

Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions on Instruction of Braille Literacy in Primary Schools for Learners with Visual Impairment in Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to investigate and analyze teachers' perceptions on instruction of Braille literacy in special primary schools for learners with visual impairment in Kenya. To address the problem of decline in Braille literacy as a result of teachers' reluctance to learn and teach Braille in these schools, seven objectives were formulated to determine and establish teachers' perceptions on the Braille Code, and factors influencing instruction of Braille in schools, as well as establishing their professional preparation, dual media for learners with low vision and the relationship between Braille and technology. The study targeted five (5) primary schools which had learners with visual impairment in the country and the target group comprised 132 teachers teaching in the five primary schools and five headteachers. The research adopted the descriptive survey research design and was based on Bruner's perceptual model which explains the process of perceptual development. Multiple sampling techniques were applied to select the five schools and respondents. Out of fifty-eight (58) respondents, fifty-three (53) were teachers while five (5) were headteachers. A questionnaire focusing on the objectives of the study was used to collect data from the teachers. An interview schedule was used to collect data from the headteachers. Pilot testing of the teachers' instrument yielded a reliability of 0.842 while teachers' questionnaire was reviewed by experts to enhance validity. Quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics namely: frequencies and percentages. The statistics were generated by means of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0, while qualitative data was analyzed through narrative analysis and thematic approach. The findings revealed that Braille literacy skills have declined in special primary schools for learners with visual impairment and that factors perceived by teachers as causes of this decline in Braille standards include: increase in multiple disability population, pupil-teacher ratio, inadequate teacher preparation and teacher incompetence. The findings also indicated that teachers were not specially trained in Early Childhood Education (ECD) for learners with visual impairment. The study findings further revealed that nearly two-thirds of the teachers believed that children who use contracted Braille are better spellers and faster readers than children who read English Braille grade 1. Moreover, the research established that schools for learners with visual impairment do not have a standardized assessment tool developed to help teachers determine whether children should receive literacy instruction through Braille, print or through a combination of Braille and print, with a mean of 2.21. Finally, findings revealed that nearly three quarters of the respondents indicated that technological devices should be used to enhance Braille, not to replace it, with a mean response of 1.25. On the basis of these findings, the study recommends that policy-makers through the Teachers Service Commission should adequately support the ECD programmes for learners with visual impairment with specially trained teachers. The Ministry of Education should also facilitate Special Needs Education teachers to attend Braille refresher courses, seminars and workshops on a regular basis. The Ministry should also make a deliberate effort to increase funds to the schools for learners with visual impairment

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