

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL HOMEWORK OF VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN IN IBADAN: OPINIONS OF PARENTS AND TEACHERS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

The visually impaired children find academic exercises strenuous and require assistance to aid their learning activity. This study, therefore, examined parents' and teachers' perceptions of parental involvement in homework of the visually impaired children in Ibadan metropolis. It adopted a descriptive survey design. Three (3) research questions were raised and answered in the study. Participants were forty-five (45) parents and fifteen (15) teachers of visually impaired children from three selected schools for the handicapped in Ibadan. Two survey instruments, Parental Involvement Survey and Teachers Survey Instrument were used to collect data for the study. Data was analyzed using frequency and percentages. Findings revealed that parents actually get involved in the homework of their visually impaired children. Also, that majority of parents do not encounter difficulties playing their roles and that teachers perceived parents as partners in progress in their efforts towards the education of the visually impaired students. It is recommended that weak parents must be provided with help to enable them play their roles better and more meaningful. Also, effective communication between parents and teachers should be developed and maintained and that there should be parents' regular consultations with the Counsellor. Moreover, visually impaired students should be provided with materials in special formats.

Key words: Disability, visual impairment, school homework, teachers, parent, parental involvement

Introduction

Education is an indispensable medium of bringing about developments; a pivot on which individuals' and nations' developments rotate. It is governments' concerns globally to provide education for their citizens without discrimination on grounds of visual impairment or any other form of disability (Omede, 2009; Shikulen, 2012). Visual Impairment describes sight loss that cannot be fully corrected using glasses or contact lenses; a significant loss or damage that makes a person to function

more as a blind than as a sighted individual. Visual Impairment is on a continuum; ranging from mild symptoms to more severe cases where reading can be severely impeded. Visually impaired persons may have short-sightedness, long sightedness or low vision. Vision of a visually impaired person may fluctuate; depending on lighting or even the person's mood. If the person is tired, unwell or stressed, his vision may not perform to its maximum potential. Abang (2002) adds that loss of vision causes major

changes in a person's lifestyles and habits. Regardless of their disabilities, people with visual impairment also acknowledge the need for education; they pursue varieties of educational attainments like others.

It is very difficult for the visually impaired to get a lot of things done, as the variety of activities experienced by sighted individuals may not be realistically achievable for persons with visual impairment. The problem is compounded if the visually impaired person also has other special educational needs (Fan, Williams and Wolters, 2012). The need to educate persons with visual impairment includes the fact that their potentials have to be developed towards assisting them realise their desires; to be literate, self-reliant, and useful to the society (Omede, 2009). People with visual impairment go to school to acquire knowledge and experience, relying more on auditory experiences in forming concepts (Eniola, 2003).

The Global Campaign on Education for All Children with Visual Impairment (EFA-VI) was launched in 2006, as a partnership of the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI) and the World Blind Union (WBU), with a vision that by 2020, all children with visual impairment will enrol and complete primary education and their educational and social achievement will be at par with non-disabled children. This will enable the blind and partially sighted students to participate in mainstream schools alongside their sighted peers and to acquire the specialist literacy skills they need to make a living (U.S. Department of Education, 2003; 2004). The realisation of this vision for the visually impaired requires their parents' involvement and contributions.

Visual impairment impedes the development of motor skills, cognition and

language needed in the process of learning (Maimuna, 2012; Yan and Lin, 2015). It also limits the perception of eye contact, facial expressions, body language and gestures. Moving around and interacting with people and physical environment are some of the challenges facing the visually impaired persons. As a consequence of the strain of reading, persons with visual impairment are often easily distracted and display poor concentration (Bartel, 2010; Yan and Lin, 2015). Some children with the condition misread words and have poor spelling and comprehension. Many of them also have a slower than average reading rate. The condition may result in disengagement with class work or disruptive behaviours. Unlike sighted children who can easily learn so many things merely by observing and imitating, the visually impaired will need to be guided and supervised when learning many concepts. They require more time to be cared for by their parents. Educational attainment gaps between students with visual impairment and sighted students will always exist as students with visual impairment have less opportunity to learn in the manner that sighted students do. In fact, students with disabilities will always require special education services in order to reach their potential (Hallahan and Kauffman, 2006; Bakare, 2011).

The roles of parents in children academic performance have been a subject of keen interest to educators over the years (Bower & Griffin, 2011). According to Catsambis (1998), parental involvement is one of the most effective educational strategies in student achievement and that reduces educational imbalance between children with disabilities and those without disabilities. Parents involvement in their children's homework is very important, it enables the children achieve better in and out

of the classroom as well as keeping parents well informed of the children's strengths and weaknesses (Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino and Steineret, 2010; Thornton, 2015). It is of crucial importance for children with disabilities (Hernandez, Harry, Newman and Cameto, 2008; LaRocque, 2011). De Planty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007) believe that school children require parental involvement in their school activities and are more positively affected when a relationship is sustained between home and school. Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino and Steineret (2010) identified six dimensions to foster parental involvement and of the six, three most effective were; parental involvement expectations, school involvement, and homework help.

It is established that effective parental involvement in homework helps to increase and stimulate a child's interest in school and encourages academic achievement for students, particularly those students with special needs (Carr, 2013). Parental involvement in home-school activities is a positive reinforce that gives students the confidence needed for positive school related outcomes. Cooper and Nye (1994) also agree that homework can lead to greater parental involvement in school activities. Involvement of parents in their child's education is thereby believed to be the most important aspect of academic achievement to improve home-school relationships; linking what is learned at school (LaRocque, 2011). Carr (2013) and Marzano and Pickering (2007) believe that homework has the potential to be an extremely valuable part of students' learning experience and support its effectiveness for reinforcing learning.

Sad and Gurbuzturk (2013) adds that parental involvement in the child's studies can have a long-term developmental effect; helps develop good study habits, promotes

positive attitudes towards school and communicates to students that learning takes place inside as well as outside of school. Moreover, parental involvement encourages activities filled with reading, writing, and meaningful family moments (Hill and Tyson, 2009). This is why Archer-Banks and Behar-Horenstein (2008) suggest that parents should have high expectations, provide workshops, and create positive cultural environments. Parental involvement could include the following ways: (a) parents establish daily routines, (b) monitor out-of-school activities assuring structured time and set attainable goals and (c) offer encouragement by expressing interest in progress (Fan, Williams and Wolters, 2012; Thornton, 2015).

Meanwhile, parents may have problems staying involved in school activities of their children. Research has shown that parental involvement begins to decrease after elementary school and is minimal by the time the child reaches high school (Reglin, Cameron and Losike-Sedimo, 2012). According to DePlanty, Coulter-Kern, and Duchane (2007), there are parents who believe that when a child reaches adolescence, he should have his own space for independence and growth. At high school, parents who may not have the knowhow of the child's subject areas would feel awkward and thereby becoming less involved in their children's educational activities. Observed factors that have impacts on parental involvement of students with learning disabilities include: (a) parents with little or no social networks, less financial stability and lower educational status will have a tendency to become less involved in school activities; (b) parents of students with learning disabilities are more likely to work outside of the home and less likely to be involved in school activities, (c)

students with learning disabilities are less likely to have both parents in the home with a college education, and (d) parents of students with learning disabilities report they are less involved than those parents of students without disability (Bryan, Burstein, and Bryan, 2001; DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane, 2007).

Deslandes, Royer, Potvin and Leclerc (1999) opine that parents of children with disabilities get less involved because they could not assist in their children's achievement-related outcomes and did not feel welcomed in helpful situations. When parents do not know how to get involved, the schools are expected to offer support in every aspect of modelling and guiding. Some of the workable strategies include purposeful homework, design homework to be completed, involve parents appropriately and monitor the amount of homework, (Marzano and Pickering, 2007; Carr, 2013). Bartel (2010) and Elsleger (1999) examine incentives as a means of enhancing/increasing parental involvement in homework and other activities. In order to enable parents to grow in their ability to help their children get the best education possible, encouraging parental involvement has to be viewed as a process rather than a one-time event.

Parents of the visually impaired children often do not realize the impacts their involvement in school homework could make in terms of contributions towards the success of these children. Parents might not make extra efforts to play their parts in the school homework for these visually impaired due to their ignorance, leaving these children at disadvantage when compared with their sighted schoolmates. Hence, there is sufficient research need to link parental involvement with school success among these visually impaired students; it could be

logically inferred that this study would be a worthy contribution.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate parental involvement in the homework of their visually impaired children and to investigate teachers' opinion of parental involvement in the homework of the visually impaired children in Ibadan metropolis.

Scope of the Study

This study was carried out in Ibadan and it covered three selected schools for the handicapped within Ibadan metropolis. It involved a total number of forty-five (45) parents and fifteen (15) teachers of visually impaired children from the three selected schools for the handicapped as respondents to the study.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated and answered in the study:

1. Do parents get involved in homework of their visually impaired children?
2. What difficulties do parents have in getting involved and in understanding homework?
3. How do teachers perceive parental involvement in visually impaired students' school works?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. A total of sixty (60) participants (45 parents and 15 teachers of visually impaired children) partook in the study. All participants provided their free and informed verbal consents. Participants were randomly selected from among the parents and teachers of visually impaired students of three schools for the handicapped; Omoyeni Basic Special School, Adesola Ibadan, Schools for the Handicapped, H.L.A Compound Agodi-Gate Ibadan, and Aperin Oniyere Commercial

Grammar School, Ibadan. Two survey instruments, Parental Involvement Survey and Teachers Survey Instrument, adopted from Reglin, Cameron and Losike-Sedimo (2012) were used to collect data for the study. Responses were based on Likert-scale items of SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, UD=Undecided, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly

Disagree with all items pertaining to homework and parental involvement. Lastly, an open ended question was included at the end of each survey for comments about issues or concerns not addressed in the questionnaire. Data was analysed using simple percentages.

RESULTS

Table 1: Showing Parents' Support for Homework Efforts

Items	N	Agree	Disagree
Parents checking if homework is given	45	40 (88.9%)	5 (11.1)
Parents willing to help	45	44 (97.8%)	1 (2.2%)
Parents check homework for correctness	45	40 (88.9%)	5 (11.1)

Note: Agree & Strongly Agree = Agree; Strongly Disagree & Disagree = Disagree

Table I provides information on parents who offer support to their visually impaired children. The responses of parents' support in this table include (a) checking student if there is homework, (b) willingness to help

and (c) checking homework for correctness. The Table shows that majority of students had parents who did offer support in the student's homework efforts. Parents agreed they offer support to the students by always checking homework and making sure it is done correctly.

Table 2: Parents Who Have a Difficult Time for Involvement and Understanding Homework

Items	N	Agree	Disagree
Difficulty to be actively involved	45	3 (6.7%)	42 (93.3%)
Hours spent understanding homework	45	9 (20%)	36 (80%)
Feeling of awkwardness	45	1 (2.2%)	44 (97.8%)
Homework not a priority at home	45	0 (0%)	45 (100%)

Note: Agree & Strongly Agree = Agree; Strongly Disagree & Disagree = Disagree

The data in Table 2 shows that majority of the parents did not find it difficult to be actively involved in student's homework, did not spend several hours understanding the

homework and are comfortable with children's homework. The data show that greater number of parents disagreed that there were difficulties in being actively involved in their child's education and are not spending hours trying to understand homework.

Table 3: Teachers’ Perceptions of Parental Involvement in Visually Impaired Students’ School Works

Items	N	Agree	Disagree
Teachers share strategies for success	15	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)
Teachers and parents as partners	15	11 (73.3%)	4 (26.7%)
Parental involvement in homework crucial to learning	15	13 (86.7%)	2 (13.3%)
Considerate when giving homework	15	15 (100%)	0 (0%)

Note: Agree & Strongly Agree = Agree; Strongly Disagree & Disagree = Disagree

Table 3 provides information on teachers’ perception of collaboration with their colleagues and how they perceive parental involvement. The Table shows that there is collaboration among teachers going on for the success of the students, as majority of teachers share strategies for the success of students and that majority of the teachers consider parents as partners.

Discussion

The first research question states, “Do parents get involved in homework of their visually impaired children?” Findings have provided answer to this question as it revealed that majority of the parents actually get involved in homework of their visually impaired children. Parents’ responses have shown that they realise involvement as their responsibilities. Involving in homework of their children enables the children to achieve better in and out of the classroom, as well as keeping the parents well informed of the children’s strengths and weaknesses. This supports the earlier submission of Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino and Steineret (2010) as well as the opinion of Thornton (2015). Hernandez, Harry, Newman and Cameto (2008) and also LaRocque (2011) reiterate the importance of parental

involvement for children with disabilities. Parents who want success for their children would no doubt realise that children need help. Also, Carr (2013) establishes that effective parental involvement in homework helps to increase and stimulates a child’s interest in school and encourages academic achievement for children with special needs.

The second research question states, “What difficulties do parents have in getting involved and in understanding homework?” Findings have shown that majority of the parents indicated not to have any difficulty getting involved and in understanding homework brought home by their children from school. The very few who indicated difficulty in homework revealed having to spend long hours to understanding homework as an issue. This may be so because the children were in secondary schools and their works may require a level of education by the parents. In support of this view, Reglin, Cameron and Losike-Sedimo (2012) had earlier identified that parental involvement begins to decrease after elementary school and is minimal by the time the child reaches high school. Parents may have difficulty understanding homework as parents with lower educational levels have a tendency to become less involved in school activities, as reported by Bryan, Burstein and Bryan (2001). Parents with little or no social networks or less

financial stability may also have difficulty with their children's homework, as in the opinion of DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane (2007). The nature of job parents do also could factor in getting parents involved in their children's homework. Parents that are not available at home would not be able to provide help. When parents identify workable strategies and follow such, they are not likely to have any problem. Thornton (2015), sharing the opinions of Fan, Williams and Wolters (2012) suggests that parents should establish daily routines, monitor out-of-school activities, assuring structured time and set attainable goals and should offer encouragement by expressing interest in the progress of these children.

The third research question states, "How do teachers perceive parents in terms of partnership towards the education of visually impaired students?" Findings show that there is collaboration going on for the success of the students. Majority of teachers shared strategies for the success of students and have considered parents as partners. In most instances, teachers have played roles of surrogate parents to the students in their school-care. This is why they see parents as partners in the upbringing and monitoring of students. This is in line with the finding of Carr (2013) as well as Marzano and Pickering (2007) who report that when parents do not know how to get involved, the schools, represented by the teachers, offer support in every aspect of modelling and guiding to the parents on how best to get involved in school works of the children. Bartel (2010) and Elsleger (1999) add their views that some of the workable strategies offered by teachers to the parents include involving parents appropriately and monitoring the homework of the children. Teachers have also identified incentives as means of helping increase parental

involvement in homework and other activities, as reported by Xu, Benson, Mudrey-Camino and Steineret (2010). DePlanty, Coulter-Kern and Duchane (2007) believe that school children require parental involvement in their school activities and are more positively affected when a relationship is sustained between home and school.

Conclusion

Children with visual impairment require the involvement of their parents for support in their school works, particularly their homework assignment. Parental involvement has proven to be important towards the success of the visually impaired children. When assisted by parents, the visually impaired children gain educational attainment to boast of as a better fulfilled members of the society. This study has ascertained that parents actually get involved in the homework of the visually impaired children and that majority of the parents do not encounter difficulties in the efforts to play these roles. Teachers have perceived parents as their partners in progress in their teaching of the visually impaired children, thereby were considerate when giving homework to these visually impaired students. Counselling for parents of visually impaired students is important to the educational attainment of their children.

Implications for Counselling

The state of emotional distress and attitude on the side of parents indicates that they need someone to offer them counselling assistance on how to adjust and manage their children with visual impairment to realise their potentials (Chukuka, 2010). Counselling is a helping relationship between two or more people; one who is a trained professional and is ready to give expertise assistance and the person(s) that is

burdened with a contending issue, be it in the area of career, educational or socio-personal (Chukuka, 2010). Counselling therefore, is a means by which families of children with visual impairment are given enlightenment, support, information and encouragement about visual impairment on how to support and assist the visually impaired child to attain educational status (Bolchit & Dorothy, 2011). Counselling gives professional help to parents by assisting them create opportunities and suitable environment for the socio-personal, educational and vocational growth of the visually impaired children and making them more effective to their educational pursuits. It is not easy for many students with visual impairment to attain educational status and achieve any feat at all. It, therefore, requires the inputs of many, particularly the parents as well as the guidance counsellor.

Recommendations

More research attempts should be focused on ways to encourage parental involvement based on results from both parents and teachers. The parents should be more encouraged to enable them play their roles better. Teachers of these children should also be assisted on the issue of more exposure and training towards better handling of children with special needs and attention. Schools and teachers should provide visually impaired students with materials in special formats, such as enlarged font, keeping a front row seat open for a student with vision impairment, asking for a sighted volunteer to team up with a vision-impaired student for in-class assignments, assist the student with finding an effective note-taker from the class, allowing audio-taping of class lectures to assist review of notes, give verbal description of visual aids or writing on whiteboard or slides, and spell aloud difficult words or names, supplement

laboratory practical experiments or field trips with audio commentaries, keep teaching environment consistent and uncluttered, and allow students to sit closer to visual resources if necessary.

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