

ABSTRACT

The rights of all persons are provided for in many policy documents around the world. Every child has a right to free and compulsory education at Primary and Secondary levels. The same rights are accorded children with hearing impairments. Further, parents have a right to choose the kind of education to be given to their children. In the process of seeking to provide effective education for learners with hearing impairment, parents experience challenges in fulfilling their roles and therefore learners with hearing impairment suffer neglect and often lack socio-emotional, material and educational provisions. The purpose of this study was therefore to establish the perspectives of parents on challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments in Kenya. This study adopted a qualitative research approach using a case study research design and was informed by the Social Model of Disability as propagated by Union of Physically Impaired Against Segregation (UPIAS) (1976). The objectives of the study were: to examine perspectives of parents on financial challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments, to establish the perspectives of parents on communication challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments, to find out the perspectives of parents on challenges faced in monitoring academic progress of learners with hearing impairments, to establish the perspectives of parents on socio-emotional challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments and to find out perspectives of parents on strategies of coping with challenges faced in educating learners with hearing impairments. The target population was 177 comprising 150 parents of learners with hearing impairments, 26 teachers and 1 Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. The study sample size comprised 30 parents, 13 teachers and 1 Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. A purposive sampling technique was used to select parents and teachers while saturated sampling technique was used to select the Quality Assurance and Standards Officer. Data was collected by use of interview schedules, focus group discussion guides and document analysis guide. Trustworthiness was established by use of detailed report of the process within the study, member checks and overlapping methods. Data was analyzed using thematic analysis technique as proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The study established that most parents of learners with hearing impairments held the view that they were economically less endowed therefore expected the financial burden to be shared between the government and sponsors, that sign language was too difficult to learn at their age and expected the school and the government to facilitate sign language trainings, that academic counseling was too routine and served no purpose, that both children and parents relationships with others had suffered on account of the HI and that though parents employed certain strategies in coping with the challenges, they felt they would cope better if they got support from the government. Recommendations of this study were that: Awareness be created on financial support available for economically disadvantaged learners, sign language training centers be established by the Government for parents and all interested parties, parents be encouraged by the schools to participate actively in the academic process, the Government to sensitize parents and the society on the rights of learners with HI and parents should constantly come up with relevant strategies to cope with the challenges they face. The findings of this study may be useful to teachers in understanding the perspectives parents have on educating learners with hearing impairments and to other stake holders in raising and educating children with hearing impairments.