

**FACTORS AFFECTING THE PERFORMANCE OF LEARNERS WITH  
LOW VISION IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTING IN CHUKA DIVISION  
MERU-SOUTH DISTRICT-KENYA**

**BY**

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### DECLARATION

I do declare that this is my original work and has never been presented to any University or institution of higher learning for any award

Signed:

.....

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Date .....20/12/2011.....

### APPROVAL

Signed :

.....

**Mujuni Evarist** (Supervisor)

816

Date .....

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this work to my beloved husband Mr. Mtemi and children Diana, Derrick and Brandon.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to various people and institutions who supported and assisted me during this study in one way or another.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study was carried out to find out factors affecting the education of children with low vision in the Chuka division of Meru South district.

The researcher was interested in finding out the views of different people towards the education of children with low vision in the area, therefore qualitative approach was employed to collect data.

The researcher chose Head teachers, teachers, parents and visually impaired children as sample population because through them relevant and appropriate information would be obtained.

The researcher also used interview and questionnaire as research instruments. Interview guides were used to collect data from parents and d children with low vision because it enabled the researcher to make clarifications on some views given and make possible adjustments depending on their moods and needs. Head teachers and teachers were given questionnaires because they were assumed literate enough to handle these instruments

The findings pointed out that although the children and their parents have positive attitudes towards their education although the poor performance of low vision children was greatly attributed to poor parental participation and poor attitude of teachers and administration. There are a number of challenges affecting the education of low vision children in the division and hopefully beyond.

These include:

- Poor social economic status of their families
- Poor academic performance
- Labeling .
- Poor/bad peer groupings
- Ancient cultural beliefs
- Lack of self motivation and zeal in learning
- Poor teacher-pupil relationship



The researcher therefore recommended that:

- Organization of meetings for parents and teachers to interact.
- Guiding and counseling low vision children by qualified personnel.
- The community to be sensitized on the value of low vision children.
- Possible ways of eradicating poverty in families especially those with visually impaired children.

## CHAPTR ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background:**

According to Ngaroga (2001), education is a process that enables one to acquire and develop desired knowledge, skills and attitudes. It is a field of study that deals with how to teach and train children, youth and adults. Ngaroga identifies the three different types of education which Kenyans have experienced as informal, non-formal and formal education.

Formal education is the current type that is identified and recognized by the government of Kenya. It is structured by means of syllabus, which have content, methods and time table. Formal education takes place in established institutions and certificates are awarded on completion basis. All children world over are entitled to this particular form of education.

In 1990, at Jomintien, Thailand, the world community pledged to ensure the right to education for all regardless of individual differences and abilities. This world declaration of education for all in article 1:1 states that; “Every child, youth and adult shall b able to benefit”. Following this world declaration, the Kenyan government declared universal primary education, adult education and education for persons with disabilities. The purpose of all these was to eliminate the high rate of illiteracy in the country. The marginalized persons like the visually impaired child were also given opportunity to pursue education to the highest level depending on their ability and capability.

The focus of this study was majorly centered on the education of visually impaired child. A child according to the constitution of the republic of Kenya (1964) refers to: Any person below eighteen years of age. It has been that girls at this age are always full of potential and eager to develop skills and knowledge through observation and instructions. A visually impaired person on the other hand is an individual who has lost sight either mild or profound due to either genetic or environmental factors.

Informal education as used in the early days was used to empower persons with skills and knowledge for house wife activities. Today this kind of education exists but its importance has been forsaken due to modernity which emphasizes formal education. Therefore education in many communities is now based on formal education which is not valued in case of the visually impaired

Children. It is considered as wastage of resources and time to educate the handicapped.

Affirmative action on children with disabilities has been put in place in order to promote this group of marginalized persons. Slogans such as “Education for all”, “To educate the handicapped is to educate the whole world” among others have been used to create awareness people in communities on the benefits of educating but whether these children benefit much is yet to be seen on the ground.

According to the researchers own personal experience in this division which is the area of study, there is a big number of visually challenged children dropping out of schools despite the efforts made by the government and other social organizations to promote the education of disabled children in the country. The researcher’s attention therefore has been drawn to carry out an investigation to find out the factors affecting the performance of children with low vision not only in this area but the whole country and world over.

### **Statement of the problem**

Despite the efforts of the government and the world to equalize educational opportunities to all children regardless of their gender, abilities and individual differences, there is a large number of visually impaired children not in schools and some dropping out at lower classes and those in schools have the least performance compared to their sighted counterparts. It is for this reason therefore that the researcher attempts to find out the factors affecting the performance low vision children I this area.

### **Purpose of the study**

This study was aimed at finding out specifically what factors affect the education and performance of low vision children and to suggest possible remedies to uplift their education and life for them to live as independent and productive citizens.

## **Objectives of the study**

The objectives of the study were to:

- Find out learning challenges faced by children with low vision
- Find out the role parents, teachers and administrators play to improve the performance of learners with low vision.
- To find out the attitudes of parents and teachers towards education of children with low vision.
- To suggest possible remedies for improving the performance of low vision children.

## **Research question**

- What challenges do children with visual [impairment experience in schools?
- What role do parents, teachers, administrators and peers play improving the performance of visually impaired learners?
- What strategies can be put in place to address the factors affecting the performance of children with low vision?
- What should be done to improve the performance of blind children in schools?

## **Scope of the study**

The study was carried out in Chuka division, Meru south district of Kenya. It was limited to only primary schools and only three schools were chosen to cover this study. One of these schools has a special unit while rest of the two schools are regular schools. The researcher identified three head teachers, six teachers, three parents and six children with low vision as respondents of the study.

The study addressed the factors affecting the performance of low vision children in the area and centered on the attitudes visually challenged learners and the views of their teachers and parents towards their education and other factors that affect the education of the low vision children while at school-learning environment.

## **Significance of the study**

It is the researcher's hope that the findings of the study will:

- Improve the attitudes of the visually challenged learners and their parents about their education.
- Create awareness about the need to educate the children with low vision in the division and the country as a whole.
- Shade light to policy makers and implementers the educational needs of children with low vision such that attempts can be made to implement and enforce the laws that have been put in place but have rather remained to be seen in books and not on the ground
- .Help the researcher as a teacher to be in better position to help a visually challenged child.
- Be used as a springboard for further research in future to uplift the wellbeing of low vision children and all the disabled in their struggle for equal opportunities and dignity.

## **Limitations**

The researcher encountered the following limitations among others:

- The time scheduled for this study was limited. This time also coincided with the time set by the district for athletics and theatre act competitions. It was therefore hard for the researcher to get teachers and children since they were out for these activities. The researcher was therefore made to visit the schools several times.
- Parents who were respondents expected to be paid back in exchange of their answers. They were therefore rigid in giving their responses.
- The study was too expensive for the researcher in terms of transport, stationery, typing and binding among others.
- It was tiresome for the researcher because he had to carry out the study and at the same time continue with the work programme and teaching practice.

## **Delimitations**

- The knowledge of the respondents' mother language enabled the researcher to collect data with much ease.
- The manageable study sample enabled the researcher to collect data easily with in short time given.
- Costs were lowered because of the distance from the researcher's working place to the sampled schools. There was therefore no need for accommodation expenditure as the researcher gathered information.
- Seeking help from people of good will also enabled the researcher to get such services as typing and binding at a subsidized cost.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this chapter, the researcher presents the ideas of other writers who have discussed issues related to the education of children with visual impairment. Their views have been found to be relevant to the study and views may be of much help in understanding issues related to education of these children.

The researcher gathered information under three categories based on the study objectives;

- Role of school administrators, teachers and parents
- Attitudes of parents, teachers and school administrators
- Ways of improving the performance of children with visual impairment

**The role of school administrators, teachers and parents in the performance of children with low vision.**

All children have the right to basic needs of life including quality education. This is spelt out by the Children's Statute (196), which gives the right to every child to acquire education. Section 6, Sub-section 2 states that; "A child has a right to be educated and guided, given all basic needs by his/her parents, guardians or custodians". The above section reveals that parents, guardians and custodians have a big role to play in the education of the children under their care regardless of their varying abilities.

Mazzin (1996) observes that; "A child comes to have first lessons of citizenship on the mother's knee and father's kiss". He notes that the home has an important influence on the behavior, character, conduct, personality and performance of its members not only in academics but all other

areas of life. It is however unfortunate that children with low vision are given little attention even from their families and this leaves a lot to be desired in their performing activities of daily life.

Ojuri (1995) states that; "Teachers and parents have a tendency of not fully involving children with visual impairments in school and home activities and this has led them to remain shy and not actively participating in social activities".

Ojuri further argues that teachers and parents view children with low vision with pity and perceive them as hopeless and useless. There is therefore need for these custodians of children to actively involve them in activities useful for their incidental learning which is paramount for their effective learning and performance. He also emphasizes active involvement of children with low vision in the school and home activities to help them acquire skills that would make them self-reliant.

Descent (1985) noted that parents have abandoned and left children with visual impairment to teachers despite the crucial role they ought to play in the learning process of their children. He argues that parents of children with low vision should endeavor to motivate and ensure their parental responsibilities are adhered to rather than shifting their role to teachers. It should be noted that professional services have never been free. Therefore parents should endeavor that teachers are well facilitated for them to put in more effort to deliver service to learners and improve the performance of all children including those with low vision.

Kenwood (1997) states that parents have a very important role in the successful integration and performance of children with low vision. The writer encourages teachers to consider how to create effective interaction with parents. Schools should design programs to have minimum frequency of contact between teachers and parents to include guiding and counseling of both the children and parents and for parents to be reminded of the role they have in the learning of their children.



Waltendela (1972) concludes his research on parents contribution to the performance of children with low vision by noting that; “The quality content of a parent is equal to that of a trained professional”. Accordingly, parents can make an invaluable contribution to the assessment process given the extensive and intensive knowledge and experience of their children’s development and performance right from the birth of the child onwards.

Daniel Okot (2002) states that; “Being a parent is complex and demanding responsibility. It is full of challenges yet rewarding”. He further makes suggestions to aid and improve the performance of pupils with low vision as;

- ❖ Joint decision making with all other stakeholders
- ❖ Contributing financially towards necessary assistance needed by these children.
- ❖ Guiding and counseling children with low vision to accept themselves and making everybody in the child’s environment to be able and willing to help these children

Okot further argues that the role of teachers is to see to it that all learners benefit from the available resources without segregation. This is in view of the fact that most teachers in inclusive classes direct their focus towards the sighted learners than those with learning challenges.

Ndurumo (1993) notes that; “Children with low vision are typically limited with potentials to read and write”. This therefore calls for the need to modify the general school curriculum to focus on the learning needs of all children without segregation.

Kakkar (1997) highlights three areas to benefit children with low vision to enable them perform better in the mainstream education setting. These include among others;

- Having a clearly stated policy, understood and accepted by all the stakeholders
- Flexible curriculum that allows additions adaptations to aspects that pertain to children with low vision.
- The state and parents providing quality materials to help in teachers' training and in the learning process.

It should be noted that for effective learning of all children including those with low vision, teaching/learning materials have to be in place. Government should therefore endeavor to provide materials, equipment, trained teachers and other supportive facilities.

#### **Attitudes of school administrators, teachers and parents towards the education of children with low vision**

The term 'attitude' is a common word, which is widely used, in everyday life to refer to feelings that develop from experiences with others and the environment. The attitudes influence the way people behave towards, feel about others. For example when the word is being referred to as having a negative or positive attitude.

Different researchers have offered a variety of definitions of attitude. According to Allport (1954) states an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience. From encyclopedia, an attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs around an object or situation predisposing one to respond in some preferential manner. According to Triandis (1971) attitude refers to one idea, knowledge or perceptions of a given objects.

Oketch (1992) notes that; “People exhibit negative attitude towards children with disabilities”. Negative attitude towards children with low vision have been manifested through neglect, isolation and denial of rights and certain basic needs of life.

As observed by Ingstand (2005), negative attitudes can also influence parents’ practices and approach to children with disabilities in a particular way that the would be custodians of these children turn against them in terms of denying them their rights.

Denshen (1995) notes with concern that due to traditional practices and beliefs, parents and teachers may refuse to adjust to the needs of the children with disabilities. He is of the view that for effective learning of these children, negative attitudes need to be changed in order for them to benefit from the school learning environment.

Horn (1995) observes that parents and teachers discriminate against and punish disabled children, are neglected and not attended to both at school and home. Some children wuth low vision are not totally taken to school but are instead taken to their grandparents in villages where they limited or no chance of accessing schools.

Ebell (1997) also states that attitudes constitute one aspect of an individual or society personality in dealing with others be it individuals or groups people.

Attitude is also the sum of man’s inclinations, ideas and logical, cultural and social development people society has failed to recognize. The values and capabilities of children with low vision have been affected by negative attitde towards them which has left them abandoned and neglected. In developing countries parents give disabled children to their grandparents to bring them up because od stigmatization that is evident among people in society.

Lukol (1993) puts it that teachers and parents believe that children with visual impairment cannot learn at the pace and level of the sighted peers.

Oketch (1994) describes the role of parents and teachers at home. Accordingly, it is the parents who should expose children with low vision to the world. They should expose these children to environmental experiences, orientation, mobility and facilitation in the acquisition of life adjustment skills as well as developing language to enable them to learn. This is however a role that has been neglected by most parents but instead projected to teachers who are also not well facilitated to play it effectively.

Wendy (1999) agrees with the view that parents of children with low vision often find themselves confused by society. They believe that they have no ability and therefore should not take part in activities like any other members of society. This is a contributing factor to the low performance of these children in all aspects of life.

President Museveni (1993) while opening the first International East African Disabled Peoples' Leadership seminar quoted a Kenyan Professor Mzee Rashid who commented that; "If you deny a person education, then you have denied him everything after, on the basis that he/she is not educated". The President was fighting against the denial of education to the disabled children as a result of negative attitude society has towards these persons.

Seng (1992) emphasizes that parents and teachers of children with low vision often treat them as "second class". Most parents do not take these children to school and for the few who get chance to go to school have their school dues not paid in time or not paid at all in pretext that they have other children to cater for. Teachers also complain that they have many sighted children to attend to forgetting that the visually impaired have the right to be engaged while teaching and be called

upon to participate in all class/school activities. The inference is that parents and teachers think that these children benefit less from education and therefore prefer to help those who will academically prosper to the “blind” whom they perceive as wasted resources.

Kizito (1994) observes that in all societies the handicapped have the same social needs as other ordinary children. Above all, they need love, acceptance and respect. Children with low vision should be allowed opportunities to develop and use their bodies and minds to their fullest ability. They need to be welcomed and appreciated by their families and community and should also be allowed to play and explore their environment. It is unfortunate that the handicapped are not given full opportunities they deserve by the public. Often society notes only the wrongs about the disabled than appreciating the little things they manage to do.

#### **Ways of improving the performance of children with low vision**

Mark (1990) states that; “Parental involvement is an important element in socialization process”. Parents who support their children make them socially rich which allows them chance to develop positive interactions. Social interaction helps positive learning and performance. Children with low vision given free interaction with their sighted peers may be helped to perform better.

Mwangi (1985) noted that to improve the performance of learners with low vision, parents have to team up with teachers in partnership. A program should be designed to enable teachers and parents cooperate and facilitate the learning process by addressing the needs and rights of their children both at home and school. This is in agreement with Josh (1989) who asserts that; “Parents are the very foundation on which rests the fruitfulness of the training imparted to children in our institutions that aims at higher performance of children with low vision”.

Mittler and Moconadine (1983) considers the best way to improve the performance of children with low vision as being through developing positive relationship between their teachers and parents in which teachers should be viewed as being experts and parents as facilitators. Positive relationship between teachers and parents may lead to a partnership which involves sharing of expertise and control in order to provide optimum performance of children.

Amwen S.S (1995) argues that children with low vision and their peers as well as their teachers must ensure that boundaries of educational institutions should be open rather than closed as a way to improving children's performance. Successful performance of children with low vision is determined by both their parents, teachers and peers.

Encouragement and positive reinforcement of children with low vision from their fellow peers, teachers and parents may give them chance succeed in both school and home activities. Parents need to make it an obligation to interact with teachers and school administration so as to help them monitor the learning progress among their children as well as facilitating the children's learning needs.

Sandars (1993) puts it that; "To improve the performance of children with low vision, there is need to freely accept them and avoid negative attitudes towards these children".

Green (1976) looks at the psychological aspect of mainstreaming education as being paramount where children with special needs accept themselves and the limitations the handicap imposes on them in performing certain activities. Children accepting themselves as being of visual impairment depends on parents' and teachers' attitudes and the degree of their acceptance that these are children like others and can perform. Parents and teachers should develop positive attitude towards children with low vision and learn to accept them as they are. Green further argues that if parents become

over protectively involved with their children with low vision, they will help to avoid such negativities such as “I am unable” leading to low self-esteem and poor performance.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

The concern of this chapter is to explain how the study was carried out. It shows major areas of methodology that is, research design, area of study, study population, sample size research instruments, sample research procedure and data analysis.

#### **Research design**

Robinson (1997) defines design as being all about the style a researcher uses in presenting ideas on a given topic. In this case the researcher used qualitative to gather information. Enon (1998) also notes that for a study to qualify as qualitative it should make use of ordinary data, expressed in descriptive terms. This study adopted a descriptive research design because:

- It enables the researcher to obtain a better understanding of the causes and impact of teacher quality on academic performance of learners not only in this area but elsewhere world over.
- The method chosen allows a collection of comprehensive and intensive data and provided an in-depth understanding of the topic under study.
- It is not much time consuming
- It allows the respondents chance to speak out themselves .

#### **Area of study.**

The study was carried out in Chuka division of Meru South district. The division consists of twenty eight primary schools. The researcher selected two primary schools namely; Chuka Township primary school and Ndumbiri primary school. Purposeful sampling method was employed to identify the two schools because the enrolment of the deaf girl-child is not done in all the twenty



eight primary schools in the area. These schools were also selected because they are found with in the researcher's area of work and these made collection of data easy.

### **Targeted population**

Koul(1998) defined the term population to refer to any collection of specified groups of human beings or non-human entities such as time, objects, units educational institutions and geographical areas. Targeted population in this studt included headteachers, teachers, parents and children with low vision.

**He**

**(a)**

#### **ad teachers as part of the respondents**

They were selected because they are the immediate supervisors of all education programs in the schools. Because of this big role, the researcher expected to have all the records of performance of all children in the schools. They were also selected because they implement government policies at school level, so they expected to have relevant views from teachers, parents and community about performance of children with low vision.

#### **(b) Teachers**

These were also among the target group because they are the ones entrusted with full time responsibility o teaching children under study. This gives them relevant experiences as far as performance of all children is concerned.

#### **(c) Parents**

These were considered as respondents because they know better of their children than any other individuals and they act as service providers in the process of educating their children.

## **Sampling**

Koul (1998) defines Sampling as a process by which a relatively small number of individuals, objects or events are selected and analyzed in order to find out something about the entire population from which it was selected.

The researcher selected few respondents from a bigger population who would give relevant information as pertains to this research study

## **Sampling Techniques**

Out of the targeted population, the following individuals/persons were selected as respondents;

Head teachers: The researcher used purposive sampling because the head teachers were few in number so all the head teachers in the selected schools were picked as that were expected to be having first hand information regarding the performance of all learners including those with special learning needs.

Teachers: these were selected using random sampling technique. Random sampling was used because it allows computation of occupancy of selection and offers a high degree of representativeness. This was achieved by using a random number method.

Parents: These were selected by purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was used as it simply means to select a sample from others with a reason or purpose of doing it. Five parents who included three males and two females were picked to answer the questionnaires.

**Table 1: Summary of respondents.**

No.	Category	Number of respondents
1	Head teachers	2
2	Teachers	6
3	Parents	5
4	Total	13

### **Research instruments**

The researcher used questionnaire approach as it was considered ideal for collecting required data.

It is the most commonly method used when respondents can be easily reached and are willing to cooperate. Questionnaires that were used in this study were both open and close ended. Open-ended type of questionnaires demanded for free responses in the respondents own words. The Closed-end type demanded short responses such as “Yes” or “No”. The researcher used. The researcher used questionnaires because:

- They can reach a larger number of subjects who are able to read and write independently.  
The respondents have freedom to say whatever they want to say and what they know since their identity is not revealed
- It is cheap, convenient and time saving
- Different responses or situations can be compared
- Distant responses can be obtained and used.
- Respondents feel free to give genuine answers to sensitive questions.

### **Data collection procedure**

The researcher developed questionnaire from the set objectives of the study which were revised by the supervisor who approved them. With the introduction letter from Kampala International University, the researcher obtained permission from the Head teachers of the sampled schools to carry out the study.

The researcher then designed a program on how to visit the schools at different times. The researcher distributed questionnaires to the selected respondents and collected them later after they had been filled.

The researcher ended with parents' questionnaires. For the parents who did not know how to read and write, the researcher had to interpret questions for them so as to respond positively.

### **Data analysis**

It was likely that all the data collected could not be relevant to the objectives of the study and therefore some irrelevant information was disregarded after sorting out the data that was relevant. After the data had been collected, brief information was presented in frequency distribution. The data was analyzed in three columns; the first column showed category, the second showed frequency and the last showed percentages. The data collected was analyzed, presented and then discussed briefly concerning learners with mental retardation. The data in frequency columns was converted into percentages and recorded in percentage columns. It consisted of a number of tables, well analyzed and discussed.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

#### Introduction

In this chapter attempts are made to interpret the findings. Also key information enabled the researcher to relate the specific objectives and give a clear picture of the results. The researcher recorded the data collected and then analyzed, tabulated and interpreted the data using tables.

**Table 2: Role played by Teachers, Parents and Administrators in the performance of children with low vision.**

Responses	Respondents			Frequency	Percentage
	Administrators	Teachers	Parents		
Provision of food, shelter, clothes and medical care	2	-	4	6	30
Provision of assistive devices	1	3	-	4	20
Proper methods of teaching that cater for individual differences	1	3	-	4	20
Not sure	-	-	3	3	15
Active participation of all stakeholders	-	1	-	1	4

Findings as indicated in table 2 indicate that teachers, parents and schools administrators play different roles in the performance of all children including those with low vision. Findings clearly show that it is the responsibility of parents to provide basic needs of life to all children regardless of their varying abilities. It is also revealed that some parents do not play their role of

providing for their children as some were not even sure of what to do, which may affect their development both physically and academically hence poor performance.

Some heads teachers endeavor to provide medical assistance to some of visually challenged learners while at school but this was not supplemented by some parents at home as shown by the findings in the table. Generally, the participation of all stakeholders was wanting which could account for the poor performance of visually impaired children.

**Table 3: Attitudes of the school administrators, teachers and parents towards the performance of children with low vision**

Responses	Respondents			Frequency	Percentage
	Head teachers	Teachers	Parents		
They are not interested in learning	2	4	4	10	34.4
Need a lot of materials and there had to maintain	1	3	3	7	24.1
They have poor concentration span	-	3	5	8	17
They need a lot of special care and are tiresome to maintain	-	2	1	3	10
Can only be taught by specially trained teachers	-	1	2	3	10
Lack independency. Their life heavily depends on others	-	-	1	1	3.4

Findings in table 3 indicate that majority of the respondents have negative attitude towards the learning of the visually impaired learners as most of the respondents overwhelmingly revealed that these children have negative attitude towards learning. This was most especially so with parents whose attitude towards education of children with low vision was completely negative. The parents perception is that visually challenged children cannot concentrate and study most especially in the mainstream setting compared to their sighted counterparts and that they need special care in terms of personnel, equipment and materials for them to acquire some learning which seems expensive to the parents. Equally majority parents believe that children with low vision lack independence and have to entirely depend on others throughout their life. It can therefore be concluded that the attitude of the majority stakeholders in the education of visually challenged children is still negative. It is this pre-determined misconception that may affect service delivery to these children and therefore poor performance.

**Table 4: Ways of improving the performance of children with low vision**

Responses	Respondents			Frequency	Percentage
	Administrators	Teachers	Parents		
Sensitizing the public about the importance of education for low vision children	2	4	4	10	77
Guiding and counseling parents to play their role and children on how to overcome the effects of their condition.	-	1	5	6	46
Coordination of all stakeholders in the provision of children with special learning needs	1	-	4	5	38.4
Availability of learning resources for effective learning/teaching	2	4	-	6	46
Training of more teachers in special needs education to equip them with skills to manage all learners under inclusive setting.	2	5	4	11	84



Table 4 shows that the best way to improve the performance of children with low vision is to sensitize all the stakeholders on the importance of educating these children..this is aimed at creating positive attitude towards visually impaired children, readiness to assist them and eventually improve their performance. Findings further reveal that sensitizing parents about the importance of educating their children and also sensitizing children themselves to overcome the challenges imposed on them by the handicap would help improve their academic performance. Parents, teachers and community as a whole need to create conducive environment for these children to learn.

Some other respondents suggested positive cooperation between all stakeholders to forge a way forward to provide quality education o all learners. Also positive relationship of the stakeholders would create fertile learning environment on which effective learning and performance will thrive.

Also responses on training of more teachers in special needs education to equip them with skills to manage all learners under inclusive setting were singled out. These are believed will be able to handle these learners with skills and confidence to enable them perform better.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The study aimed at analyzing the factors that affect the academic performance of children with low vision. It was carried out in the selected schools that have units for children with visual impairment.

The study was carried out depending on the need to improve the performance of low vision children. It was observed that these children fail exams and repeat classes because of poor performance.

The Constitution of the Republic of Kenya states it clear that persons with disabilities have a right to respect and human dignity and the state and society shall take appropriate measures to ensure that they realize their full mental and physical potential. Because of this the researcher saw it urgent and critical to investigate the factors affecting the performance of children with low vision in schools. The findings are discussed on the study objectives

#### **The role played by teachers, parents and administrators in the learning of children with low vision**

As noted earlier, results in table 2 indicate that not all parents adequately provide basic needs to their handicapped children. Only a few provide medical care to children with low vision. In addition, the study found out that parents, teachers and school administrators provide little assistance, care and support to support better performance of learners with visual impairment.

A few teachers emphasize adequate methods of teaching that cater for the individual learning needs of all children. Some parents too are aware of their role in the learning of their children. However, some are not even aware of what they are expected to do to help their visually challenged children learn effectively.

There is lack of assurance of love and care among the visually impaired learners except for a few parents which creates feelings of uncertainty and hopelessness, negative self-esteem and consequently poor performance among these children. The limited/poor participation of the three stakeholders in the education of these children can justify this observation.

Another challenge to efficient learning of children with low vision as revealed by the findings seems to be the negative attitude towards these children. As noted by Warner (1998), many families still keep their handicapped children at home. This is probably due to the feelings of shame that comes due to the fact that they have children with visual handicaps. Most parents here consider their children to be of less importance or even inferior to other ordinary children which may also influence other family members to have similar sentiments of shame towards these children. Visually impaired children have been ignored and not given adequate guidance and counseling to enable them overcome their visual challenges.

#### **Parents, teachers and school administrators attitude towards education of children with low vision.**

It can be observed from the findings as shown in table 3 that generally the attitude of parents, teachers and school administrators towards the learning and performance of children with low vision was not completely negative but rather they lack the ability, knowledge and skills to to

play their role. Very few of them believe that these children can concentrate in class and study as their sighted peers under the mainstream arrangement.

Majority respondents prefer these children being taught in special schools where special care may be adequately provided in order for them to perform fairly. They have a feeling that these children are expensive to be maintained in regular schools as special learning materials are required to support their learning but which are costly most especially that most of these children come from humble families and parents are either unable or not ready to sacrifice and provide for children they perceive as wasted resources.

Horn (1995) observes that some parents and teachers show negative attitude at home and school towards children with low vision. Accordingly, attitudes of parents are characterized by denial of involvement and participation of these children in all home activities and teachers consider them to be slow in learning and much time consuming hence spend little time to engage them in class as learning progresses.

Seng (1992) in agreement with the above observation also stresses that most teachers and parents treat children with visual impairment as “second class” both schools at school and home. Most parents do not take these children to school and for the few who get chance to go to school have their school dues not paid in time or not paid at all in pretext that they have other children to cater for. Cases of late or defaulted payment of school dues have been sighted from the responses obtained from various head teachers

In addition children with low vision lack basic necessities to aid their learning process. It is the researcher's view that the problem of parents' inability to obtain basic needs for their visually challenged children and children's feelings of hopelessness impact much on the learning and

performance of these children both at school and home. Both school and home environment hold similar sentiments that seem to work against the learning needs of these children.

### **Ways of improving the performance of children with low vision.**

Findings in table 4 reveal that the majority of the respondents agree that the best way to improve the performance of visually challenged learners is through sensitization of their fellow ordinary peers, parents, teachers, school administrators and the entire community about the importance and the need for these children to acquire education and what is expected of each of them to help these children feel free in school and community environment in order to develop into productive and self-reliant members of community.

Findings further indicate that there should be cooperation between all the stakeholders in educating all learners including those with special learning needs. Responses from some teachers show that they acknowledge the fact that there is no cooperation between them and parent to work hand in hand to educate these children. It should however be noted that poor relationship between teachers and parents may negatively impact on the teacher-pupil relationship that may adversely affect the performance of the teacher and pupils in the teaching and learning process respectively. There is therefore need to develop positive and meaningful co-existence efforts for team work be made in order to boost the learning and performance of children with low vision.

It has also been noted from the respondents that there is no assurance in the protection of rights of children with low vision. However for effective learning to take place, children's rights and learning needs have to be adequately catered for in order for visually impaired children to feel secure, loved and accepted. Feelings of a secure environment may help these children settle and learn hence better performance. Denshan (1995) is in agreement with this view by noting that;

“Due to traditional practices and beliefs parents and teachers may at times fail to adjust to the needs of learners with low vision”.

Warnock (1989) emphasizes that success education of pupils with low vision is dependent on full involvement of their parents and teachers. The researcher is in agreement with this view as cooperation and active involvement of both teachers and parents in the learning process of their children is likely to motivate learners due to good learning environment created by the positive teacher-parent relationship.

Suzan (1998) similarly believes that children who find themselves excluded from associating with their peers have got unsatisfactory relationship with their teachers. Life in school becomes a punishing experience and a living torment to them. Children without friends are exceptionally vulnerable and are therefore exposed to a greater deal of woes such as poverty, poor health and at constant risks.

## **Conclusion**

It should be noted that the trend no longer supports the special schools systm, therefore children with special educational needs should be placed under inclusive school system. Three things therefore have to be put into consideration namel; Environmet, Curriculum and Teaching approaches. Teachers handling children with mental retardation should have compassion and love for assisting these children to learn and accept them as they are, freely interact with them, coming down to their level, building good rapport and knowing their likes and dislikes. Teachers should endeavor to get more knowledge the learning needs of children with special needs by going for further studies, attending refresher courses and workshops on Special Needs Education.

## Recommendations

According to the children statute, it is the right of every child to live and receive all basic needs of life including food, shelter, clothing, medical care, love respect and education. After gathering all the information herein, the researcher made recommendations which when implemented may improve on the education and performance of children with hearing impairment. These include:

- ❖ There is need to co-opt special needs education into Primary Teacher Training Colleges. The current system of training special needs at Diploma level minimally favors special needs education. A few teachers who receive training either at Diploma or Degree level do not go back to class. They are instead placed in leadership positions such as Headteachers, inspectors or hired by rich non-government organisations which have high demand for them. It is therefore important that primary teacher training colleges take up the responsibility of training special needs teachers so that teachers get a 'dose' to take to primary schools where they are needed most.
- ❖ Special needs department-EARS should organize a number of sign language seminars at subcounty and parish levels for teachers, parents and pupils in mainstream schools. It should be noted that sign language seminars currently being organized at regional levels are very expensive and attended by few. This could be best done with the help of such organizations "of" and "for" who may provide instructors and logistics. This may help to bridge the gap between children with disabilities, their peers, teachers and parents.
- ❖ Creation of resource room facilities within every mainstream school, with a variety of to cater for the learning needs of all children with special needs. There should also be trained teachers to be made responsible for special education in each regular school.
- ❖ Intensifying awareness programs. It should be noted that although Special Needs Education/EARS has carried out awareness sensitisation seminars in many districts country schools, many people in the community have not had enough information about

inclusive learning. EARS therefore to intensify its awareness activities. The work of sensitisation should however not only be done by EARS/SNE staff but involve different categories of concerned professionals and stakeholders. While organizing seminars and other programs about persons with disabilities like education of the deaf children, their involvement is of great importance. The idea behind this involvement is to bridge the gap between persons with disabilities and the community

- ❖ Since it has been found out that the majority of teachers are untrained special teachers in main stream, many teachers should go for up grading in special needs education at Kampala International University and KISE.
- ❖ Seminars for teachers to learn to make and use educational materials from local materials should be organised locally by districts. Local manpower should be utilised to train and other people who are more experienced be incase there are areas where competence seems to be limited. This will increase the number of teachers with skills and eliminate the problem of teachers depending on the already made teaching/ learning materials which are expensive and scarce.

In a word, I suggest that there should be more research studies in future to find out more challenges found by teachers not only in teaching children with hearing impairment especially in regular schools.



## **APPENDIX 1**

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**APPENDIX I1**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

Dear Sir/Madam

You are requested to answer questions in this paper that will contribute towards this research study aimed at finding out factors affecting the academic performance of children with low vision. Put a tick in the appropriate box and write in the space provided while giving your views.

The information you give will be treated with maximum confidentiality. You are therefore advised not to show your name on this paper.

1. How many children with low vision do you have in your school?

STD1 ☐ STD2 ☐ STD3 ☐ STD4 ☐ STD5 ☐ STD6 ☐

STD7 ☐ STD ☐

2. What is your role as Headteacher in the provision of education to children with low vision?

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## APPENDIX 111

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HEADTEACHERS

I humbly request you to answer these questions and contribute towards this research study titled “Factors affecting the academic performance of children with low vision”. Put a tick in the appropriate box and write in the space provided while giving your views.

The information you give will be treated with maximum confidentiality. You are therefore advised not show your name on this paper.

1. What is the general enrolment in your school?

.....

2. Do you have any children with low vision in your school?

.....

If so, how many?

GENDER	STD1	STD2	STD3	STD4	STD5	STD6	STD7	STD8
Boys								
Girls								
Total								

3. Comment on the general performance of children with low vision in your school.

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

9. What do you take to be factors affecting the academic performance of children with low vision in your school?

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

10. Comment on the attitude of other ordinary children in your school towards fellow children with low vision?

.....  
.....  
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11. What would you recommend the following stakeholders to do towards improving the performance of children with low vision?

(a) Ministry of Education.

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(b) Parents.

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(c) Teachers.

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(d) Local community.

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**Thank you for your cooperation.**

**APPENDIX 1V**  
**QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS**

Dear Sir/Madam

You are humbly requested to answer the following questions to help in the compilation of this research study aimed at finding ways of improving the academic performance of children with low vision. The views you give will only be used purposely for this study and will be treated with maximum confidentiality, therefore feel free to say whatever you feel you should say.

Your contribution will be highly appreciated.

Put a tick in the appropriate box or write in the space provided to express your views/ideas.

1. How old is your child?

.....

2. What is the sex of your child?

Male ☐

Female ☐

3. At what age did your experience visual problems?

.....

4. Is your child enrolled in school?

Yes ☐

No ☐

5. How does your child perform academically?

Good ☐

Fair ☐

Poor ☐

6. What could be the factors affecting the performance of your child as indicated above?

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

7. What role do you play in the learning process of your child?

.....  
.....  
.....  
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8. What challenges do you encounter in trying to provide for the learning needs of your child both at home and school?

(a) Home.

.....  
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.....

9. School.

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

How often do you visit school and interact with your child, teachers and school administration on issues pertaining to your child’s learning?

.....  
.....

10. What are your future expectations and plans do you hold for your child?

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.....



11. What would you recommend the following to do in order to improve on the academic performance of your child?

(a) Ministry of Education.

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.....

(b) Teachers.

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**Thank you for your cooperation.**