

A Case Study on Assessing Opportunities and Challenges of Students with Low Vision in Special Classes at Tabor General Primary School, South Gondar, Ethiopia

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Received for publication: 14 June 2022.

Accepted for publication: 31 August 2022.

Abstract

The study was aimed at assessing the opportunities and challenges of students with low vision (SWLV) in Tabor General primary and special need school of Debretabor town, south Gondar, Ethiopia. A qualitative case study research design was used to carry out this study. The total number of participants involved is 28, of which 12 were SWLV, 10 teachers, 4 parents and 2 principals. Teachers, SWLV, and parents were selected using purposive sampling method. Comprehensive sampling was also used to select principals. Interview, FGD and observation were employed to collect data, which were analyzed using thematic data analysis technique. The results of the study showed that most of SWLV were happy with getting a chance to attend their education. They get extra time during examination; get motivation and advice from principals, though it was not enough. Students' skill in Braille writing and reading was good. The challenges SWLV faced were found out to be lack of assistive technology, absence of resource room, absence of visual interpreter. Teachers were not using student-centered teaching method very well and didn't implement IEP. The most difficult subject for SWLV was reported to be Mathematics. SWLV were not involved in co-curricular activities. Finally, recommendations were put forward based the findings of the study.

Keywords: *Low vision, Students with low vision, Special class, Challenge, Opportunity.*

Introduction

Background of the Study

The right to education is a well-established universal human right, underpinned by international human rights treaties and conventions. It is undeniable that when education is guaranteed, access to all other civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights is enhanced (UNICEF, 2007, cited in UN, 2015).

A. The Concept of Visual impairment

Disability is a complex and often quite controversial concept. It is "the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions, referring to the negative aspects of the interaction between an individual (with a health condition) and the individual's contextual factors (environmental and personal factors)" (UN, 2011, P. 4). The report also elaborates that "disability is complex, dynamic, multidimensional, and contested. The transition from an individual, medical perspective to a structural, social perspective has been described as the shift from a 'medical model' to 'social model' in which people are viewed as being disabled by society rather than by their bodies (UN, 2011).

Visual impairment, being one type of disability, is defined as the reduced vision caused by eye diseases, accidents or eye conditions present from birth (Keefe, 1999, cited in Agesa, 2014). Visual impairment is categorized into blindness and the low vision.

The terms "low vision, partially sighted, legally blind and totally blind" are used by schools, colleges, and other educational institutions to describe learners with visual impairments.

Low vision is defined by Kebede (2015); as follows:

Low vision generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. It applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of eyeglasses or contact lenses. People with low vision use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although they may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes Braille.

Partially sighted indicates some type of visual problem, which necessitates that a person receives special education in some cases,

Legally blind indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye after best correction (contact lenses or glasses), or a field of vision less than 20 degrees in the better eye (Kebede, 2015).

i. Prevalence of Visual Impairment

According to World Health Organization (WHO, 2009), Sub-Saharan Africa has an estimated 5-6 million blind and 16-18 million persons with low vision.

In Ethiopia the national prevalence of low vision is 3.7% with considerable regional variations.. The prevalence of childhood blindness is 0.1%, which accounts for over6% of the total blindness burden nationwide (Yemane et al., 2007).

According to Haile (2014), the prevalence of low vision and blindness in Ethiopia is 3.7% and 1.6% respectively with considerable regional variations. The prevalence of childhood blindness is 0.1%, which accounts for over 6% of the total blindness burden nationwide

ii. Educational Services for Learners with Visual Impairment

The history of education of people with disabilities in general and those with visual impairment in particular has gone through long and difficult challenges and passed through stages: beginning with segregation and ending, in most countries, with inclusion (Sydenham & Thomas, 2009).

The education of children with disabilities in Ethiopia was initially begun by foreigners but it was not started at the same time in all places. Later, the government of Ethiopia gave attention to the education of children with disabilities, even though many children with are still out of school. Finally those who are in school are also at risk of dropout and repetition. The education of these children is also impeded with limitations in resource and support in integrated classrooms

B. Challenges of Students with Low Vision

Many people with visual impairment are rejected human beings possibly because they might not have been regarded as normal in social instances.

i. Academic challenges of Students with Low Vision:

With the exception of unique problems of visual input and possibly a greater demand in processing the fundamental learning procedures, blind children do not differ from those of sighted children (Taylor, & Sternberg, 1989, cited in Awetash, 2013).

Purdue (2009, p. 807), cited in Kebede (2015) explains that the challenge regarding their educational achievement is brought about by the barriers that get in the way of full acceptance and participation in education activities. Age of onset and severity of vision loss as well as presence of multiple disabilities are some of the factors that make each child's situation unique.

According to Rosenblum and Amato (2004), there are several problems in the lesson books of visual impaired students such as, reading the text book; accuracy problems of text books in the Braille form, problems of translated textbook access, text books were not designed specifically for visually impaired students, printed version differences between the Braille version and the text book version.

ii. Challenges in Physical Movement

Children with low vision can experience many negative consequences such as feeling like an outsider because they cannot take part fully in activities, feel less than capable because they do not understand visual concepts fully and feel clumsy because they drop things or bump into objects. All of these consequences can have the effects of lowering their self-esteem. Restricted movement within the environment, particularly for children with congenital visual impairment, can affect a child's development. Children with visual impairment often have limited interactions with their environment, less reason to explore interesting objects and as a result miss opportunities to learn (Andrea and Farrent, 2000, cited in Gale Group, 2009, p. 3).

iii. Lack of Social Skills

Social skills are important to a child's overall success. Children need instruction and feedback in appropriate ways of interacting with others, such as initiating conversation without eye contact, facial expression. Many students with VI cannot see nonverbal forms of communication, so they miss out the information and feelings displayed with a look, a nod, a smile, a frown, or a shrug (Kassie, 2013).

Since SWVI experience over-protection from their parents, their families and service provider, they do not develop the societal skills that are required for integrating into school life (McBroom, Tedder & Kang, 1991). SWVI are sometimes insecure and ashamed and have a hard time starting a conversation with others. This might lead to an uncomfortable situation when it comes to asking for help and might affect their performance of academic tasks (Vancil, 1997).

C. Opportunities of Students with Low Vision

i. Conducive Policy Environment

There are many national and international instruments to support children with disabilities. These are like, Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Salamanca statement for action. In respect of the education of CWDs, the human rights-based model requires the state to ensure that Children with disabilities (CWDs) are able to access education on an equal foot with other children (Meseret, 2013).

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes as a goal the inclusive quality approach to education 'Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all (Goal 4).

The national legal documents that gave emphasis to the need for supporting and empowering people with disabilities include: The FDRE Constitution, the Education and training Policy of Ethiopia and other related specific programs and strategies such as Special Needs Education Program Strategy.

The SNE Program Strategy

The Ministry of Education has developed SNE Program strategy. This strategy, according to the document (MOE, 2006) provides an overview of the current situation of SN; define national objectives, strategic priorities and division of responsibilities; identifies resources and possibilities for cooperation; propose key elements for inclusive education system development, and analyze favorable conditions, factors, risks and possible solutions.

Generally, the document further noted that, the strategy shows the direction for the development of inclusive education and special needs education services that should be open to all learners.

Openly accessible at <http://www.european-science.com>

ii. Braille Reading and Writing Provisions

It is true that Braille books even are produced for libraries for the blind by individual transcriber, usually volunteers. Thanks to computer technology a laborious process Braille writing has been changed to computerized Brailing system.

iii. Orientation and Mobility

Orientation 'refers to our understanding of where we are currently located in the environment, in relation to where we have travelled from and where we would like to travel'. Mobility 'relates to our ability to move safely and confidently through the environment. This will often incorporate the use of mobility aids, including sighted assistance, a white cane, or a guide dog' (Royal Guide Dogs Tasmania, n.d., cited in Farrant, 1980). Therefore, orientation programs are highly important to help students

iv. Guidance and Counseling Services

Children with disabilities may show varied emotional reaction and self-awareness. However, it is highly crucial that the counselor has to make ultimate effort to rehabilitate the individual to accept the change in self before he/she accomplishes new learning and future development.

The Present Study

Even though different research works have been presented on students with visual impairment in general, attention has not been given for SWLV. The researcher was assigned in Tabor General Primary and Special Needs School as an ambassador of the school in school college linkage program of Begemidir College of Teacher Education. So the researcher has got an opportunity to hear that SWLV in the school have different challenges, and attentions were not given for them like other students with disabilities. In the same manner, the researcher could not find previous research works on the challenges and opportunities of SWLV in the study area. That is why the researcher preferred to select the research problem and to conduct an investigation on the topic under investigation in Tabor Primary and Special Need School at Debretabor town.

The study attempted to answer the following questions.

1. What are the opportunities of SWLV in the Special classes of Tabor primary general and Special Needs School?
2. What are the challenges of SWLV in the special classes of Tabor General Primary and Special Needs School?

Objectives of the Study

General objective of the study

The general objective of this study was to investigate the opportunities and challenges of SWLV in Special classes in the case of Tabor General primary and Special Needs School.

Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:-

1. To identify the opportunities of SWLV in Special classes at Tabor general primary school.
2. To investigate the challenges of SWLV faced in Special classes in the case of Tabor General Primary and Special Needs School.

Methodology

Research design

The main objective of this study was to investigate the opportunities and challenges of students with Low Vision in Special classrooms of Tabor general primary and Special needs school. For this reason, to carry out the study qualitative research method was utilized. Qualitative research-

ers tend to study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Qualitative research is “a multi method in its focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994, cited in Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007).

In a case study design the researcher explores a case or cases over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection. It answers questions about what happened and why or how it is happened. The case study method is amongst the most flexible of research designs, and is particularly useful in re-searching issues related to sustainability and institutional systems (Yin, 2012).

Setting

The study was conducted in Tabor general primary and Special Needs school, which is located in Debretabor city administration South Gondar zone, Amhara region. It is 666 Km far from Addis Ababa. According to the data obtained from the school in 2010 E.C, the school was established in 1976 E.C by the fund obtained from the Ethiopian Government. From the Year 1976 E.C to 1989 E.C, the school served only for students without disabilities. But in 1989, the school transformed itself to General Primary and Special Needs School level. Starting from 1989 E.C, the school enrolls students with three types of disabilities, namely, students with visual impairment, hearing impairment and intellectual disability.

Participants

The population of the study were 66, where 26 SWLV, 26 parents, 2 directors, and 12 teachers. From this total population, the participants of the study were totally 28. These were one principal, one vice principal, 10 Special classroom teachers, 12 SWLV and 4 parents of SWLV. Purposive sampling technique was used to select SWLV, teachers, and parents from the target population. In purposive sampling the aim is to choose cases that are likely to be information rich with respect to the purpose of the study (Gall et al., 2007). Here, SWLV were selected by their age level, so those who are older in age were purposefully selected for the study. On the other hand, principals were selected using comprehensive sampling method.

Table 1. Summary of Total Population and Sample Size of the study

No.	Participants	Population			Sample			%	Sampling Method
		M	F	T	M	F	T		
1	Special class teachers	5	7	12	4	6	10	91.67	Purposive Sampling
2	Head and vice principal	2	-	2	2	-	2	100	Comprehensive Sampling
3	Students with low vision	14	12	26	7	5	12	46.2	Purposive Sampling
4	Parents of SWLV	13	13	26	2	2	4	15.4	Purposive Sampling
	Total	35	31	66	15	13	28		

Source: The researcher, 2018

Data Collection Instruments

To conduct this study, various data collection instruments were used. The instruments were Interview, FGD and Observation.

Interview guide

The researcher wanted to probe deeper into the participants’ responses on what they knew about the opportunities, and challenges of SWLV. To this end, the researcher used a semi-structured

interview guide. The semi-structured interview involves having a series of structured questions but then it explores more deeply using open-ended questions to obtain additional information

The interview items were developed by the researcher and consisted of predetermined questions asked in predetermined and scheduled manner about challenges and opportunities within special classrooms in relation to the teaching and learning approaches, educational facilities and supports as well as the psycho social aspects of SWLV.

The researcher interviewed 2 principals, 4 teachers and 4 SWLV in order to obtain in-depth information about the current opportunities and challenges. The interviews took approximately an hour for each interviewee.

Focus Group Discussion

FGD was developed to gather information about the challenges and opportunities of SWLV, in order to get data which are versatile, cannot be collected through other data collection methods. Accordingly, 8 SWLV and 6 teachers as well as 4 parents participated in the FGD. The number of FGD guiding questions were 7 for teachers, 4 for parents and 6 for SWLV were prepared. The items were prepared based on the basic questions of the study.

Observation

Maxwell (2005) argues that it is known that observation often provides a direct and influential way of learning about people's behavior and context in which this occurs. The Guideline for observing the teaching learning activities consists of 25 variables to be observed. The researcher used non-participant observation method, record on note-pads and observation was conducted for 60 minutes in each class room for three days. A checklist was prepared for observing the teaching learning process, and the class room physical condition.

Procedures of Data Collection

The necessary arrangements were made with the administration of the school to observe the special classrooms of the school from grades "O" class up to Grade3, to conduct FGD with SWLV and their peers, and to interview the respondents. Every respondent was interviewed separately. The researcher explained the objectives of the interviews, and ascertain by asking the respondents when they have questions and other concerns. The interviewer recited common introductions when all interviews were begun.

The process of interview was done by both taking notes and tape recording to collect the data more completely and objectively via the interview schedules. Further, the major issues of the interview schedule were comprised of sequenced theme; background variables, views and understandings. These were taken as predominant areas that enabled the interviewer (researcher) to grasp relevant information about the challenges and opportunities of SWLV in special classrooms.

The researcher made adjustments to the site, research participants and informants and carried out basic data collection activities and took observation notes in the course of data collection. Finally, ending of data collection was taking place after the researcher conducted the last interview.

Methods of Data Analysis

Based on the nature of the basic questions, the data collected from the respondents was edited, coded, classified, organized and interpreted. The data obtained through FGD, interview, and observation was analyzed using thematic data analysis technique.

Before starting the data analysis process, the researcher read and documented raw data that were gathered from interview, FGD, and observation, based on the respondents' response and observations of the researcher that describes the condition or the occurrences under the study. Subsequently, the researcher grouped and categorized findings and finally analyzed it thematically followed by participants' narration and detailed description and interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher identified the key informants with whom to begin with the interview process and discussion was made with all participants of the study. The discussion enclosed information relating to the researcher's consent to the research courses of what the study examines, the right to withdraw from participation at any time, the right of getting any relevant information about the study. On the other hand, the researcher obtained consent of all participants verbally to start and conduct the interview process, as well as any participant of the research was not asked to give or inform his or her name.

Results and Discussion

In the presentation of the findings, the original statements of the respondents' responses are presented in line with the basic research questions. In each part, data were first presented and then followed by discussion of the findings of other researches, whether they support or not.

The real names of the respondents are not used; instead letters and numbers are used to represent the respondents as well as direct quotes are used for responses obtained during the interview session. As shown in the case description and in table 2, SWLV stands for students with low vision, T for teachers, PR for principals, and PA for parents. Wherever number is added, it represents serial number of the participants in the study (for example, SWLV-1 stands for the first; SWLV2 stands for the second student with low vision and so on). However, the numbers do not contain any meaning, like ranks and values, but they have only been used for identification purpose only.

Demographic characteristics of the study participants

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of participants of the study

SWLV	Age (Year)	Grade and Section	Degree of Visual Impairment	Teachers	Principals	Parents
LV 1	15	2 nd	Low vision	T 1	PR 1	PA 1
LV 2	16	3 rd	Low vision	T 2	PR 2	PA 2
LV 3	14	1 st	Low vision	T 3		PA 3
LV 4	15	2 nd	Low vision	T 4		PA 4
LV 5	13	3 rd	Low vision	T5		
LV 6	15	3 rd	Low vision	T6		
LV 7	14	2 nd	Low vision	T7		
LV 8	15	1 st	Low vision	T8		
LV 9	14	O class	Low vision	T9		
LV 10	17	3 rd	Low vision	T10		
LV 11	14	1 st	Low vision			
LV 12	13	O class	Low vision			
Total	12	-	-	10	2	4

Source: Tabor Primary and Special needs School, 2017/18

In order to organize interpretation and make discussion of the study phenomenon, the data was coded. Following the coding and sorting of the raw data, various categories emerged. Thereafter, the categories were grouped into themes in relation to the theoretical perspectives and research

questions of the study. The findings are presented in the context of the specific objectives of the study. The themes and categories are presented in the following table.

Table 3. Themes and categories

Themes	Categories
Educational opportunities for students with low vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility of education • Supports from teachers and administrators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocation of extra time during exam <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy documents • Braille Reading and writing skill
Educational Challenges of students with low vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges related to the process of teaching learning in the class room. • Challenges related to mobility and orientation both inside and outside the class room. • Challenges related with Educational materials and resources provision. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individualized Educational Program.
Psycho Social Challenges of students with low vision(When interacting with the society both inside and outside the school).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation and interaction of SWLV in the society <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Parental over protection of SWLV ➤ Intra and inter group r/n ship of SWLV

Source: The researcher, 2018

Opportunities for Students with Low Vision

Educational Opportunities for Students with Low Vision

Accessibility of Education and Other Related Services

It is obvious and common that educational goals cannot be achieved without the proper support of stakeholders. Activities in general and education in particular need specific support to be successful. This is especially true for SWLV.

SWLV and teachers involved in the study did not deny that SWLV got educational opportunity in the setting. During interview, all SWLV involved in the study assured that there are some opportunities for SWLV throughout their stay in the school. One of the opportunities that the school provided for SWLV was to have access to attend the special classes.

SWLV1, for example, stated, “in the school, teachers and other students advice and encourage us to learn and other students play with us, both inside and outside the school”. The other 3 SWLV agreed with the idea that almost all the school community has positive attitude towards SWLV.

In addition, all directors, the majority of parents and all teachers from interview and FGD were of similar opinion that SWLV have got opportunities in playing and discussing with sighted peers in the school.

This shows SWLV have got opportunities that practically facilitate their learning and social interaction with other students in the school.

Supports from Teachers and Administrators

SWLV were asked the question, “Do you get support from teachers and principals?” SWLV responded that teachers and principals give moral and technical support. The responses are pre-

sented as follows. SWLV 1 stated, “Teachers provide lesson explanation, whereas administrators give informal awareness.”

In a similar way, SWLV 2 revealed that “teachers use chart board as a teaching aid, and it is the only material available in the school that teachers mainly use to teach us.”

In the same manner, both principals of the school revealed that they are striving to fulfill the necessary materials and any required support for SWLV as much as possible.

Here almost all of the participants in semi-structured interview and FGD reported that SWLV did not get sufficient support apart from motivation, awareness, and lesson explanation during learning. Although there is minor support, it is not enough to bring a meaningful change on the education and learning of SWLV in the school.

Giving Extra Time during Examination

For the question, “Do your teachers give extra time during examination?” All SWLV confirmed that they get extra time from their teachers during examination. Their response is described in detail as follows. SWLV1, for example, stated, “Teachers give us extra time though we do not have speed.”

Furthermore SWLV also 4 added: “Teachers do not collect exam papers from us, even when the allotted time is over.” This indicates that SWLV in the school have no problems of time during examination.

Teachers also responded the following responses when asked if they give extra time during examination for SWLV. T1, for example, said: “I provide extra time for SWLV because they do not have speed to read the exam as sighted peers. Reading questions takes time for low vision Students. I also admit to provide extra time until they finish exam.”

To sum up, the participants from semi-structured interview (both teachers and students) have assured that extra time was given for SWLV during examination.

Reading and Writing Braille

For a student with SWVI, learning to read and write Braille was a key to literacy, successful employment, and independence. Braille was the best way for them to develop skills in spelling, grammar and punctuation (Halten, 2002).

SWLV were asked whether they write and read by Braille equally with their sighted peers, who can read texts in print. Concerning this point, students responded as follows: SWLV 3 replied: “My skill in writing and reading Braille is satisfactory. But I cannot write and read Braille equally with sighted students who write and read print texts”. Similar findings were found from student participants in FGD that they can write and read Braille. Teachers were also asked the question in interview and FGD how they see Braille reading and writing skills of SWLV. All teachers confirmed that SWLV can write and read Braille.

Generally, based on the above data, it is possible to say that students with low vision can write and read Braille. So the ability of Braille reading and writing is very important for SWLV.

International and Local Policies for SWLV

i. International policies for SWLV

Special attention has been paid to the needs of CWDs. Concerning the right to education to CWDs, including SWLV, various policies and proclamations are designed and expected to be implemented. The United Nations has declared standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The right to education is clearly and explicitly stated in the new Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The UN Article 23 states that states shall take appropriate measures for facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community.

ii. *National policies on SWLV*

Ethiopia has ratified various international Conventions and instruments relevant to the education of children with disabilities (MoE, 2012). The Ethiopian Constitution (1995) emphasizes the need to allocate resources and provide assistance to disadvantaged groups. In particular, the constitution sets out the State's responsibility for the provision of necessary rehabilitation and support services for people with disabilities. The constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE, 1995) under article 90, declared that "to the extent the country's resources permit, policies shall aim to provide all Ethiopians access to public health and education (FDRE, 1995).

The Education and Training Policy (FDRE, 1994) special education appears to be favored. In this policy, emphasis is given to the "provision of education both to the handicapped and to the gifted in accordance with their potential and needs" (p. 9), and further confirming that "special education and training will be provided for people with special needs.

This policy also states, "Expansion of quality primary education to all citizens is not only a right but also a guarantee for development". It aims at providing education to all children without any discrimination and assures that disadvantaged groups will receive special support in education.

The Special Needs Education Program Strategy (SNEPS) is yet another policy instrument introduced in 2006 with the aim of identifying and removing the prevailing barriers to the implementation of inclusive education (MoE, 2006). This federal-level strategy shows the direction for providing access to inclusive education to all learners by identifying and removing existing barriers at all levels of schooling and higher education.

Educational Challenges Students with Low Vision Faced

Challenges Related to Teaching Learning in the Classroom

Challenges related to teacher's way of teaching

It was important to know whether different teaching methods were used by teachers to meet the needs of SWLV or not in the class room. During interview, it was confirmed that teachers used body language for teaching students with low vision like sighted students some times. Students with low vision learn differently, and they have different learning needs. In answering the question "Do your teachers know different ways of teaching methods for SWLV?" Respondents offer the following responses:

SWLV 2 explained:

Teachers are not good for teaching methodology for SWLV. They often use body language. When teachers use gesture it can't be visible and clear for SWLV. I do not understand when teachers use gestures, like hand flapping, head movement, and smile.

Similarly SWLV 1 explained that: "teachers' way of teaching does not attract SWLV. Some of them use only chalk and talk without giving consideration for us." This is to mean that most of the teacher's way of teaching learning process is poor. SWLV 3 and 4 also reported the same way.

The data from FGD also showed that teachers did not try hard to accommodate SWLV during the teaching learning process. The data from observation checklist also confirmed this.

They just write on the board surprisingly without much and repeated explanation. As it has been observed there was no note-taker assistance during lectures to allow SWLV to concentrate on the presentation of the teacher. This is very hard for learners with low vision.

Teachers were also asked whether they have taken training or not on how to teach SWLV, and all teachers responded in the negative. But there were 10 teachers who were trained in special needs education (2 teachers with BA degree and 8 with diploma). All, except one, degree program graduates are certified in Braille and sign language.

Most scholars argued with this research findings, for instance, Peters (2003) stated that teaching students with visual impairment is not an easy task; it is a challenge since teaching needs to be more specific aiming at meeting the needs of each student (Peters, 2003).

Student-centered and teacher-centered methodology

Students were requested which method of teaching methodology do they prefer, the majority of the students preferred student centered method of teaching. SWLV 1 responded, "I prefer student-centered methodology because it is a means for exchanging ideas."

The response above implies that students favored peer learning without any barrier such as shyness, and frustration when they ask questions for friends. This method could create openness and interaction to learners.

The data taken through students FGD also revealed that they preferred student centered methodology because students have different opinion, knowledge, and information.

This finding in line with Heather and Stephen's (1997) conclusion that students with visual impairment may learn best when they have a choice about what they learn and how they learn, that is when teaching is student-centered.

Subjects difficult for Students with Low vision

All most all student participants with low vision responded similarly stated that the most difficult subject for them was mathematics. Only one student gives a different response from the other students. Mathematics for SWLV and blindness is prepared in Nemeth code. Nemeth code is a mathematical and scientific notation code in Braille.

The researcher observed that SWLV were not good in working Mathematics. It was, for example, highlighted that visually impaired students had little or no ability for observation. Therefore, the automatic knowledge that came from observation for sighted people was usually missing for students with low vision. Besides, the expectations for students with disabilities were lower than the expectations from the other students (Levy, 2008) Reading and writing Mathematics with Braille alphabet is, of course, more problematic than reading and writing a text in Braille.

Students with low vision miss more concepts compared to sighted students

Missing concepts are familiar with sighted and low vision students. But, SWLV suffer from lack of concept development because of their visual problem. To know more, students were asked if they think that they missed different concepts compared with their sighted peers.

SWLV 1, for example, responded:

Sighted students go everywhere and observe different materials in the environment, reading notes placed on boards and reading displayed media. But I can say that I am inaccessible for such chances and opportunities. We miss concepts between vocabulary, real objects, body movements and abstract ideas. We often miss a lot from incidental learning available through vision and frequently develop inaccurate concepts.

In the same fashion, SWLV 3 reported that "As a result of my problem I lag behind my sighted peers. I cannot see more objects and colors like other sighted students."

This was also corroborated by the data obtained from FGD as well as from the response given by teachers. The response of T1 is a case in point: "Sighted students are more competent in language than SWLV, because they go everywhere by observing many things around their environment. Sighted peers know body language."

According to Perez-Pereriaand and Conti-Ramsden (1999), the cognitive ability of a child with visual impairment will affect the ability to conceptualize the environment in the absence of reduction of visual information.

Physical Classroom Situation: Seating arrangement and Safety

It is important to include students with low vision in the full spectrum of school life, including assemblies, field trips, work experience, and social events. Tina (2011) stated that if seating is developmentally appropriate for a typical child, it will also be appropriate for a child with visual impairment. Students were asked regarding the classroom accommodation, students' safety and seating arrangement. Here are their responses.

SWLV 2, for example, reported: "I faced a lot of challenges when moving around the school compound, the way to the directors' office and many parts the compounds of the school is not comfortable for me."

From on-site observation, the classroom condition, unlike the school compound, was relatively comfortable for SWLV. The number of chairs was determined based on the number of students and there was a free space, chairs were arranged in such a way that can not affect the movement of SWLV. The classroom entrance is also accessible for all students. With regard to the class size, the number of students in the classroom was low.

From the above responses it is possible to say that the physical learning environment has limitations for SWLV, even though the inside class room condition is good for SWLV.

Educational Materials and Equipment

Availability of Braille Books

Through teachers and students interview, it was confirmed that, in the school there are Braille books with some limitations. So students were asked the question, "Do you get books in your school which is written in Braille. For this question all students responded that there are Braille books in the school.

SWLV 1 responded: "I get the text books in Braille. But all subjects are not given for me in Braille" Likewise, SWLV 2 responded, "The school gives books written in Braille. But all text-books are not directly translated in to Braille. What the teachers teach us and what is found in the Braille book sometimes differs."

The data obtained from teachers' interview and FGD confirmed student's opinion. Besides, teachers pointed out that when curriculum is changed every 5 years, the revised text books are not translated into Braille immediately. In fact, almost half of the text books are not translated into Braille. The teachers further added that to teach the students they themselves translate and teach the text books.

Resource rooms and Visual interpreters to support students with low vision

The existence of resource rooms and visual interpreters plays a great role in the education of SWLV. Students were, then, asked whether resource rooms and interpreters were arranged in the school. For this question SWLV had similar views. Most learners with low vision replied that there were no visual interpreters in the classrooms for SWLV.

SWLV 1, for example, revealed: "teachers are responsible for the learning of students with low vision, including material interpretation. There is no person assigned in interpreting materials for us. There is also no resource room."

The school principals also admitted that the service of resource room is not available and visual interpreter as well.

In support of this finding, Foskett & Lumby (2003) described that resource allocation in most schools are too scarce to support learning and teaching.

From these responses, it is clearly understood that, the school did not have a resource room and interpreter for students with low vision. This affects SWLV educational achievement. There was no trained visual interpreter who was responsible for facilitating resource or act as interpreter.

Access to Computer, Electronic reader and talking Calculator

Asked about the availability of computer, electronic reader and talking calculator, all SWLV mention that they have no access to these materials.

In this regard, SWLV had this to say, “In my school, no computer, audio recording device and other important materials accessible for us. Knowing the use of computer and learning through the aid of computer is very important for me.”

This inaccessibility of adapted educational materials was also confirmed during observation as well as from the response of teachers during interview and FGD. Here one can understand that SWLV have no access to assistive technologies, which are very important for SWLV learning.

Holding Regular Meetings with Low Vision Students by Principals

Asked if principals hold regular meeting with low vision students, participants provide the following answers:

SWLV 1 reported, “There is no regular meeting held by the school principals. But principals try to advise us about our learning in irregular meetings.”

This is also corroborated by the data from GD and teachers responses.

From the above responses, it is clear that principals did not give emphasis to students with low vision in terms of discussing regularly on the education of students with low vision with the concerned body including parents. This again can show that there was lack of regular support for SWLV from school principals.

Challenges Related to Mobility and Orientation

Mobility and orientation is one of the most important skills for students with low vision. Most Orientation and Mobility skills are taught within the school setting, with the ultimate goal being the ability to travel independently in all environments.

So students participants were asked whether mobility and orientation training was given for them or not. For this question, almost all students responded that mobility and orientation is given as one subject area, but it is difficult that students can move independently.

SWLV 1, for example, responded: “Orientation and mobility training is given for us as a subject two times a week. But the school compound is not comfortable for free movement, I cannot move independently inside the school compound.”

Teachers disclosed that orientation and mobility is provided in the school for CWVI during FGD and Interview. But the training has no guideline or material. Teachers also added that the school compound is not conducive for SWLV. This has also been confirmed during observation.

Individualized educational Plan (IEP)

IEP is a written document that essentially describes the students’ present level of educational achievement, identifies goals and objectives for the near future, and lists the educational services to be provided to meet those goals. Concerning this issue, teachers were asked the question “Do you use IEP for SWLV in the class room?” For this question all teachers 10(100%) in both interviewed and those participated in FGD responded that, they did not use IEP for SWLV. When they expressed why, almost all teachers disclosed that there is no any reason rather than lack of commitment and giving consideration for the program. Team planning and implementation of IEP is crucial, if we want inclusive learning for students with visual impairment. However, IEP does not call for individualized teaching, rather it intends to inform educators to be aware of and meet the individual needs of every student in inclusive classroom (Mitchell,2008).

From the teachers response it is clear that, teachers are not applying IEP for SWLV. This situation again shows that the individual learning needs of SWLV is not meet well.

Social Challenges of Students with Low Vision

Low Vision Students Participation and Interaction in Society

Concerning the participation and interaction of SWLV in society, most of the participants provide similar responses. SWVL 1, for example, stated: "I think the society thinks SWLV have no roles in the school community. The community including my family does not allow me to participate and interact with all affairs that my sighted peers involved."

SWLV 3 also disclosed: "the society has a negative view concerning on my participation and interaction, the society do not think as we want to play, talk with others as well as the society assumes as we cannot do activities."

In FGD with students and parents, it was described that SWLV have problems in interaction and participation with others. As they described sometimes it is common to hear heart-breaking words and sayings, where all those in one way or another reflect the incapability of students with low vision.

Other researchers have found the same result with this part of the research finding. Laurence (1987), for example, stated that if a child with visual impairment have a problem in mixing with peers and in making and/or sustaining friendships, the child may develop a poor self image and this may result in a lack of confidence.

Intra- and Inter-Group Relationship of SWLV

Spending time in Playing and Chatting in the school

Play increases affiliation with peers, helps to release tension, advances cognitive development, increase the exploration ability of children as well as increase the probability that children will converse and interact with each other (Smith, 2000 cited in Santrock, 2006).

As all SWLV have disclosed in the interview, they spent more time with their peers with low vision most of the time. SWLV 2, for example said, "I prefer to be or to go with students with low vision because I feel that they can relate and understand me better more than my sighted peers."

Likewise, teacher participants share the same opinion in their response during interview and FGD.

From the above responses it is clear that SWLV likes to play and chat with their peers of those with visual impairment. This is because children may do this in order to play and chat without any feeling of inferiority or prejudice.

Involvement of SWLV in Co-curricular Activities and Competitive Games

Most of the respondents seem believe that it is normal for them not being invited by sighted students for competitive games.

For instance SLV 2 said: *I feel nothing as I am disabled individual, who could not able to participate in competitive games. For example playing football is not comfortable for me. If I participate, I feel afraid to get injured. In the school I am not, of course, asked to participate in co-curricular activities.*

Similarly, SWLV 1 stated: "I could not play football and hand ball because I am female. I am not also a member of any club in my school because teachers mostly are not voluntary to let us participate in co-curricular activities."

In the FGD of students it was found that not to be able to participate in competitive games for SWLV is normal.

Teachers also have similar opinion. T1, for example, said:

SWLV are not actively participating in competitive games. This is as a result of their problem, even we teachers do not allow them to play in such kind of games as football and volley ball with sighted students. Because we are afraid that SWLV may face problems while they play.

To sum up, SWLV are not allowed to participate in either competitive games or co-curricular activities. As noted from the participants' responses, SWLV are neglected by the community and this situation is also taken as a normal culture in the school. The other thing that can be deduced here is that adapted playing materials are not found in the school for SWLV

Parental Overprotection of SWLV

The data with this issue show mixed results. Some student participants revealed that their parents usually overprotect them. SWLV 3, for example, responded: "My parents over protect me and they do not allow me to play outside of the home. They mostly want me to be at home. This is because they think that if I go outside and play with others, I may be injured."

Here it is clear that those parents who overprotect their children have a belief that SWLV are not independent and cannot lead their life well. Previous researches (Okyere & Adams, 2003) support this finding in that parents can be overly protective and restrict a pupils involvement in normal social activities, which thereby reduces the opportunities for acquiring friends and fosters a limited experience base.

Conclusions and Recommendation

Conclusion

The major objective of this study was to investigate the opportunities and challenges of SWLV in Special classes in the case of Tabor General primary and Special Needs School. The study then came out with the following conclusions based on the data analyzed and findings:

➤ With regard to the opportunities, the following were found out to be important for SWLV:

- The organization of special classes and resource facilities.
- The school community's positive attitude towards SWLV
- The existence of enabling national policies and different organizational structures down to school level that can enforce these policies to support SWLV

➤ Concerning challenges SWLV faced in Tabor Primary General and Special School, the following were very critical:

- Shortage of adapted text books and other reference books, as well as other necessary adapted materials and equipment's, like computer, tape recorder, talking calculator for SWLV
- The study revealed that mobility and orientation training in the school was not given effectively for SWLV.
- There is little collaboration among SWLV, the school and other stake holders.
- The existence of parental overprotection
- SWLV were not allowed to get involved in different social settings like participating in co-curricular activities, which adversely affect the learning on the part of SWLV

Implications

Based on the findings and the conclusions drawn, the following recommendations are made to improve the challenges;

- ❖ The school should:
 - have close cooperation and collaboration with other stakeholders (parents, Woreda Education Office and NGOs) to make adapted educational materials and equipment (such as Braille text books, computers, and tape recorder) accessible to SWLV.

- organize awareness raising programs on the education of students with disabilities for the school community and parents to avoid misconception towards SWLV and to support their learning.
- ❖ Teachers should support SWLV in such areas as:
 - organizing mobility and orientation training on a regular basis
 - providing extra time for SWLV to support them in learning Mathematics, which is reported to be difficult.
 - using verbal and written forms of communication during classroom instruction
 - giving special attention to SWLV in exam preparation, including test items, administration and also scoring.
 - Let SWLV in co-curricular activities and play together with students without disabilities.
- ❖ Parents should not overprotect their children, rather they have to allow and motivate them to play and interact freely with their age mates.
- ❖ Finally, it would be more important if further research is done on the issue on a larger scale.

Limitation of the Study

Every effort was made to ensure the quality of the research finding. Although the research was achieved its objective, there were some limitations. First, interview was not held with parents of SWLV. But, it would be good if data was obtained from parents through interview.

In addition, the study would have been more useful, if it had been conducted on more similar schools.

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