



RESEARCH PAPER

Learning Opportunities and Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Students in Special Schools of District Rawalpindi

Nazia Parveen¹ Dr. Muhammad Imran Yousuf² Ammara Ajaib³

1. Lecturer, Department of Education, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Chairman, Department of Education, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan
3. Visiting Faculty Member, Department of Education, PMAS-Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan

PAPER INFO

ABSTRACT

Received:
April 17, 2020

Accepted:
June 15, 2020

Online:
June 30, 2020

Keywords:
Challenges of
Students with
Visual Impairment
Learning
Opportunities
Special Children

**Corresponding
Author:**

naziajunjua@gmail.
com

The research was designed to highlight the challenges visual impaired students had to experience during their learning opportunities set forth at these institutions. Study targeted the children with visual impairment enrolled in special education institutions at Rawalpindi. A purposive random sampling technique was applied to identify 150 students with visual impairments selected from six special education centers of Rawalpindi. The data was collected through well design, structure, validated and pretested questionnaire. One volunteer key informant was also accompanied during data collection. The data was collected by using questionnaire. After collecting data, it was analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). The descriptive as well as inserted statistics was used to discuss the findings and draw conclusion. The study found out that the specialized facilities were limited. It also found that students with visual impairment lacked support from the school administration. Ministry of Education was recommended to help in construction of specialized facilities for use by students with visual impairment. It is also recommended for more in-service courses, workshops, and seminars to keep the teachers abreast with current trend.

Introduction

Disability in its various forms is observed internationally and same is case with Pakistan. Year 1981 was celebrated by UN for disable persons as special persons.

Being signatory to convention, Pakistan has taken some grave gait for the improvement of person with special needs. Terms like "low visionary, partially sighted, legally blind and totally blind" are the terms that are normally used to

describe visually impaired learners. The persons whose physical sensory impairment or performance cannot be willingly contained in regular schools are provided with learning opportunities in such institutions. Pakistan has established services and institutions and postulated definite policies for PWD (Hameed, 2006).

Farooq (2012) stated that students having visual problem don't follow the similar method for learning. Visually impaired individual needs to learn by using Braille. The reason stated for this practice is that by writing and reading with the help of Braille, sightline can be saved. Teachers believed that use of sight for reading caused it to decrease the vision, so more attention should be given to read through touch and those who tried to read with Braille, become blind-folded (Jackson & Presley, 2012).

Blindness does not affect oral capabilities but it may reduce the tendency of articulation in blind kids and even more in the process of gaining knowledge. This kind of inflection limits the students to narrate and even leads him towards meaninglessness or curtsy, although such experiences give them knowledge of real situations (Best, 1993). According to education for all policy, by UNESCO equal and quality education to all children is ensured no matter what is their socio-economic, cultural, religious background. If properly given and implanted, in special school the opportunities can be heightened and lowering the challenges of visually impaired students (OECD, 2012).

However, Heward (2003) stated that students having visual problem don't follow the similar method for learning. She surveyed to assess the basic distinction between visionary blind children and well sighted children in early years of learning of language. She discovered from her evaluation that visually-impaired children used the language unreasonably and with no creativity. The right of receiving education for disable people cannot be averted by any reason. Disable children, grownups and adults should be provided education equally to the normal people and under exclusive environment while considering their special condition and differences (Scholl, 2006).

Well sighted children can move around and explore their environment with ease, but the child with disability of blindness unable to do this; he requires to be helped with experiences and opportunities for actions which other children experience in the normal route of their development and in their educational surrounding. A child with blindness gets low options to discover his environment, and even if he gets a chance now and then, his experience does not give him the desired amount of information that he takes as signals but not reality (Olmstead, 2005).

Mugambi (2011) discusses that people who suffer from visual impairment or blind cannot make friends and faces difficulties in making long lasting friendships due to the absence of body language. This factor strongly affects the learner's performance. Behaviour of other people has major impact on the learner's psychological and social fitting. As reported by Smith (1998), a visually handy caped student challenges a teacher and takes him /her to another stage of competency. A teacher is automatically

compelled to take the help from his or her sighted students in doing certain tasks or can require help from an itinerant. Furthermore, a teacher has to explain clearly towards pointing an object as well as converse about it more. While holding a picture or using body language, while using whiteboards for writing, they have to wait and manage the message with help of support by facilitator in detail. All this process demands little bit more practice, it is requisite for the most effluent teacher to use one or more than one method of teaching and to use teaching devices more effectively.

Method and Materials

Population

Research targeted the children with visual impairment studying in special institution in district Rawalpindi.

Sample

A purposive random sampling technique was applied to identify the visually impaired students. Sample of the study comprised of 150 students with visual impairments selected from six special education centers of Rawalpindi.

Instrument

The data was collected through well design, structure, validated and pretested questionnaire. One volunteer key informant was also accompanied during data collection. Volunteer participation was invited from respondents. Being a sensitive cadre, ethical considerations were ensured to reach the participants and their willingness for research was kept opened.

Validity

The instrument was pilot tested for its validity. This was done through experts' opinion. The experts belonged to the field of education and assessment. They approved the validity of the instrument. The research instrument was administered to 40 students for reliability which were not included in the final sample. As per feedback questionnaire were finalized and then applied to the selected sample.

Data Collection

The data was collected personally by using questionnaire. Participation in this study was on voluntary basis and participants were told that they are free to quit the study at any time.

Analysis of the Data

After collecting data, analysis was done with SPSS. Statistics like mean & standard deviation was used to discuss the findings and draw conclusion.

Table 1
Challenges Faced by Visually Impaired Students

Sr. No	Statement		SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1	Insufficient facilities	F	0	4	22	97	27	2.02	0.66
		%	0	3	15	64	18		
2	Less teachers are trained to engage the students	F	51	10	78	7	4	3.65	1.08
		%	34	7	52	4	3		
3	Facing the problems of moving from one place to another	F	8	90	14	36	2	3.44	0.96
		%	5	60	9	24	2		
4	Problems in socialization	F	40	20	55	34	1	3.43	1.13
		%	26	14	37	22	1		
5	Teachers neglect the students' needs	F	9	5	78	55	3	2.75	0.81
		%	6	4	52	36	2		
6	Feel lonely and less recognized by others	F	37	9	45	58	1	3.15	1.20
		%	24	7	30	38	1		
7	Take the time while doing the work in class	F	6	64	53	27	0	3.33	0.82
		%	4	42	36	18	0		
8	Frustration from difficulties they encountered	F	9	5	65	29	2	2.93	0.72
		%	6	3	70	19	2		
9	Facing learning problems in school	F	9	11	47	83	0	2.64	0.86
		%	6	8	31	55	0		
10	Teachers low training in handling visual impairment	F	35	56	38	19	2	3.69	1.01
		%	23	37	25	13	2		
11	Additional problems that influence their performance	F	38	45	59	7	1	3.75	0.9
		%	25	30	39	4	2		
12	Required extra time for class assignment	F	32	8	70	37	3	3.19	1.1
		%	21	7	46	24	2		
13	The difficulty of purchasing educational materials	F	6	16	44	28	56	2.25	1.18
		%	4	1	9	9	7		

Table 1 illustrates less teachers are trained to engage the students mean was 3.65 and standard deviation 1.08 respectively. Visually impaired students facing the problems of moving from one place to another and visually impaired students have difficulty in socialization. Highest frequency 55 of students and lowest frequency 1 strongly disagree of the respondents. Teachers neglect the students' requirements mean of the was 2.75 and standard deviation 0.18. More students feel lonely and less recognized by others. More students were strongly agreed that they take the time while doing the work in class. Students face more difficulties and this is reason of drop out from the schools, mean was 2.93 and standard deviation is 0.72 respectively. School does not have teaching and learning facilities for visually impaired students. Visually impaired students have more difficulties that effect their learning mean of the visual impaired students was 3.75 and standard deviation is 0.91 respectively. Visual impaired students required extra time for class assignment mean of the visual impaired students was 3.19 and standard deviation is 1.10. Schools have the difficulty of purchasing educational materials mean was 2.25 and standard deviation is 1.18.

Table 2
Learning Opportunities for Visually Impaired Students

Sr. No	Statement		SA	A	UN	DA	SDA	Mean	SD
1	Emotional support is available	F	39	23	71	12	5	3.53	1.07
		%	26	15	47	9	3		
2	Audio mike for recording during their lectures	F	35	37	47	27	4	3.48	1.12
		%	23	24	32	19	2		
3	Provision of reading material in Braille	F	10	3	75	62	0	2.74	0.80
		%	6	2	51	41	0		
4	let you know the information on the notice board	F	4	28	62	51	5	2.83	0.86
		%	2	19	41	35	3		
5	Provided with audio books	F	12	86	20	6	26	3.35	1.23
		%	8	58	13	4	17		
6	Help is provided in course assignments.	F	13	7	52	37	41	2.43	1.19
		%	9	4	34	25	28		
7	Opportunities to participate in sports and games	F	5	57	20	64	4	2.97	1.03
		%	3	38	14	42	3		
8	Pakistan Disabled Foundation policy tools for visually impaired students	F	26	38	65	8	13	3.37	1.10
		%	17	25	44	6	8		
9	Assistance by ministry of Education	F	11	54	36	40	9	3.12	1.07
		%	7.3	36	24	26	6		
10	Implementation of satisfactory procedure of Examination by Inter University and Board's Committee	F	2	61	36	39	12	3.01	1.02
		%	2	40	24	26	8		
11	Government must provide Braille to all the institutions for visually impaired students	F	9	5	77	32	27	2.58	1.02
		%	6	3	1	2	8		

Table 2 depicts the emotional support is available to the visually impaired students by the school mean of the statement was 3.53 and standard deviation 1.07 respectively. Resource persons has used mike for audio recording during their lectures. Highest frequency 47 of students and lowest frequency 4 strongly disagree with statement. Visually impaired students provided with reading material in Braille Highest frequency 75 of students and lowest frequency 3 strongly agree of the respondents. Institution makes arrangements for letting you know about the information displayed on the notice board mean was 2.83 and standard deviation 0.86. Visually impaired students were provided with audio books. They can seek help from others for completing their course assignments by mean of 2.43 and standard deviation 1.19 respectively. Visually impaired students provided with the opportunities to participate sports and games. Pakistan Disabled Foundation must make policy to provide tools for visually impaired students mean of the physical facilities for visual impaired students was 3.37 and standard deviation 1.10

respectively. Ministry of Education as a Patron Ministry must ensure the main team Inclusion and Integration for visually impaired students mean was 3.12 and standard deviation 1.07. Inter University and Board's Committee may have developed smooth and satisfactory procedure of Examination for Disabled Community Especially Visually Impaired. Government must provide Braille to all the institutions for visually impaired students. Highest frequency 77 of students and lowest frequency 9 strongly disagree with this statement and mean was 2.58 and standard deviation 1.02 respectively.

Discussion

The current study results show that visual impairment students face additional problems that influence their performance and Similar findings were seen in a study by Murugami (2009) discusses that people who suffer from visual impairment or blind cannot make friends and faces difficulties in making long lasting friendships. This factor strongly affects the learner's performance. Behavior of other people has major impact on the learner's psychological and social fitting. Barred absorption restraint the amount of information acknowledged by the students about their surrounding within their context and limited the type and quality of exposures feasible to them. This study also supported by Best (1992), a visually impaired child cannot control his movement comfortably.

The current study revealed that Provision of reading material in Braille is not available. This idea supported by Scott (1977) emphasizes that; the blind child needs more quantitative and qualitative opportunities for learning skills. The current study results show that emotional support is available for visually impaired students. This is supported by Heward (2003) have observed and analyzed that visually impaired children interact less as compare to normally sighted children in their free time and often lag behind in the development of social skills. Expressing emotions and behavior can facilitate them in their development in other areas of social competence in future. Also supported by Best (1992) as effective insufficiency may remove an important source of child stimulation. The current study results show that less number of trained teachers to handle visually impaired children as indicated by Farooq (2012) that students having visual problem don't follow the similar method for learning.

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to point out the difficulties and enhancing probabilities for visually impaired students in special centers. The results of this research indicate that schools are lacking special needs of the visually impaired. Students face more difficulties because they are lacking in transportation facilities this is reason of drop out from the schools. They were having difficulty in locomotion from one place to another, because they cannot easily move around. This study investigated the challenges of students encountered in special schools with visual impairment. A blind child has very less chance to explore his nearby, and even if he gets the chance and tries to, his experience does not help him by giving him a considerable amount of

knowledge. Visually Impaired learners should be provided with pre planned classrooms so that they must devote their time as much as possible to the studies. Despite of the practically he may be able to get, he observes many clues as indicators or signals but not as reality.

Recommendations

1. Teachers' training should be necessary for solving psychological problems of special children.
2. There should be availability of special learning materials like books etc to accomplish the needs of special children during their studies.
3. Usage of advanced technology and A.V aids should be implemented during teaching learning process of special children's.
4. Libraries of such institutes should be provided with advanced learning materials like talking books.
5. Physical training of special children should be carrying out with the mental growth with the help of sports teacher.
6. Vocational and technical training should be given like computer courses etc.
7. Appropriate job opportunities should be provided.
8. School management should provide all school facilities like class rooms, grounds, washrooms, libraries, and computer labs.

References

- Best, A. B. (1992). *Teaching Children with Visual Impairments*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Farooq, M. S. (2012). Problems faced by students with special needs in ordinary Pakistani schools. *Journal of Quality and Technology Management*, 8(1), 13-27.
- Hameed, A. (2006). *Survey of facilities and services for the persons with disabilities in Pakistan*. Unpublished report: Islamabad: Directorate General of Special Education.
- Heward, W. L. (2003). Ten faulty notions about teaching and learning that hinder the effectiveness of special education. *The journal of special education*, 36(4), 186-205.
- Jackson, R.M. & Presley, I. (2012). *Audio-Supported Reading for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired*. Wakefield, MA: National Center on Accessing the General Curriculum. <http://aem.cast.org/about/publications/2012/audio-supported-reading-blind-visually-impaired-asr.html>
- Mariga, L. & Pachaka, L. (1993). Integrating Children with Special Education Needs into Regular Primary Schools in Lesotho. (Phd thesis). Ministry of Education: Lesotho.
- Mboshi, N. S, (2018). Teaching Learners with Visual Impairment in an Inclusive Education Setting: The Cameroon Perspective. *International Journal of Education and Research*.6(2), 45-58.
- Mugambi, M. K. (2011). *Challenges facing teachers in teaching students with visual impairment in integrated school: A study of Moi Girls" school, Nairobi*. (Phd thesis). University of Kenyatta, Kenyatta.
- Murugami, M. W. (2009). Disability and identity. *Disability Studies Quarterly*, 29(4), 23-45.
- OECD (2012). *Equity and Quality in Education: Supporting Disadvantaged Students and Schools*, OECD Publishing.
- Olmsted, D. (2005). The age of autism: The amish anomaly. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 32(3), 289-299.
- Scholl, (2006). Foundation of education of the blind and visually handicapped children and youth theory and practice. *Journal of Technology Transfer*, 40(1), 85-104.
- Scott, E. P. (1982). *Your Visually Impaired Student*. Baltimore: University Park Press.
- Smith, D. J. (1998). *Inclusion: Schools for all students*. Albany, NY: Wadsworth Publishing Company.