

An Interpretative Study on Dimensions and Factors Supporting the Construction of Functional Assessment Scale for Developing Educational Programme of Blind in Yemen : Perspective of Teachers and Paraents

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ABSTRACT

Studies in special education field in developed countries have paid more attention to the dimensions that need to be included in the functional assessment scale for developing special educational program for blind students, these dimensions could help blind students in different aspects such as daily living skills, academic skills, personal skills, and use assistive technology in the educational, vocational and social life. The same has not been found in Yemen therefore, this is considered the research gap for this study. Twenty studies related to construction of functional assessment scale for developing educational programme of blind have been reviewed for this study, interviews with 20 Arabian special educator who are currently teaching and training the blind students in Yemen and 20 parents of blind students were conducted to understand how they are assessing the functional skills in educational programs, determine the most significant dimensions, sub-dimensions, along with the criteria that are more required in develop the functional assessment. The interviews' questions were framed based on the research gap and considering purpose of this study. The collected data were analyzed by build themes from the interviews and prior research findings. The study found that there is a need to build a functional assessment scale of educational program for blind students in Yemen. Also, the main dimensions that need to be studied were found.

Keywords: Functional Skills, Assessment, Educational program, Blind Students. Dimensions.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the backbone of every individual in the World regardless of physical, mental and psychological challenge .Integrated education system is all learners participate equally in the learning processes whether physically challenged or not. Under inclusive education, this system was adjusted to meet the learner's needs. Expanded core curriculum considered to be important for the holistic development of a child. The functional skills that the blind students' needs to develop can be taught and practiced by them at school, and can then be transferred to the home environment for making the blind students competent and independent.

Functional assessment is the need of an hour as it assesses the functional skills of the blind students. The blind children have capability just like others. Education provided to them should be such that it gives opportunity to bring out their latent potentialities.

Positive attitude towards them will make them socially amicable, psychologically adjustable and educationally sound. Medical intervention, education, rehabilitation programs, community involvement and parent involvement programs and such multifaceted approaches are vital for the betterment of their life. The unlimited opportunities and experiences extended to them make them physically fit, mentally alert and independent in the community.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The use of the Standardized Functional Assessment Scale in the teaching-learning process encourages the development of need-based educational programming for blind students; however, such a tool does not yet exist in Yemen, thus making it difficult for special educators to prepare educational programs which take into account the functional needs of blind students. As a result, the study is being conducted with the goal of developing a Functional Assessment Scale that may be used by special educators to determine developmental levels and prepare educational programs for blind kids in Yemen. The blind pupils have the same talents as everyone else. Education should be offered to them in such a way that it allows them to realize their full potential. The goal of any curriculum or instructional organization is to improve the living quality of individuals and communities.

However, in order for an educational program to be successful, the true expectations of learner performance must be considered during the program development process. In this vein, the current research seeks to develop a functional evaluation scale that may be used as both an assessment scale and as an educational programming tool.

RATIONALE FOR THIS STUDY

Educators and parents are constantly concerned that blind kids obtain enough instruction. To create an IEP that is appropriate for blind kids. It is critical to conduct a complete assessment of functional skills. A review of studies on blind pupil in Yemen reveals a distinct lack of psychological tools for the category of visual impairment. Because there is no method available for complete functional evaluation of blind kids that is standardized on a Yemeni sample, it is critical to design one to examine their functional skills in many developmental domains.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviewed previous studies on the Functional Assessment Scale, after that an overview of the Functional Assessment Scale in India.

DIMENSIONS OF FUNCTIONAL ASSESSMENT SCALE

Bakke- Hanne Alves et al, (2019) conducted a systematic and integrative review study on assessment of motor skills in children with visual impairment and found that the research on motor skills in children with visual impairment is limited because of shortage of instruments for assessing motor function in these children.

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Rutkowska-Izabela, et al, (2015) have studied the balance functional assessment in people with visual impairment. They suggested that Elaborating physical fitness development programs for children and adolescents with visual impairment should take into account age variety, the degree of vision loss, and limits in capacity to maintain balance.

Rooks-Ellis, (2014), reviewed studies related to the inquiry-based education for visually impaired children. First, it has been demonstrated that inquiry-based methods to scientific teaching are helpful and beneficial for students with impairments. Although direct instruction approaches may be effective in some contexts, these researches demonstrate that children with impairments appear to flourish in inquiry-based learning environments. However, more study is needed to expand the body of knowledge regarding scientific instruction for children with visual impairments.

A survey study done by (Koretz, and Barton, 2003) aimed to study the issues and evidence for assessing children with disabilities -Until recently, many students with disabilities were excluded from large-scale tests, such as those mandated by states. Recent federal and state policy measures, including the most recent reauthorization of IDEA, call for the inclusion of the vast majority of children with disabilities in statewide assessments utilized in accountability systems. Most observers believe that educational outcomes for children with disabilities were unsatisfactory prior to the implementation of the new rules; nevertheless, the evidence supporting the new policies is weak. The changes have resulted in an increase in relevant research, but more and better research is required.

Labib Taha et al, (2018), conducted a study on Assessment and Management of Children with Visual Impairment. This Study revealed that low vision aids may play an effective role in limiting the effects of the same and enhancing the visual performance of children with low vision, resulting in the maximum social and educational integration.

For visually challenged adults, the content validity of a home-based person-environment interaction evaluation instrument was investigated by (Carignan, Rousseau, Gresset, and Couturier, 2008). They expressed requirements for vision rehabilitation treatments might more than quadruple in the next 20 years, according to a study. Visual impairment causes numerous functional issues at home, thus professionals will face significant challenges. As a result, experts' capacity to recognize and comprehend these challenges will become critical, and an assessment of functional difficulties should come before any intervention strategy. Many scholars in the field of vision rehabilitation advice that during the evaluation phase, rehabilitation experts speak with clients to identify their objectives, watch them in their environment during daily chores, and study the home and work environment to offer particular modifications.

Twum et al, (2018) have investigated the extent to which students with vision impairment can use a white cane in their learning environment, and found that Students had progressed through the phases of conscious competence and were generally proficient in utilizing the white cane in their learning environment. Personal and environmental issues, however, were impeding their growth. Personal variables included problems with fine motor skills and the onset of blindness. External problems included a shortage of mobility trainers and canes, as well as physical obstacles. In general, there is a positive relationship between the start of visual impairment and particular cane abilities. Final Thoughts and Implications: It is suggested that resource personnel dedicate more effort to building students' abilities in cane methods, particularly in abilities linked to obstacle detection.

Making changes to the physical environment, as well as giving more canes and mobility trainers, will help visually impaired pupils navigate around the campus.

According to Division of Disability Sciences, University of Tsukuba, Tsukuba, Japan reported that (Miyachi Hisae, 2020), Teachers in general education had both favourable and negative views about students with visual impairments, which were impacted by teacher, student, and environment variables. One of the primary teacher-related variables, feeling unprepared, seems to have a significant impact. Mathematics, Science, and Physical Education were the most talked academic topics in terms of access. Despite the fact that children with visual impairment appeared to be learning at or above grade level, they were clearly excluded from classroom activities. Unfortunately, these difficulties have both immediate and long-term repercussions. General education instructors with a generic set of good pedagogical techniques, effective teaching-learning technologies, and external assistance were key components in enhancing topic accessibility. The significance of teacher education and a comprehensive support structure was stressed.

Schölvinck, Pittens, and Broerse (2017), conducted a research that Research directly focused at the ethology of ophthalmological diseases and was deemed more essential than research aimed at enhancing quality of life in the medical research agenda. The topics of "new and regenerative medicine," "cause and disease mechanism," "prevention and diagnostics," and "improvement of present therapies" were ranked first and second, respectively. For the sociopsychological agenda, the highlighted research requirements were quite consistent across consumer categories, allowing for collaborative action. The study agenda covered topics that might be addressed by "conventional" ophthalmological research, as well as more generally defined health-care-related research and policy-influencing techniques.

A study conducted on Department of Special education, Islamic University of Jordan by (Shnikat-Feryal Abdulhadi 2018), found that the teachers have given first rank to the cognitive skills and the last rank was given to the skills of independence in motor skills. In regard to blind children's instructors, independent skills are placed first, followed by social skills, the result of the teacher type factor was that blind teachers had no influence on the study's findings, where the researcher made a set of research and educational suggestions.

Chen, (2013), Investigated the Vocabulary Learning Blind Spots of Chinese EFL Students. The major findings of the study in Appendix 5 demonstrate that three quarters of the respondents believe vocabulary development is essential for listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Their interest in this subject necessitates that every instructor make significant efforts to enhance instructional techniques and materials and the education of the course.

Kaiser, Justin and Tina, (2016), stated that the processes and tools utilized by teachers when performing functional vision assessments with children with visual impairments were not as uniform as we had anticipated in conclusion, Participant responses on five tools and procedures were not as uniform as they had wanted Despite the fact that a sizable number of instructors of children with visual impairments reported measuring close and distance visual acuity, tracking, and spatial awareness, peripheral fields and colour perception, the results for some of the other visual talents and abilities were startling. The discrepancy in whether a screening was utilized to evaluate the necessity for an O&M and low vision evaluation referral was also unexpected. Given that several participants stated that their FVA methods and tools differed greatly depending on the student, these comments

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confirm what we already know about the different features and requirements of children with visual impairments.

Fernández, (2004), stated that although parents are supportive and interested in their children's education, study findings reveal that special education professionals and the school system do not encourage family engagement.

Adetoro(2010)conducted a study in Nigeria to measure Reading interests and information requirements of people with visual impairment with 401 respondents and found that adults with visual impairment exhibited a strong desire to read religious, commercial, and entertainment items, according to the study. Art themes, reference resources, manuals, and animal tale materials piqued the attention of secondary school responders. In predicted and relevant topics, both respondents expressed a significant desire for knowledge and information. In general, Braille materials (58.3%) are the most favoured source of information. Braille was favoured by adults (72.4%), while secondary school students chose talking books/audio recordings (55 percent). The transcription and source of information resources for the visually impaired through libraries must be based on an understanding of their reading interests and information requirements.

(Oklahoma State University, US, Kimberly Davis, (2014)ConductedThe outcomes of the Need Strategies for Teaching Learners with Special Needs Curriculum and Instruction (STEM) are In the United States, there is a strong push for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) in education. From Persons with special needs in order to cover the possible shortage of teachers in this subjects in the United States. The Students with disabilities have challenges in pursuing STEM professions due to a lack of role models, mentors, adequate education, low expectations, and a lack of support from prominent individuals. Several techniques, including the use of UDL, technology, and accommodations, can be utilized to enhance student access to STEM material. Students with disabilities benefit from improved self-confidence, self-advocacy, and self-determination skills.

METHODS

The interpretative technique entails a variety of informal dialogues in which the researcher shares a feeling of time, location, and common fears with respondents (Huber, Clandinin and Huber, 2006).The interpretive approach was used to analysis and discuss the collected data was used in this study. We questioned experts in interviews about the scales used locally to measure functional skills for blind students before developing personalized programs for existing blind students and the circumstances they chose. We analyzed our observations and information from the interviews and attempted to deduce significance from them. The data gathered from the interviews were compared with prior research examined in the literature review part in the second interpretative phase. The data were analyzed and the findings were written up in the third interpretative moment. We presume, based on the facts and logic processes given, that the design of expanded educational programs and added to the main curriculum for totally blind students in Yemen in associations, centers, and also in private and inclusive schools need to be studied and there is a need to develop a functional scale. This hypothesis aims to explore more dimensions related to develop a functional skills assessment scale of the educational program for blinded students.

OBJECTIVE OF STUDY

This study aims to identify the more required dimensions for developing functional assessment scale for educational programming of blind students in Yemen from the point of Yemeni Teachers (Special Educators) and parents

DATA COLLECTION

20 open ended questions were asked to special educationists and 20 parents of totally blind students in the field of special education. As well as various informal discussions were conducted in which the researcher shared a sense of time, place and mutual anxiety with the respondents and groups via Google Meeting program. And Interviews of approximately 10-15 minute were conducted face-to-face with all targets respondents.

The authors formed a topic outline with main and penetrating questions, which were reviewed by research experts and then translated into Arabic. To evaluate reaction, brainstorm additional probing directions, and estimate time, a pilot phone interview with four experts was carried out. During the actual interviews, the researcher began by introducing himself and his guide to the participants, explaining the study's aim and addressing ethical and privacy concerns.

The researcher obtained permission to record the interviews and made notes on body language of the respondents for subsequent analysis.

The following are the key questions that were requested the Special Educators to answer them:

1. What are the functional academic deficits that exist among students with blindness?
2. What are the wide ranges of skills required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academic?
3. Please priorities the above listed skills of functional academics of students with blindness?
4. What are the skills required for psychomotor domain for the students with blindness?
5. Classify the skills that fall under cognitive domains for the students with blindness?
6. Classify the skills that fall under affective domain for the students with blindness?
7. Classify the skills that fall under psychomotor domain for the students with blindness?
8. List out the skills required acquiring socialization among students the students with blindness?
9. Please add on necessary skills if any, required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academics?

The records have been translated from Arabic to English by the researcher and were validated by the English expert. The researcher prioritized major themes by significance and focused on the valuable facts for citing in the real work based on recurrent concerns.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section will cover the analysis and discussion based on the reviewed and collected data. It will begin with the Profile of the respondents followed by summarising the main dimensions and subdimensions which obtained from the special educators and parents' perspective that required supporting the existing functional assessment scales in developing blind educational programs and in improving blind students' educational achievement in Yemen.

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PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENTS

This study contains two different samples namely; special educators and parents of blind students. According to the data obtained from special educators it was found that majority of the respondents were male patients constituting (84.6%) when analysed based on age group the highest number of the respondents were aged in age group of 30-40 years old (53.8%). Most of the respondents have above 15 years of experience and bachelor degree qualification. Based on the type of school it was found that most of the respondents (76.9) are working in special visual impairment schools.

Descriptive analysis of blind's parents students showed that majority of the respondents were male patients constituting (66.7%) and aged in age group of 40-50 years old. Most of the parents of blind students have admitted their children in integrated education schools (66.7) followed by inclusive education schools. This proved that the sample of this study has covered all type of special schools for the blind students.

ANALYSIS OF OPEN END QUESTIONS

FUNCTIONAL ACADEMIC DEFICITS THAT EXIST AMONG STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

The targeted respondents who were interviewed were asked for the functional academic deficits that exist among students with blindness? From the responses of interviewed people and from reviewed literature it showed that, the main deficits that existed among students with blindness in Yemen are: -i) non-accept themselves, ii) their disability of the blind due to their disability problem, iii) low level of ability to accept others, iv) establish effective communication, interact friendship and cooperation with them, the problem of lack of acceptance of the blind students by their family, a problem of the blind's dependence on a others family member, mobility problems in the classes or home. Etc, a problem in satisfying their needs in play because their spatial environment is limited, A problem in social development is that their relationships are limited, and a problem in the emotional development of the children is their inability to express well. The teacher's inability to prepare an appropriate educational plan that meets his educational needs.

WIDE RANGES OF SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS TO ACHIEVE FUNCTIONAL ACADEMIC

Respondents were asked to answer the question of what are the wide ranges of skills required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academic. The response of the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies are exhibited that there were eight major areas or dimensions of wide ranges of skills required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academic namely; psychomotor skills, perceptual skills, cognitive skills, socio-emotional skills, compensatory academic skills, religious education skills, vocational training skills, and assistive technology skills.

PRIORITIES THE ABOVE LISTED SKILLS OF FUNCTIONAL ACADEMICS OF STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were requested to priorities the above listed skills of functional academics of students with blindness. The sample of the study and integrated with previous studies are Eight major areas or dimensions as explained in the answer to the previous open question in the order, and contains a (15) sub-domains, which are as follows: under the : psychomotor skills (gross motor skills-fine motor skills-spatial awareness), under the perceptual skills (sensory awareness-environmental awareness-temporal awareness), under the cognitive skills (cognitive skills-language skills), under the socio-emotional skills (socio-emotional awareness-daily living skills-orientation and mobility skills), under the compensatory academic skills only one main dimension, under the religious education skills (mental skills-practical skills-social skills), under the vocational training skills only one main dimension, and the last dimension is assistive technology skills. Only one main dimension.

SKILLS REQUIRED FOR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were asked to answer the question of what are the skills required for educational programme for the students with blindness?The answers the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies are exposed that the main skills required for educational program for the students with blindness skills in the Orientation and mobility efficiently, safely and independently in familiar and unfamiliar environments of the best practice of daily life skills, skills of dealing with educational assistive technology to help and apply the rules and behaviors of the educational system and participate of school's activities, advanced levels of successful relationships with family members and peers in the classroom and their basic concepts and skills for the future profession and to be able to benefit from the ICT in educational programming and his life day.

SKILLS THAT FALL UNDER COGNITIVE DOMAINS FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were requested to classify the skills that fall under cognitive domains for the students with blindness. According the responses of the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies the skills that fall under cognitive domains for the students with blindness are:Cognitive Skills and Language skills

SKILLS THAT FALL UNDER AFFECTIVE DOMAIN FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were requested to classify the skills that fall under affective domain for the students with blindness.The responses of the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies showed that the skills that fall under affective domain for the students with blindness – the blind student has positive feelings, emotions, and attitudes, and includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally (feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasm, motivations, and attitudes towards himself, family, classmates, teachers, administrative community and respects values and morals according to the stages of his growth.

SKILLS REQUIRED FOR PSYCHOMOTOR DOMAIN FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were asked to answer the question of what are the skills required for psychomotor domain for the students with blindness? and According the their respondents the main skills required for psychomotor domain for the students with blindness are Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Spatial awareness.

SKILLS REQUIRED TO ACQUIRE SOCIALIZATION AMONG STUDENTS THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS

Respondents were requested to List out the skills required to acquire socialization among students the students with blindness. According the Respondents, the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies the main skills required to acquire socialization among students the students with blindness are socio-emotional awareness, daily living skills, and orientation and mobility skills.

NECESSARY SKILLS REQUIRED FOR THE STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS TO ACHIEVE FUNCTIONAL ACADEMICS

Respondents were requested to add a necessary skills (if any) that are required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academics. The responses of the sample of the study and integrated with previous studies showed that there are three necessary skills that are required for the students with blindness to achieve functional academics namely;

- Religious Education Skills and sub domains (-Mental Skills-Practical Skills-Social skills).
- Vocational Training skills only one main domain.
- Assistive Technology Skills only one main domain.

CONCLUSIONS

Some dimensions and sub-dimensions related to functional assessment scale for educational programming of blind Students in Yemen such as (Psychomotor Skills(Gross Motor Skills-Fine Motor Skills-Spatial awareness), under the perceptual skills (sensory awareness-environmental awareness-temporal awareness), under the cognitive skills(cognitive skills-language skills), under the socio-emotional skills(socio-emotional awareness-daily living skills-orientation and mobility skills), under the compensatory academic skills only one main dimension, under the religious education skills(mental skills-practical skills-social skills), under the vocational training skills only one main dimension, and the last dimension is assistive technology skills were obtained from this study hence the purpose of this research has been achieved.

LIMITATIONS AND SCOPE FOR FUTURE STUDY

The study's limitations were that the sample size was limited; however, in future research, the sample size may be increased and randomly selected. The scope of this study was confined to a very small region of Sana, Ibb, Hadhramaut, Yemen cities; however, future studies might be expanded to include Aden and Alhodida states, as well as any other Yemen city which has more blind students.

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