



## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### PARENTAL PARTICIPATION; A STRATEGY TOWARDS ENHANCING ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE HEARING IMPAIRED LEARNERS

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#### ABSTRACT

Guided by Joyce Epstein's model of parental involvement in academics, a case study of Nyangoma School for the hearing impaired in Bondo Sub County Kenya was undertaken to establish how parental participation contributed to improved academic performance of the hearing impaired learners. Informants interviews with 19 participants composed of parents of the hearing impaired were carried out. From the study, it was found that though faced by several challenges, parents of the hearing impaired do participate in their children's education and this contributes to improved academic performance. It is recommended that further studies on factors affecting parental participation be carried out. Moreover, guidelines and policies to enhance parental participation in the learning of the hearing impaired need to be institutionalized.

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## INTRODUCTION

Educational performance of the hearing impaired learners has been comparably lower than the hearing learners and equally so, the visually impaired learners. This trend however seems to be going on irrespective of efforts to modify the learners curriculum and even shift to teaching using Total Communication (TC). Research studies carried out by the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2005) globally on selected member countries found out that the number of pupils progressing to high school is low among the HI learners. The question that begs to be answered is why this trend still persists. This paper aimed to explore the issue of parental participation in the education of the hearing impaired learner. It was aimed towards realizing a positive impact that parents exhibit when adequately involved in their children's learning. The performance of the hearing impaired has over time not been satisfactory and this trend still persists. This is a puzzling issue since most of learning takes place through vision, which the HI child is endowed with. Research previously done, has shown that parental participation in education is key in achieving positive results.

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One such research was conducted by Westmoreland (2009) who argues that parent's involvement in school activities is positively associated with students' academic, social and emotional adjustment. Another research study which gives the same voice as the one above was done by Zarate (2007) in which life participation was mainly seen in the ways that parents provide life education and are holistically integrated into their children's lives in school and at home. The study equally notes two major categories of parent participation which are educational involvement and life participation, all of which are important in a learner's life. In Kenya, it has been revealed that this discrepancy is in the arena of academic performance when it comes to the HI child (Ndurumo 1993; Adoyo 1995). Recent data of the academic performance in the Kenya Certificate of Primary School Education (KCPE) and the Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) results drawn from various schools for the HI revealed the same trend. The table below shows the academic performance of the school for the Hearing Impaired which was used in this study. From the table above it can be clearly seen how HI learners performed in various subjects between 2011-2013. The subject mean in most of the subjects is notably below 4.00 points in all subjects out of the aggregate mean which is usually at 12.00 points. This is way below the minimum aggregate that a school should score. There could be myriad possibilities to explain why this trend still persists.

**Table 1. KCSE performance for a secondary school for the hearing impaired in Bondo Sub County**

NAME	YEAR	TOTAL NO.	Eng.	Math	Bio	Geo	Hst	Bst	Cre	Agric
Sec. A	2013	12	—	1	1.25	1.25	2.09	2.33	3.4	1.89
Sec. A	2012	—	1.8	1	1.2	1	1.6	2	2	1
Sec. A.	2011	—	4	2.13	1.75	—	2.63	1	3.38	3.2

Parental participation in the education of the HI has been singled out as one of the contributing factor that this study will handle. Marschark, Sapere, and Lumsden (2012) assert that the challenge of understanding the social and academic needs of deaf children in regular classrooms is of interest both practically and theoretically.

They document that there is evidence that despite many cognitive similarities between deaf and hearing children, these learners still perform way below the average mean. A study carried out in the United Kingdom revealed the importance and value of parental participation as a factor in the education of the HI. The study was carried out by the Department for Education and skills (DFES) (Desforges 2007) which revealed the impact of parental involvement on children's education. It stated that parental involvement significantly affects children's cognitive development, literacy and numeracy skills. Apart from that, it revealed increased academic achievement that parental involvement has on students apart from parents, teachers and schools benefiting in other ways. The study additionally revealed that parental participation can be less fruitful when met with many challenges like inadequate time for parents to visit the school and be engaged in their learners' education. Within the African setting however, the situation is a little different from the practices carried out in the Western countries. Mutasa, Goronga and Gatsi (2013) in a research carried out in Zimbabwe found out that parents are involved to a certain extent in the education of their children. The research which comprised of parents and teachers revealed that in Zimbabwe, the most popular form of parental involvement is participation in the children's school work and attendance of meetings.

The study sample comprised of 15 parents, 3 regular and 3 special teachers bringing the total population to 21 participants. The study which used a qualitative case study adopted interviews and observation guides as data gathering tools. It helped bring to light the extent and levels of involvement on all the teachers and parents groups. The study argues that the role of parents in supporting their children in education has kept on improving from passive recipients of services to equal collaborators although there are challenges facing this participation. In Kenya, Mutua and Elhoweris 2010 found out that in developing countries, parents' primarily focused on aspirations for the future employment of their children without disabilities. The study comprised of 60 parents from three provinces and sought to find out the expectations of post-school outcomes of parents on their HI learners. The study which used a quantitative design concluded that parents were involved majorly in three ways in their learners' lives; Involvement in their child's learning like helping with homework, attending parent's evenings in the life of the school and on being representatives on bodies like membership of parent councils. Another finding of this study was lack of knowledge in communication which led to

decreased parental participation. This therefore tends to leave out a gap in the level of parental participation in the education of their HI children. Equally, in Namibia, Erlendsdóttir (2010) sought to find out the relationship existing between parental behaviors on students achievements at the Combretum Trust School. 7 students and 7 parents who had shown progressive academic ability were used in this qualitative study.

They formed the sample population intended to find out the perceptions of their parents and how they are involved in their children's education. The study which used a single case study found out that all parents who were interviewed were highly involved in their children's education. Apart from that, the study findings indicated that parents perceived parents participation to be of great importance to the education of any learner. Locally in the Kenyan setting, parental involvement in educational activities was found to indirectly influence the academic performance of preschoolers. In a study carried out by Mwirichia (2013) it was revealed that there were various forms of parents' participation in educational activities both at school and at home. The study which had a sample size of 207 participants comprising of parents, teachers and children employed a quantitative research design in the collection of data. The aim of the study was to establish the influence of parental involvement on academic performance of pre-school children. Apart from that, the study showed that all these forms of participation had positive influence on the academic performance of preschool learners. It revealed that when parents are involved in children's education, children had higher grades and improved behavior both at home and school. Additionally, those children whose parents made a follow-up on them got the highest mean score compared to those children whose parents did not. Moreover, parental supervision on child's homework revealed a positive association with academic achievement.

#### **Aims of the Study**

- To understand how parents perceive the value of academic performance of their hearing impaired children.
- To find out the value add of parental participation in the hearing impaired learner's academic performance.

#### **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The sample population consisted of 19 respondents who included 16 parents and 3 class teachers. The parents involved in the study were a mixture of both hearing and hearing impaired of both genders. The study used purposive sampling technique to select one special secondary school for the hearing impaired. Simple random sampling was used to select the 16 parents while saturated sampling was used to select 3 class teachers. Data was collected through interviews and observation guides. Trustworthiness and authenticity of the qualitative data was achieved by logical coding and organizing

of data into appropriate themes for the final analysis. A semi-structured questionnaire was devised for the study which included a series of open ended questions. These questions were used to encourage each parent to recount the detail of their previous participation and to identify some strong points from their perspective. The questionnaire covered the following topics: demographic characteristics, type and level of parental participation and perceived importance of involvement from the parents view on hearing impaired learners. The interviews were primarily carried out face-to-face between the researcher and each parent on specific school function days being that Nyangoma School is a boarding school. Emerging patterns and divergent data or "outliers" were identified and the findings collated to get the main themes (Braun & Clarke 2006). The researcher obtained a research permit to conduct the research from the Board of postgraduate studies of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of science and technology and the National Council of Science and Technology for Innovation (NACOSTI) and consequently clearance from the County and Sub-County directors from both Siaya and Bondo respectively before the research.

## Findings

### Parents' perception of the value of education to their hearing impaired children

The parents involved in this study perceived the education of their hearing impaired children as very significant. This was done by the use of interviews which were one on one with the researcher. Parents were given dummy names for confidentiality. It was observed that all the parents understood the value that education bears to their child's future. They also understood that education prepares their children to be independent in life and to be empowered to make their own decisions. Additionally, most parents knew that in the current society, as opposed to the past, education is the only best gift to give their hearing impaired children. They were quick to enumerate that it was the same education that is used as a yardstick to acquire any job opportunity in the country.

*When I will one day see this girl being employed in the office, I will smile because I will have contributed to that job that she is doing, she needs to be encouraged to go for it even if she is hearing impaired....parent D*

One parent noted that the only reasons why some people he sees succeed in life nowadays are the ones who knew the importance of education. In his view he stated that;

*"...Society has changed from since our time when we did not really need to work very hard. In this current society; I see a lot of people succeeding through learning, learners with hearing impaired should be part of this too..."Parent A*

This view was backed up by a female parent who specified the value and the voice that education gives to the ones who have gone to school up to college level and beyond. In her statement she indicated the following;

*This education is the only way that can make him have a bargaining power in the future. When he grows up,*

*irrespective of the handicap he has, with education he will have that bargaining power...parent H*

The findings from parents seemed to agree with most of the views that majority of the parents had given concerning their perception about parental participation. Most parents gave out the importance and value of education to any individual in this current society. The parents seemed to be unison on the fact that education will help enable their children get jobs and be employers in future. These findings concur with the study findings by Erlendsdóttir (2010) which was carried out in Namibia. In the study, it was indicated that parents perceived parents participation to be of great importance to the education of any learner. Additionally the study determined that successful students have strong academic support from their involved parents. These are sentiments that are agreed on by a majority of parents in response to this question on the perception of parents in the education of their H.I learners.

### Benefits of value add of parental participation in academic achievement

The parents' response to the question on whether parental participation was beneficial or not in their children's academic performance was almost synonymous. Every parent who was interviewed in this study felt that their participation was of great impact to their learner's performance. This, they said helped them to know exactly what their children go through in their absence when they are in boarding school and it provides a chance to interact fully with them and their teachers. Additionally, parental participation to most of them was a show of love to their children: a way of encouraging them that they have not forgot about them when they are back in boarding school. Some of the views of the parents as documented below seem to be in some form of agreement.

*"I have struggled with this child because of her handicap since the parents neglected her, I am her auntie. Most times, I have to convince her parents to support me and not to lose hope in her. I know that when I participate in her education, the child will work hard not to fail us..."Parent E*

To confirm the view above, another parent also gave out this opinion about parental participation;

*"It will help her because when she sees me come to school, she will feel obligated to work hard in class and that is what is important. I want her to read and be self-reliant..." Parent C*

Another parent also agreed to the two opinions given above by stating this over his sons' education and the future he hopes for him.

*"I know very well how vital it is to be involved in his education. He is a boy and you know that society looks at boys as leaders irrespective of the deafness condition he has. When I step in and help I know he will play his part too..." Parent G*

Most parents do not have any problems when it comes to participating but it was realized that some were seeing it as becoming increasing difficult and therefore after paying school

fees and buying some few essentials, they stay at home and leave these hearing impaired children solely to their teachers.

## DISCUSSION

Parents of the hearing impaired learners are well aware of the value that academics bear on their learners. Most of the parents agree well to the fact that without a proper education, life can be unbearable in the current society. Another revelation was that parents of the hearing impaired are aware of the power that comes along with education. To them, it does not just hold the key to the employment of their children in future; rather it is an avenue for their children to be employers in future. The study also revealed that when it comes to parental perception about academic success, they are aware that it cannot be got solely from the effort of their learners. Apart from that, most parents of the hearing impaired learners are conscious of the fact that for one to have a voice of reason in the society, he or she should be educated. This situation however withstanding, one strong finding that came out in the study was the fact that these parents had low esteem in their learner's success. In most cases, the parents interviewed kept using the non-hearing impaired learners as a point of reference. This brings in a situation of general acceptance that however much they understood the value of education, an inner voice was of the opinion that they cannot outdo their hearing counterparts.

## Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concluded that as a result of the below average performance of the hearing impaired children, the parents develop negative attitude towards participation in the academic performance of their children even though they know the value addition of the same. This study therefore concludes that attitude that emanates from the parents of the hearing impaired learners should be discouraged in order for them to participate and motivate their learners fully.

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## Appendix

### Appendix i: Interview schedule for parents

#### Part A: Demographic Data

- i) Gender of parent : Male [ ] Female [ ]
- ii) Age of parent : 20-30 years[ ] 30-45 years[ ] 45 years and above[ ]
- iii) Professional qualification : Not trained [ ] KCPE level [ ] KCSE level [ ] College and above [ ]

#### Part B:

1a) In your own opinion, how do you understand the education of your child?

- Does education bear value to your child's future?
- Does education prepare your child to be independent in life?
- Is education a source of empowerment for your child?
- Is the education of your learner expensive to maintain?
- Kindly explain any of the choices you have picked above in detail.

b. In your view, is parental participation beneficial or not in your learners education in terms of academic achievement? Please explain your answer .....

2a) In your own understanding, what are the roles that you play in the education of your learner?

- Paying of school fees and other school dues
- Proper parenting by establishing home environments to support children.
- Proper communication with the school
- Motivating of your child in his/her education
- Volunteering and helping support the school activities.
- Helping students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities, decisions, and planning
- Working together with the community members to strengthen school programs
- Developing parent leaders and representatives in bodies like P.T.A. and B.O.M

Kindly explain your choices in detail.....

b) In your opinion do you think you have always tried to play all these roles? Kindly explain.....

3a) In your view, do you think playing these roles or not can affect your child's academic success. Kindly elaborate.....

**Appendixii: Document analysis**

Document (s)	Level of availability	Details of parents previous involvement
School mission and vision statements		
Records of parents of all learners in the school		
Records of previous visitations by parents		
Pupils progress records in academics by class teachers		
List of various school functions involving parents		

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