



Higher Education of Social Science
Vol. 18, No. 2, 2020, pp. 9-13
DOI:10.3968/11661

ISSN 1927-0232 [Print]
ISSN 1927-0240 [Online]
www.cscanada.net
www.cscanada.org

Educating Students With Visual Disability in the State of Kuwait: Literature Review and Recommendations

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Received 1 March 2020; accepted 14 May 2020

Published online 22 May 2020

Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to review the educational process of student with visual disability in Kuwait. The visual impairment is one of the special education classes that attracted the attention and attention of researchers and educators. Students with visual impairment show various educational and psychological needs, and the assessment determines the nature of these special needs. Meeting these needs requires specialized educational programs and a variety of services to achieve their maximum potential optimal level of adjustment. The present study is considered a theoretical study. The review indicated that students with visual disability have a wide range of characteristics and specialized needs. Visual disability negatively affected students' especially academic achievement, nonverbal communication, as well as psychosocial development. These needs require special services in order to meet them. The study ended by offering a number of conclusions and recommendations for better education of this group of disability. Basically, there is a need to rethink with the educational procedures used and develop their education.

Key words: Educating Students with Visual Disability; Special needs, Kuwait

El-Zraigat, I., & Alshammari, M. (2020). Educating Students With Visual Disability in the State of Kuwait: Literature Review and Recommendations. *Higher Education of Social Science*, 18(2), 9-13. Available from: URL: <http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/hess/article/view/11661>
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3968/11661>

INTRODUCTION

Visual disability is a special education category that has a wide interest in researchers, teachers, and program providers. The visual disability negatively affects the acquired experiences and the various developmental aspects. Minimizing the negative impact of visual disability requiring relevant services to achieve maximum potential of students with visual disability (El-Zraigat, 2006).

In order to understand the special needs of students with visual disability, this requires us to understand students with low vision and blind as well as special modifications needed; however, those student may benefits from using assistive technology in learning environment according to their unique needs, especially enhancing reading and writing skills (Alves, Monteiro, Rabello, Gasparretto, & Carvalho, 2009).

Visual disability is categorized into two main types: low vision and blind. Student with low vision are the pupils who use sight in learning, but their visual abilities or visual disability affect their daily functional capabilities. While blind students are individuals who use touch and hearing for learning and have no functional use of vision (Smith, 2007). To determine the nature of the special educational needs of students with visual disability, this requires a comprehensive evaluation of them to understand the nature of these needs. The main objective of the evaluation is to identify the special needs of targeted students. This process increases the ability and capabilities of teachers and those involved in delivering programs to develop special educational plans and provide the programs necessary to meet them (El-Zraigat, 2006). Therefore, the first step in providing special educational programs is to conduct a comprehensive assessment of special needs and then set special goals aimed at satisfying these needs, and achieve the goals through special programs (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) (2000).

The teacher also plays an essential role in collecting information about students' needs. After defining and specifying the special needs, special educational programs are established, and then the final objective of the evaluation is to assess the quality of these programs (El-Zraigat, 2016). Thus, the evaluation of special educational programs provided to students with visual disability provides important background information for teachers to fulfill their role and obligations to ensure that students with visual disability receive appropriate educational services especially in meeting unique needs in the fields of reading, writing, as well as orientation, mobility and other self-help skills (Educating Students with Visual Disability in Texas: Guidelines and Standards, 2008). Hence, the continuous review of educational programs for students with visual disability is an essential step in maintaining the provision of appropriate services that help in providing appropriate education in line with the requirements of contemporary life (El-Zraigat, 2006).

The importance of this study comes in reviewing the procedures of teaching students with visual disability in the State of Kuwait, identifying challenges and setting the necessary plans to confront them to achieve the best possible level of programs and provide educational services.

THE GOAL AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The primary purpose of this study was to review the procedures for teaching students with visual disability in the State of Kuwait in relation to literature review and find our recommendations for better education. Therefore this study is considered as a theoretical study. To achieve the goal of the study, the researchers reviewed the theoretical literature of educating student with visual disability. Throughout this review, the investigators try to answer the following questions:

- How are students with visual disability educated in Kuwait?
- What are the recommendations that improve the quality of education based on the results of the studies?

Objectives of the Study

The object of this article was to review the procedures for teaching students with visual disability in the State of Kuwait and providing scientific recommendations to decision makers and providers of programs for students with visual disability.

The Importance of Studying

The importance of the study lies in reviewing the procedures for teaching students with visual disability in the State of Kuwait and providing recommendations based on the results of studies related to special educational programs for students with visual disability.

Educating Persons With Disabilities in the State of Kuwait

The State of Kuwait, like other countries, has complied with international legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure appropriate educational and inclusion opportunities for them. Consequently, Kuwaiti Law No. 8 of 2010 Concerning Rights of People with Disabilities embodied a solid and large foundation for protecting children with disabilities, also the law guaranteed all the rights of a disabled child while obliging government agencies to provide them with full care without any discrimination, such as providing educational services for them starting from the age of 3 years until the end of the education stages, qualifying those with severe disabilities to ensure their inclusion in society through special rehabilitation institutions, ensuring the rights of children with disabilities to build their capabilities, develop their skills, and promote their inclusion in society.

The Ministry of Education also rooted the right to expression through school curricula and developed social skills based on dialogue and discussion with absolute freedom, which contributed to providing an opportunity for children with disabilities to express themselves individually or collectively, and this all comes in the context of the right to expression (Kuwaiti Law No. 8 of 2010 Concerning Rights of People with Disabilities).

The State of Kuwait also issued Law No. 21 of 2015 in the matter of protecting the rights of the child, which in turn may contain many texts that guarantee the protection and rehabilitation of a child with a disability. According to the law, a child with a disability has the right to education and training and vocational rehabilitation in the same schools, institutes and training centers available to children without disabilities. The state is also committed to providing education and training in special classes, schools, institutions or training centers to provide complete education or rehabilitation for all children with disabilities (whatever their age and degree of disability).

Through the government agencies, the State of Kuwait has enabled persons with disabilities to live independently and fully lead their lives, by facilitating their access and communication with society in a manner that is appropriate to their needs without discrimination or exclusion (Kuwaiti Law No. 21 of 2015 Law No. 21 of 2015 on Children Rights).

With regard to the care of the blind in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Association for the Blind was established in 1972, and aims to introduce the blind to all available means (seminars, invitations to them and all that would demonstrate his abilities and talents) and spread culture among the blind and holding workshops that contribute to developing the capabilities of the blind, and work to overcome the obstacles and difficulties facing the blind and consolidate relations between members of the association and Arab and international societies (Kuwaiti

Law No. 8 of 2010 Concerning Rights of People with Disabilities).

Kuwait established Al-Noor Joint Schools, which are schools specialized in teaching students with disabilities, the blind category, and it includes three educational stages: (elementary - intermediate - secondary). Al-Noor schools involved in the management of special education schools and apply the general education document for all levels. Students are taught general education curricula, which are supervised by specialized technical guidance from special education, and according to the technical guidance plan approved by the general education in the Ministry of Education. Textbooks are printed in special presses in the Department of Special Education Schools, using a special Braille printing system to teach reading to the blind for all levels of all subjects. Through the book printed in Braille, the student's interaction with the teacher in the classroom and the sighted book will be to continue the study with the guardian at home and all blind students in Al Noor schools learn to write Braille from first grade until graduating from high school, reading and writing during class or doing homework.

In Al-Noor schools for the blind boys and girls, the educational and supervisory board includes blind teachers who depend on their learning for the students on hearing and touch through reading them from the teacher's book printed in Braille and the students follow their books. Students with residual eyesight can use non-Braille textbooks, provided they are enlarged with magnification devices, and larger exams are given to them. The exams are done from the technical guidance for each subject and printed at Al-Noor Press in the management of special education schools for all students for the elementary and middle levels. Among the most important tools that students use in education are: a Braille print machine for class, exam, and homework, a magnification device for students with sight eyes, and musical instruments.

Two methods are used to teach blind people in Al-Noor Common Schools:

First: The Braille method which used to teach the blind to read and write Braille.

Second: The Tiller method used to solve operations, which is a metal plate with holes in the shape of a star that has eight corners in horizontal and anchored rows at the same time. This type is used to solve the mathematical operations from the first - ninth grade (Ministry of Education/ Private and Qualitative Education Sector – Kuwait, 2020).

According to study of Alshammari (2016) about evaluation of programs provided for students with visual impairment in State of Kuwait in light of international standards. The results indicated that the rate of achievement of the programs offered to students in the State of Kuwait in the light of international standards was by (72.27%), the proportion achieving moderately respect to the total of the scale of all the dimensions of

the study sample society (officials, teachers, practitioners, specialists, parents), The results also showed that the percentage of the officials was by (88.89%). In addition, the results showed that the percentage of teachers was (81.23%), whereas the ration achieving evaluation viewpoint practitioners were by (75.79%), also the percentage of specialists were by (78.75%). The results showed that the parent's rate was increased (54.20%). Also, the results indicated significant differences between mean scores of families and the average differences in the total.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Visual disability affects growth in varying degrees, depending on the age at which the disability occurred, the severity of the disability, and environmental experiences. Cognitive development is affected by visual inputs, as limited inputs determine cognitive abilities. Likewise, visual disability affects communication; however, students with visual disability need more time to relate the word to the meaning. Given the presence of auditory ability, this group of students has linguistic abilities, and therefore the blind student depends on a more hearing sense on their daily communication (AlRihani, El-Zraigat, and Tannous, 2018).

Visual disabilities affect the academic performance, and the severity of these effects depends on the severity of visual disability, age of occur disability, and type of visual disability. Sight is also an important sensation in the implementation of daily life activities. Therefore, the loss of this sense requires the affected person to develop new skills and methods to assist him in carrying out these activities. One of the most important skills that help students with visual disability in carrying out their activities is to give them orientation and mobility skills that give them freedom of movement inside the home and in the surrounding environment (Falvo and Holland, 2017).

In order to meet the special educational needs of students with visual disability, the educational environment must be an appropriate environment for the characteristics of blind students and students with visual disability. Visual disability leads to negative effects on psychosocial development, self-esteem, and quality of life. However, these effects negatively affect their independence as well as carrying out their daily life activities. The students with visual disability face difficulties in reading and writing, and therefore the use of visual techniques helps them to read and write in the educational environments (AlRihani, El-Zraigat, and Tannous, 2018).

Globally, different studies in the evaluation of services have indicated different results. The Lewis and McKenzie (2010) study indicated that teachers need more training, better services and more supervision by

more qualified teachers. As for the study of Kesiktas and Akcamete, (2011), it showed that teachers faced problems in realizing and implementing some areas of knowledge and skills important for the education of students with visual disability. Reed and Curtis (2011) shown that teachers facing challenges in high school that affect students' accessibility to higher education. Furthermore, institutions of higher education provided little information to support the teachers in preparing their students. Levin and Rotheram-Fuller (2011) assessed approaches to acquiring empowerment skills and self-determination for persons with visual disability. Their data indicated that students benefited from the curriculum in learning self-determination skills.

With regard to supporting the use of assistive technology for students with visual impairments, study results Zhou, Ajuwon, Smith, Griffin-Shirley, Parker, and Okungu (2019) have shown 40.7% of the participants were confident, while 59.3% reported no confidence. The younger teachers were relatively more confident in teaching assistive technology than the older teachers. Furthermore, the results of Wong and Law (2016) indicated the gaps in assessment, collaboration and knowledge among teachers about assistive technology.

The (Manyumwa, 2018) study explored the inclusion and psychosocial experiences of students with visual disabilities in a government university in Zimbabwe. The results of the study confirmed the importance of support from friends and colleagues and help in the curriculum to achieve positive experiences, while negative experiences of the target sample in the study resulted from social environment constraints, difficult economic conditions in addition to students' perception of themselves. These factors have led to feelings of despair, frustration and anxiety. The findings of the study confirmed the importance of awareness the university community about people with visual disabilities and their needs and the significance of respect diversity. Johnson-Jones (2017) revealed the importance of feeling self, relying on support and a desire to feel a normal life and responding to barriers, and stressed the necessity of training and support teachers and providing appropriate services. Jabeen and Akhter (2018) studied self-concept of students with visual impairment in Lahore (Pakistan) and their results indicated that the concept of self-perception of students with ethics was more positive than students with visual impairment.

Koehler and Wild (2019) emphasized the importance of appropriate educational practices, adaptations, and adapted educational methods in teaching students with visual disabilities in the United States and Canada. This study also showed how to teach students with visual disabilities in the science class. The study carried out by Rosenblum, Ristvey, and Hospital (2019) illustrated the importance of the role of teachers of students with visual disabilities in supporting teachers of elementary students

with visual disabilities in accessing science curricula and understanding the content of science, and the importance of communication on how best to further integrate their knowledge, so that students those with visual disabilities should be scientifically educated citizens with the possibility to contribute to science. The study Gordon-Pershey, Zeszut, and Brouwer (2019) addressed the production of speech sound in children with visual disabilities, and the results indicated that children and adolescents with visual disabilities in the target sample had errors in producing speech sound and that these errors may not be caused by their disability.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The State of Kuwait, like other countries, has complied with international legislation to protect the rights of persons with disabilities and to ensure appropriate educational and integration opportunities for them. Based on the results of the studies mentioned earlier in this research, it can be concluded that educational practices based on scientific research should be used and implemented in teaching students with visual disability in order to reach their maximum potential and achieve optimal level of growth and adjustment.

According to the results of (Manyumwa, 2018) it is important to provide support from friends and colleagues for students with visual disability in order to achieve positive social and psychological experiences. In regard to the results of the (Johnson-Jones, 2017), training and supporting teachers and providing appropriate services should be emphasized. Based on results of Koehler and Wild (2019) we recommended the necessity of using appropriate educational practices, modifications and adapted educational methods in teaching students with disabilities. As a result of a study Rosenblum, Ristvey, and Hospital (2019) we suggest strengthening the role of the teacher in supporting students with visual disability and training them to implement areas of knowledge and skills important for the education of students with visual impairment. According to a study of Gordon-Pershey, Zeszut, and Brouwer (2019), we stress the need to pay attention to speech and language problems and to use effective techniques with them. In relation to findings of Zhou, Ajuwon, Smith, Griffin-Shirley, Parker, and Okungu (2019) and Wong and Law (2016), it is necessary to support the use of assistive technology in the education of students with visual impairments.

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