

**Teachers' Workload Influences Their Attitude Towards Visually Impaired Children In Integrated Schools.**

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**ABSTRACT**

*When visually pupils attend public schools, there are many additional challenges for them to overcome for their adjustment. Some of the challenges includes; parental expectation, sighted peer attitude and teachers workload. The study assessed the attitude of 19 male and 29 female teachers in integrated classrooms on whether their workload influenced their attitude towards integration of visually impaired pupils. The main objective was to find out if teachers with less than 20 lessons per week differed with those with more than 20 lessons per week (heavy workload). The sample selection criteria was any teacher who taught an integrated classroom. There were 48 teachers in this regard. The instrument used to measure attitude was a 24 item Likert scale which had a Cronbach alpha of 0.7. Collected data was coded and analyzed through SPSS to get mean grades of 67.13 for those teachers with more than 20 lessons per week. The calculated mean difference was -2.66 while the p value was 0.278. This implied that there was no statistically significant difference between teachers with less than 20 lessons per week and those with more than 20 lessons per week. However, there were minimal differences favoring teachers with less workload per week*

**Key Words: Teachers Workload, Integration, Attitude, Adjustment**

## **Background Information**

The successful implementation of any inclusive policy is based on the educators/teachers being positive about the whole concept. Examining teachers' attitude towards integration and inclusion of children with special educational needs in mainstream system is vital step in the process of successful implementation of educational policies. This paper investigated how teachers' workload influences their attitude towards visually impaired children in integrated schools.

In a study of social acceptance of speech handicapped children in ordinary schools, Marge (1996) found that children and teachers attitude towards handicapped children were similar and that both preferred the non-handicapped child. But for integration of the visually impaired pupils to succeed teachers accept visually handicapped one when they join the mainstream school.

### **Statement of the problem**

The full integration and adjustment of visually impaired children in various regular primary schools is slowed by their rejection by their hosts. So how is attitude of teachers influenced by their workload?

### **Objective**

To find out if teachers with less than 20 lessons per week differed with those with more than 20 lessons per week (heavy workload).

### **Hypothesis**

There was no significant difference between teachers with less than 20 lessons per week to those with more than 20 lessons per week in their attitude towards integration of visually impaired learners.

### **Symbolic Interactions Theory**

Societies are composed of interacting individuals who not only react but perceive, interpret, act and create. The individual is a dynamic and changing actor. The individual mind is always changing due to new experience and activities in the environment. We share meanings with others. We respond to others and reality emerges in the process of interaction. According to Blumer one of the chief architects of the symbolic interaction refers to the peculiar distinctive character of interaction as it takes place between human beings. Human beings interpret or define each other actions (symbols). Skinner (1986), a behavioral psychologist points out that individuals react to external stimuli, a process Hollander (1969) says occurs in stages. That is, when a visually impaired pupil is brought in an integrated regular classroom the sighted children and even teachers may take time to familiarize themselves with the new comer. During that time of familiarization, significant learning occurs (Rogers, 1969). Abraham (1982) pressured this theory and observed that societies are made of interacting individuals, who are dynamic. The individual changes after acquiring new experiences. Experience is shared and through this interaction occurs, a situation Abraham called symbolic interaction. This interaction is vital for the adjustment in teachers including visually handicapped in school. When visually impaired pupils are brought to the integrated classroom, the above mentioned interaction may not be there. Visually impaired

children have social features which are perceived by sighted children and teachers as lack of social competence. In their study Bryan, (1986a) Pearl et al, (1986) found that disabled children in integrated schools, received more negative than positive reinforcement from teachers than their non-handicapped counterparts.

In Kenya, studies indicate that visually impaired children perceive themselves as higher academic achievers (Anyango, 1984) although they hate integration (Njoroge 1991) due to their low self-concept (Muola, 2000) and perhaps the attitude of their sighted hosts in the schools.

### **Teachers training as a factor in attitude towards visually impaired children**

Teachers' skills and attitude assist the process of bonding teachers and students. This facilitates knowing and working with students as individuals (Collins, 1996; McCain & Good, 1996, Morse, 1996). Teacher's skills necessary for working with the handicapped children may be instrumental in determining student's attitude towards placement and quality of intervention services (Medina & Luna, 1999). In addition, the flexibility and attitude of regular classroom teachers are related to success of integration once it has been undertaken (Grosenick, 1971; Simek, 1979 & White, 1980).

Planning teams often do not select or identify the receiving teacher before planning integration (Peterson, 1980). This is because teachers come from the same community as the visually impaired children; hence they possess the same negative attitude as the rest of the society. They resist the integration of the visually impaired children (Goodlad, 1984). This resistance is natural and stems from teachers not being prepared for the task. Handicapped should not be mainstreamed until teachers in regular schools are trained and willing to handle them.

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The observation supports Schwarts (1983) finding that, the teacher's positive attitude towards the handicapped children is crucial because it helps in adjusting and shaping the attitude of the non-handicapped ones. Wahler (1977) observed that teachers could convince an isolated Childs peer group to change their reaction towards him/her and thus increase social activities between them. In addition, Kounin (1970) found that interaction between a teacher and a pupil has an impact on how other students view the one who has interacted with the teacher. This means that if a teacher is trained to handle a visually impaired child favorably, especially in front of the other children, they will appreciate and accept the child faster than if the opposite is the case. This enhances social integration. Hence the need to investigate teachers' attitude towards the incoming visually impaired children. The study examined the impact of training in special education or lack of it, in influencing their attitude of teachers towards integration of visually impaired children in regular schools.

## Research Methodology

### *Research design*

The study used ex-post facto design, which involves systematic empirical inquiry in which the researcher does not have direct control of independent variables because their manifestations have already occurred and cannot be manipulated. This approach makes use of a naturally subjected to treatment (independent variable) in the form of integration into regular schools.

### *Location of the study*

The study was done in Nakuru County, Kenya.

### *Population of the study*

In Nakuru County there were 558 primary schools, including 26 ones with visually impaired pupils. These schools had a population of 352,465 pupils which translates over 700,000 parents, over 5000 teachers. There were 9 integrated schools. The sample size of teachers in integrated schools were 48.

### *Sample and sampling procedure*

In the study there were 9 schools with at least one visually impaired pupil in the sample. There were 48 teachers of visually impaired pupils in 9 integrated schools. The criteria of selecting teachers was that they taught integrated classrooms. This is considered a fair representation of the total population (Kathuri & Pals, 1993; et al; 1996; Mugenda & Mugenda, 1999).

Probability sampling involves selecting a reasonable number of subjects that is a true representative of the target population. Non probability sampling was used to select all teachers (48) who taught in any integrated classroom. All the schools in the sample were selected on the basis of having at least one visually impaired pupil.

### *Data analysis*

Descriptive statistics namely frequencies, percentages and means were used to analyze the data collected. The inferential statistics, mainly t-test were used to test the hypothesis of the study.

## Findings

Results show that there a statistically significant difference between teachers with less workload and those with more workload.

**Table 1: Teacher's workload attitude**

Work load	N	%	Mean
Below 20 Lessons	34	70.1	67.12
Above 20 lessons	14	29.9	69.7
Total	48	100	

Table 1 shows that teachers who had more than 20 lessons per week were slightly more (69.77 %) than those who had less than 20 lessons per week (67.12 %).

**Table 2: Teacher's attitude due to workload**

<b>Workload</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Mean attitude</b>	<b>Mean difference</b>	<b>T value</b>	<b>P value (2 tailed)</b>
<b>Below 20 lessons</b>	26	67.12	-2.66	-1.094	<b>0.278</b>
<b>Above 20 lessons</b>	22	69.77			

There was no significant difference between teachers with more and those with less than 20 lessons per week in their attitude towards the visually impaired pupils. The objective was to find out if a teachers weekly workload influenced his/her perception of the visually impaired children in integrated schools. A weekly workload of less than 20 lessons was considered low while more than 20 lessons were considered high. The obtained p value was 0.278 while the mean difference was -2.66. It implies that, there was no statistically significant difference between teachers with less than 20 lessons per week and with those with more than 20 lessons per week. The null hypothesis was accepted.

It is normal for students to demand a lot of teacher attention whether visually impaired pupils or not. Students seek clarification, answers and general guidelines on how to tackle issues from their teachers at all levels, from nursery schools to university. Over 90 % of all teachers in the sample strongly agreed that low vision pupil demand a lot of attention. This shows that teachers in integrated schools had to contend with demand for attention from both visually impaired pupils and sighted ones.

Teachers in integrated schools may have become tolerant to problems of visually impaired children like poor handwriting, slow in school work and demand for more attention from visually impaired children. When it comes to teacher's workload and motivation to work only 4.5 % of the teachers reported lacking motivation in their work while 95.5 % of all the teachers reported that they did not need motivation to teach in integrated schools.

When teachers were asked whether it is not difficult teaching low vision pupils, half (50 % of the teachers') were in agreement while 39.6 % of teachers felt it was difficult task. Apart from teachers heavy workload, teachers have to handle visually impaired pupils have several problems, which hinder learning. These problems include emotional disturbance, time use, poor handwriting and speed of reading and absenteeism. Earlier studies by Glass, Cahan, Smith and Filby (1982) reported that smaller classes are associated with high quality student's achievement. A position also supported by Mackenzie (1983) but who cautioned that class size alone does not guarantee success but teacher preparedness for work may be the main determinant factors for success in integration.

Research by Gersten & Walker (1981) found out those teachers of integrated schools perceive handicapped children as difficult to teach and demanding, while Dui'brough & Kniread (1979) had reported that classroom teachers may perceive the visually impaired pupils as extra burden. Due

to this extra workload the teachers may use a lot of their time with the handicapped children at the expense of the non-handicapped.

Xia-guang (1990) indicated that visually impaired pupils need to take more time to read and write. As they require extra time for completing their work, teachers reported that the visually impaired children are very hard working in their class work and they need remedial instructions from teachers.

Fullan (1988) argue that teaching effectiveness depends of teacher's beliefs. Teachers of visually impaired children may be surprised because they were not prepared for an extra burden of the handicapped or handicapped child may interfere with education of other children (Booth, 1983). Visually impaired pupils require more remedial work than sighted ones as 79.2 % of teachers reported. Only 18.7 % of the sample disagrees and a minority 2.1% was left undecided. As reported elsewhere, visually impaired pupils just like any other pupils require remedial teaching to improve their class performance. Hence they seek more attention. Remedial teaching is required to correct initial errors that occur in the learning process. These initial errors were listed by Christine (1979) and Hodges (1983) as spelling and omission ones. They further reported that diagnostic teaching approach is desirable because students have different level of vision at different stages in their school time. Later Xia-guang (1990) reported that as visually impaired pupils become integrated in regular classroom where they study with regular students, they need and receive help services from a special teacher.

Bennet & Cass (1989) added that visually impaired pupil's increases teacher's workload because of their low IQ, being dozy, careless mistakes and difficulty in recognizing shapes. In the same regard Hardman (1993) adds that visually impaired children differ from sighted peers in areas of intelligence, ranging from understanding spatial concepts to a general knowledge of the world. They also differ in speech and language development and social development, orientation and mobility.

### **Conclusion**

There was minimal difference in teacher's attitude due to their workload.

### **Recommendation**

Workload of teachers in integrated schools should be reduced or moderated.

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