

Title

EXAMINING THE ROLE OF PARENTING IN THE RISE OF STREET-CONNECTED CHILDREN IN LILONGWE, MALAWI

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ABSTRACT

The study investigate effectiveness of Braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment at Lilongwe Girls Secondary School in Malawi. It is a qualitative study using a phenomenology research design and narrative analysis. The study employed purposive sampling to select 15 participants with relevant characteristics. The findings hightlight that Braille is a foundation tool for independence and education globally, learners with visual impairment in Malawi face challenges.

The study reveals that poor academic performance is challenging for learners with visual impairment, mainly due to limited access of Braille and insufficient of teachers training in special needs. Initially they struggle to early preparation, but provide with adequate Braille materials and teachers training special needs to improve the performance of learners with visual impairment. Copy strategies include create routines, involving staff communication and seeking support from their fellow learners without visual impairment, through discussions. The study recommends providing teachers training in special needs, introducing Nemeth code mathematics and providing updated Braille resources. Further research need to evaluate effectiveness of Braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment.

Keywords: Braille, Visual Impairment, Academic Performance, Inclusive Education, Special Needs Education, Assistive Technology, Secondary School Education, Malawi

INTRODUCTION

According to the united nations convention on the Rights of person with Disability (*UNCRPD, 1989*) ensure the right to inclusive

education for children with Disability guarantee access to equality education without discrimination and on equal terms with others. It also emphasizes the essential of accommodation, effective support and individualized measured to maximize measure academic and social development for learners. Education is a fundamental right for every child, including those with impairment.

Background

In Malawi, formal education started in 1875 by missionaries. The main focus of education was on reading writing and arithmetic in 1926, the Department of Education was established by government of Malawi. It was until in 1950's when the provision of Special needs education (SNE) Started by Scottish and South Africa Evangelical Missionaries in two pilot districts in Malawi.. Special needs education is now mandatory across the country in 28 districts in Malawi. The provision of special needs education services begun with the education of learners with visual impairment.

Braille is a tactile system that allows visual impairment learners and partially sighted to access literacy by writing and reading. Braille is read by touch using tips of fingers to feel the letters and symbols. It can be written in a variety of ways, using special equipment and computers software. According to *United Nation (2018)* the importance of the universal touched-based community system for full realization of human rights for blind and partially sighted. Therefore, education is a fundamental right for everyone, including those individuals with visual impairment.

In Malawi, in the past many children with disability have been excluded from basic education (*WHO,2011*), where learners with impairment learn in separate classroom. These approach promote discrimination among learners. But now the introduce inclusive education where all learners learn impairment participate fully in class since they learning

together with other learners without visual impairment. It has help increase knowledge and social interaction with their fellow learners.

Problem Statement

Learners with visual impairment face many challenges in accessing quality education, and Braille remains the primary tool through which helps in reading and writing in class activities. At Lilongwe Girls Secondary School, Braille is widely used to support visual impaired learners in their studies. Despite the importance of Braille, concerns persist regarding its effectiveness in enabling learners to perform competitively especially during national examinations like Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE). Limited access of Braille and inadequate specialist teachers in special needs often constraint the academic performance of learners with visual impairment. As a result, many struggle to finish their assessments on time which directly impacts their opportunity to continues education in university. The issues is critical whether Braille is sufficient to ensure equitable academic achievement. This study filling the gap by critical assessing the effectiveness of Braille in enhancing academic performance of learners with visual impairment.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Main Objective

Assess the effectiveness of Braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment at Lilongwe Girls Secondary School.

Specific objective

- To find out the academic performance

of learners with visual impairment who are using Braille.

- To identify the positive impacts of using the Braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment.
- To analyze how teachers are assist learners with visual impairment who are using Braille.
- To explore the strategies that learners with visual impairment can use to improve the use of Braille and attain good results in MSCE.

Research questions?

- How is the academic performance of learners with visual impairment who are using braille from beginning compare to current performance?
- What are positive impacts of Braille literacy on the academic performance of visually impaired learners?
- How teachers assist learners with visual impairment who are using Braille?
- What strategies can be used to improve the academic performance of learners with visual impairment who are using Braille?

Significance of study

This study is important because it shows the significance of having Braille and inclusive education for all learners in Malawi, through thee assessing the effectiveness Braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment. This is directly related or link with the Sustainable Development Goal's (SDGs) 4, in which target 4.7, which focus on quality education is particularly relevant to promote human right, gender equality, promoting of culture of peace and non-violence. Providing Braille in school help

learners to access quality education and also participate fully in the classroom with other learners enhance knowledge and skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of terms

- **Inclusive education program**

A school-based approach aimed at accessing quality education for all learners including learners with visual impairment According to *inclusive strategies education (2025)*

Theoretical framework

This study has used cognitive learning theory. It is a framework used in understand how learning involves internal mental process such as understanding, thinking ability and memory. It was developed *Jean Piaget (1930)*. Braille resources allows learners with impairment be independent where are able to gather information by own.

The Performance of learner with visual impairment who are using Braille.

The study conducted *Morelle Mokwema (2016)* in Zambia, indicates that surrounding environment affect learners with visual impairment performance. The findings of the study show that at duration of activities for teaching and learning for learners who are visually impaired. Furthermore, regarding the amount of time learners with impairment required in read and finish assignment, the teacher might need to assign various assessment methods and offers learners student extra time.

Another scholars *Aura and Komen (2014)* point out that the beginning braille readers, requires the reading skills associated with the actual reading process. It is important prerequisite that all readers must have to be

efficient and read with comprehension is a rich background of concrete experience involving objects, activities and cause and effect relationship. In additional, Learner with visual impairment have to expressive and receptive vocabulary that correspond experience. They will develop auditory skill of identification and memory for the stories, learners are able to concentrate, self- control and follow direction.

In Rwanda, *Bolingo, A. (2009)* conducted a study to assess the impact of assistive technology on academic performance of learners with visual impairment at university of Rwanda (found out that visually impaired learners use assistive technology such as Braille machine, embossers and slate. It emphasized that technology addresses special need issues as keep information. Learners with visual impairment complete their activities.

The positive impact of using Braille on the academic performance

A study conducted by *Jones and smith (2023)*, indicates that learners with higher level Braille reading skills performed better on standardized test and had higher grades compared other learners who do not use Braille have lower skill and problem skill. This suggest that a strong Foundation in Braille reading and writing is essential academic achievement in learners with visual impairment.

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Teacher support learners with visual impairment using Braille

A study conducted by in *Kirsty (2016)* German, highlighted that teacher should apply same rules to learners with visual impairment need to follow all the same rules that apply to other learners in class. To ensure that learners with visual impairment have an access to learning materials and the same chance to make a contribution and complete assessments as other learners in the class. These helps all learner in the class followed same rules that benefits all learners including those learners with visual impairment, equal treatment.

The strategies that can be used to improve the performance of learners with visual impairment who are using Braille.

The study conducted by *Savaiano and Hatton (2013)* in America. Highlighted that consult Teachers of visually impaired for print, auditory and electronic text reading strategies that consider the learners reading preferences. It provides opportunities to practice reading on own time which is including repeated reading, for overall fluency and comprehension development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology and design

In this research the researcher has use qualitative as method since it is flexible in way that it gives the researcher an opportunity to ask question directly to respondents. The researcher also uses exploratory research design as it assists in discovering more information.

Research setting

This study was conducted at Lilongwe secondary school in Lilongwe, Mchesi.

Study Population

The study targeted 15 participants from Lilongwe Girls Secondary School.

Sampling method

The research employed a non-probability sampling called purposive. The purposive sampling gives a researcher the discretion to use his or her own judgement to select respondents that will help in answering the research questions to meet the set objectives (*Saunder, 2009*). The research target only those respondents who have desired characteristic

Research Instrument

In this research the researcher used interviews guide, focus group and questionnaire.

Data analysis

According to (*Ndegu, 2012*) data analysis is about making sense of the data. The aim of the data analysis is to reconstruct or assemble the data in a meaningful way. Data analysis is done manually where themes categories and sub-categories are in line with the objectives and theory of the study.

Ethical consideration

Ethical refers to a system of moral values concerned with degree to which the degree to which research adhere to professional. Legal and social obligation to the study (*Scutt, 2004*). This research follows and respect the ethics. The researcher asked for consent before engaging data collection. Respondent were informed about the purpose of the research. The research also consider the

principle of voluntary participation and respondents did not be force to participate. Information collected will be privately and confidential and respondents was treated with respect. Information collect has not been misused or wrongly disclosed.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Response Rate

The study targeted 15 respondents from Lilongwe Girls Secondary School in area 8, Lilongwe. All the participants took part in the study, representing 100% response rate.

The academic performance of learners who are using Braille

The findings of the study indicated that use of braille has significant positive on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment. These Learners depend on braille improves literacy skills, including reading, writing and comprehension which enhance in English and Chichewa subject. the school work such as continues assessment, homework and end of term examination Braille also helps learner with visual impairment to be independent in completing search new information. One participant narrate "*at beginning of learning how to use braille machines I had in challenges in adapting*". And other participants also narrated that, "*my performance increased as I adapt the new technology*".

According to *morelle Mokwema (2016)* indicates that surrounding environment affects the performance of learners with visual impairment. The finding of study indicates that lack of resource such as specialist and accessibility of braille in school also affects the performance of learners with visual impairment, in which the read out date syllabus texts and teachers are not trained on

how to use the braille..

Subject did they perform well and subject did not perform well

It has been reviewed that majority learners with visual impairment perform well in humanities subject such as Bible Knowledge, social studies and life skills since these do not have experiment and diagrams. Whilst, for science subject such as biology, physical science, chemistry and agriculture, these subject learn through observation through experiments and drawing diagrams and labeling parts of specimens. This is challenging to these learners because they can see what happening since is practical. For mathematics do not learn because Braille code such as Nemeth code are not available. In line One participant write "*subject which I perform well is Biology, I understand the topics*". Majority of participants do not perform well in biology but in humanities.

According to *Soudien, (2006)* study flexible curriculum and inclusive assessment practices that cater every learner needs is important inclusive classroom because learners have different learning abilities.

Positive impact of braille on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment

The findings of the study show that the use of braille has significant positive impact on the academic performance of learners with visual impairment. Braille enables them to access written topic, allowing them to participate actively in classroom activities and also improve their understanding of topics in particular subjects such as English, Chichewa, Business studies and Bible knowledge. The availability of braille materials has foster reading and writing skills and promoting equal participation in assessment same as other learners. One of participant

Overall, the study indicates that braille does not only serve as tool for writing and reading, but also it is an instrument that is used in academic achievement which empowering learners with visual impairment to understand and connect concept in class so that perform well in academic.

Teacher supporting for learners with visual impairment who are using Braille.

most of teachers lack skills on how to use the braille and also on how to handle learners with visual impairment. This study finding shows that some teacher describes some diagram on the chalkboard by mention word such this and that which is not acceptable in teaching learners with visual. Learners with visual impairment should handle with care since learning ability is slow compare to learns with visual impairment. In line Lynch, (2011) indicate that special training on help them to support effective. One participant narrate that “*most of time teachers explain diagrams on the chalk board by mention this but I am unable to see*”. another participate complained “*teacher try the best by writing what teacher is observing so that I can easily understand to question which asking on diagram*”.

Extra help they get from their teacher on topic do not understand

A researcher found out that most learners with visual impairment find it difficult understand topics because all activities are written on chalk board. Therefore, learners ask extra help from their teacher so that can understand the topic which have learnt in class .one participants narrate that “*I ask for extract from our teachers, has help me to perform better*”. In line with A Glickman (2022) in support of study findings indicates that motivation learners with visual impairment can perform well in class.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that learners with visual impairment at Lilongwe Girls Secondary School struggle to access Braille Machine and insufficient of teachers training who are to use machines. While they are skilled in time management and Their coping strategies including creating routines, updating braille and teacher training in special needs. Many learners face challenges such as limited access to braille materials and lack of teacher training in special needs but struggle to seek better support, such as. At school rely on fellow learners for help but lack of skills to

RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening operational efficiency by ensuring early preparation, updating the Braille machines, provision of adequate Braille materials introducing of Nemeth code and teacher training in special need would help to poor academic performance of learners with visual impairment at Lilongwe Secondary school in Malawi.

Area of further Study

According to study findings, there is a need for further study in which future studies should investigate the assistive and technology programs, in order to assess the impact of professional development programs, workshop and ongoing

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