be educated.					
2	It is difficult to teach some subjects to visually impaired students.					
3	Teachers are interested to support visually impaired students in class.					
4	Teachers feel comfortable to teach visually impaired students.					
5	Students with visually impairment are better in class					
6	Teachers encourage students with visually impairment to participate in co-curricular activities.					
7	Teachers communicate openly with parents and concerned bodies about the progress of visually impaired students.					

8	Present curriculum is suitable for visually impaired students.					
9	Students become comfortable while doing activities in group.					
10	School administration is cooperative to solve the problems of visually impaired students.					
11	Teachers give available material to visually impaired students to make them perform better.					
12	Teachers feel difficulty by using technology for the students.					
13	Special training is provided to teachers to teach visually impaired students					