

Importance in education for students with visual impairment

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Since the onset of formal education, many countries are lagging behind in the preparation of the personnel to handle students with special needs. This is negatively affecting such physically challenged learners as the visually impaired. Going through a substantial number of letters from visually impaired students to the London Office of the Blind Aid Africa, sent between 1995 and 2005, reveals some problems faced by them in their different, inclusive learning environments due to teachers' lack of or insufficient knowledge and understanding about visual impairment, general abilities and limitations of visually impaired persons, and how to effectively interact with them. The table below summarises some usual teacher-tendencies which result into some visually impaired learner problems.

Teacher Tendencies	Learner Problem
Prolonged nervousness during maiden periods of delivering lessons to classes with visually impaired members.	Anxiety about possibility of progressive learning.
Indirect communication with visually impaired learners especially when answering their questions.	Getting demoralised
Constant use of visual demonstrations without clear verbal explanations.	Feeling isolated
Regularly making decisions for the visually impaired learner or conclusion about visual impairment, by generalisation and/ or implications.	Feeling dehumanised

The letters as well as views from some teachers, who were asked to comment on the matter, suggested some co-ordinated efforts by learning institutions with visually

impaired learners, Ministries of Education, Non Governmental organisations and families with visually impaired members to improve the situation as summarised below:

Government/ Ministies of Education;

Incorperating some basic information about visual impairment in the primary and secondary schools curricula.

Organising in-service training workshops for nonspecialist teachers of schools with visually impaired learners.

Intiating and/ or financing research about visual impairment for regular updating of information used in formal courses for personel preperation.

Non Governmental Organisations;

Advocating for quality education for the visuaaly impaired persons.

Financing research and programmes for improved preparation for the personel to handle learners with special needs such as the visually impaired.

Schools with visually impaired learners;

Holding semi-formal familiasation discussions between teachers and visually impaired learners for them to learn and understand each other.

Keeping sample records of some individual visually impaired learners' behaviour or perfomance inorder to appriciate their personality differences.

Familes;

Parents and guardians should encourage the participation of visually impaired childlen in peer group activities inorder to let the sighted children learn how to interact and work with visually impaired persons, thus, laying a good foundation for the preparation of teachers and other proffessionals to handle visually impaired learners correctly.