

PARENTS' PERCEPTION OF THE GOAL OF EDUCATION FOR THEIR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

Background:

Studies have shown that:

- Parents perception of their children focuses more on their inabilities than their potentials (1)
- Many parents of children with learning disabilities do not take an active role in the education of their children and this leads to their limited access to basic education and training(2)
- Girls and Children from poorer families are more likely not to attend school(3)

Aim:

This study explores parents' perceptions of the education of their children with learning disabilities in order to generate strategies to improve support for the education of their children

Objectives:

1. What do parents consider to be the goals for their child's education.
2. What are the reasons on which parents base their decisions to send or not to send their children with learning disabilities to school.
3. Generate suggestions for addressing the knowledge gap (if any this may increase parents understanding and participation in the education of their children.



Researchers & parents of CWD after the dissemination workshop

Methods

Based on the stratified purposive sampling process, a COMBRA register of 205 of persons with disabilities was consulted. All persons with learning difficulties were identified (N=25). Children between 0-20 were then identified (N=9). Parents of the 9 children were located. Amazingly, 3 were those whose children were going to school, 3 for children who had never been to school and 3 were for children who had dropped out of school. The plan was to have 15 parents but due a limited number of children with learning difficulties and with in the required age range (0-20 years) only 9 were selected.

Analysis

The intention was to interview each of the parents using prepared interview guides by the four researchers. Finally, 9 interviews and 3 focus group discussions were conducted. Interviews and discussions were conducted in Luganda. Question-led analysis of data was undertaken.

Results:

Reasons on which parents base their decisions to send their children to school.

- Preparation for self reliance in adult life
- Literacy for older children
- As a human right
- Socialization
- Good quality of life
- For children to acquire practical skills

Reasons on which parents base their decisions not to send their children to school:

- Not having enough money
- Lack of information on available schools
- Too much emphasis put on academic achievement
- Inaccessibility to schools
- Large classes
- Prejudices of teachers and parents

Suggestions for increasing parents' participation in the education of their children:

Parents of children with learning difficulties should be assisted to start income generating activities such as piggy to help them support their children's specific needs including school fees

Government and other stake holders to build more special schools for children with severe learning difficulties

Training and motivating teachers teaching children in special needs education

Sensitization and training of parents on the goals of education for their children with learning difficulties

Curriculum development to suit the needs of children of the different learning difficulties

Challenges faced during the study

- Tape recorder failure
- Small numbers of children with learning difficulties in Combra register.

Conclusions

Parents of children with learning difficulties expect an education that provides their children with practical skills that prepares them for independent living. The current school system that emphasizes academic success disadvantages their children.

Recommendations

- Teacher training in special needs
- Income generating activities
- Curriculum modification to give practical skills
- Boarding facilities which can ease transport costs
- Provision of educational materials/assistive devices to simplify learning
- There is need for education stake holders to rethink the implementation of inclusive education

What the study has added

- Parents are skeptical about enrolling their children in inclusive settings given due to large classes, inadequate training of teachers, negative attitudes and lack of curriculum flexibility
- General clarification of issues that concern parents of parents of children with learning difficulties are concerned about

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