

# Parental Roles in Provision of Mobility and Educational Resources for Children with Physical Challenges a Case of Joytown Special School, Kiambu County, Kenya

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## Abstract

Children with physical challenges have developmental needs and rights like other children and due to their exceptionality they call for more attention in provision of adequate quality mobility and educational resources to enhance their holistic development. However, it is apparent that provision of resources to children with physical challenges has not been possible in Kenya due to various factors which are not yet understood. The study drive was to explore parental role in the provision of mobility and educational resources to children who are physically challenged. The study sought to establish parents' involvement in provision of mobility and educational resources. The study was carried out in Joytown Primary School for the Physically Challenged in Thika Town. The school was purposefully selected because it is best suited for the study since it caters for children in the category of special needs being addressed in the study that is physical challenges. Case study design was used. Target population of the study was 100 children with physical challenges, 200 parents and 4 teachers and the head teacher. Stratified random sampling method was employed to arrive at a Sample size of 30 children with physical challenges, purposive and opportunity sampling to arrive at 30 parents and purposive sampling to arrive at 4 teachers. Therefore, the total sample size was 64. The data were collected using various techniques which included questionnaires for the teachers, interview guides for parents and observation guides for children. Collected data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods entailed use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages which enhanced discussion of qualitative data which was organized into themes and categories and presented in discussion form. The study established that parental involvement in provision of mobility and educational resources is minimal. The main recommendation of the study is that government should have a budgetary allocation meant specifically for purchase of mobility and educational resources and maintenance of facilities since it's a noble course which would ensure that children are actively involved in learning activities therefore enhancing holistic development hence molding children with physical challenges to become self-reliant and productive citizens.

**Keywords:** Parental Roles, Mobility Devices, Educational Resources.

## 1.0 Introduction

Children in the African region with physical challenges face many difficulties such as lack of mobility devices and educational resources. This problem is accelerated by poverty in most African countries which lack finances to purchase mobility and educational resources as well as for adaptation of the environment which is a pre-requisite for learning to take place. Funding in most African countries is by the government, parents, NGO's and other individual sponsors for example in Tunisia, Namibia, Zambia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya. However, in Botswana special education is funded entirely by the government (UNESCO, 1993), UNESCO, 2003b). Nevertheless, even with the support from several stakeholders' in most African countries financial inadequacies continue to be a major issue.

Consequently, many children with physical challenges in the Africa region are underprivileged and largely depend on relatives for upkeep even after completing school (College, 1991), (Kamau, 1986) and (Mwathi, 1997). Parents normally bear a great deal of the burden of supporting the child with physical challenges but due to lack of support from the community and other stakeholders they give in to the fact that the child with disability shall be dependent throughout their life. Therefore, they fail to put effort in assisting the child to overcome their challenges by providing mobility devices and educational resources which would allow the child participate effectively in educational activities.

According to Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (KNBS) (2009) In Kenya, there are about 1.3 million people with disabilities. Among this huge number are children with physical challenges approximated to be about 20,000 (Ministry of Education, 2007) some of these children have been mainstreamed in regular schools others in special schools and some fail to join any school. This population with physical challenges cannot be neglected and they require more commitment from parents, government and other stakeholders in order to secure for them a bright future. However, most of these children are kept at home, denying them an opportunity to attend school where their potential can be developed.

Children with Physical challenges who are privileged to join school experience many problems due to poor adaptations of the learning environment. Kamere (2004) noted that all the special schools in Kenya do not

have adequate adapted materials for enhancing learning at school. Also through a study conducted by Andolo (2007), children with physical challenges reported on the need to be provided with quality mobility and assistive devices to enhance participation in various learning activities independently. These shows that educational needs of physically challenged have not been fully addressed especially in the provision of mobility and educational resources.

## **2.0 Statement of the Problem**

Mobility and educational resources are very important to children with physical challenges while at school and also at home. Mobility devices allows children to move freely as they engage in various play activities and as they manipulate availed learning resources. Movement and manipulation activities for children with physical challenges do not just happen without extra effort in provision of appropriate mobility and educational resources. It is documented that many people with physical challenges live a life of dependency their entire life. The issue is likely to persist if parents do not take the lead in provision of mobility and educational resources for children with physical challenges. Therefore, this study explored the role of parents in the provision of mobility and educational resources which would enhance learning of young children in special schools as well as enhance development of independence of individuals with physical challenges.

## **3.0 Purpose of the Study**

The study explored parental role in the provision of mobility devices and educational resources to children with various physical challenges in the early childhood in Joytown Special School for the Physically Challenged in Thika.

## **4.0 Objectives of the Study**

The following objectives guided the study:

1. To establish parents' role in provisions of mobility devices to children with physical challenges.
2. To establish parents' role in provisions of educational resources to children with physical challenges.

## **5.0 Significance of the Study**

The study yielded information on the role of parents' in the provision of mobility devices and educational resources to children with physical challenges. These findings should inform policy makers in developing policies that support provision of mobility devices and educational resources. Curriculum developers also should gain important information about the relevant materials and facilities that should be recommended in the curriculum being offered to children with physical challenges which can effectively adapt it to suit the needs of physically challenged children better.

## **6.0 Parental Roles in Support of Children with Physical challenges**

Parents bear a great deal of responsibility in raising a physically challenged child.

Discovery that a child has a physical challenge is usually traumatizing for the family which is the first environment where the child learns several basic skills. Therefore, the response of the parents determines whether the family is going to support the child or not in providing mobility devices and educational resources. Gallagher and Bristol (1990) found out that there were approximately twice as many divorces in families with physically challenged children as in families with children of similar age without disabilities. This is due to the significant greater stress that is experienced by both parents which may contribute to increased tendency for child abuse. In families children with physical challenges are seen as financial drain because of the necessary medical, social, and special educational services. This in turn can cause several conflicts within the family and even separation. With such conflict the special child may not receive the support the need to help them cope with their disability.

In supporting children with physical challenges parents may tend to be overprotective however a compromise has to be worked out between too much and too little independence. Holistic development of the child should be a governing factor while supporting the child. According to (Canadian Council on Learning, 2006) play lays the groundwork for holistic development as well as forming pathways for education. Therefore, parents who are primary caregivers ought to support play and learning of their children with physical challenges to enhance holistic development. The support would be possible if parents have developed a positive attitude toward the child with physical challenges and knowledgeable about mobility devices and educational resources which are beneficial to the child.

Parental acceptance of the child with physical challenges promotes support in provision of mobility devices and educational resources which stimulates development of a positive attitude in the child toward play and learning activities (Taub, 2006). If parents find the child to be very helpless they do not provide materials for play due to the belief that children with physical challenges cannot play like other children consequently

neglecting their play and learning needs. As a result the parents may not bother finding out how to support the child while in school consequently hindering holistic development.

According to Education Bureau (2008) Parents are expected to do the following in support of their children in school; Sustain interaction in setting up the classroom for easy movement along the paths, adapting tables and chairs for class work and in planning of outdoor activities for the child. Such an involvement ensures that movement of the child within the classroom is taken care of, children participate in outdoor activities and learning facilities are adapted therefore making it possible for the child to learn and play.

Parents are also expected to encourage their children to attempt working in an orderly manner despite the fact that their hands may not be steady and quick in addition any little progress should be acknowledged to motivate them (Bandura, 1977). Dynamics of the child condition and health status should be communicated as soon as possible to the school because if the child health condition is not clear to the teacher he or she can judge wrongly the child abilities. However, this kind of involvement of parents in school life of their children is rare.

To enhance parents' participation in the school life of a child with physical challenges then development of the right attitude toward the child would be a pre-requisite. Proper attitude can be indicated by the following parental roles. Unconditional acceptance of the child, understanding their limits, extent of their shortcomings so as to provide support for enhancing their flexibility as well as advance their academic and interpersonal skills (Sciarra, 2004). Responsibilities in taking care of children with physical challenges should be shared among various members of the family. Parent should seek for social support from other parents nurturing children with special needs. Impartiality should be practiced while attending to the child in the midst of others and the child should be encouraged to do what they can. Nevertheless, this does not happen with most of the parents more often doing the opposite of the identified roles for example little effort is put in place to maximize learning opportunities of children with physical challenges. Also while connecting with agencies supporting children with physical challenges parents look for financial support which is rarely forthcoming rather than information on how they can effectively support their children.

Family participation has been documented as one of the factors which increase positive child outcomes. In order to produce citizens who are self-reliant and productive in the society irrespective of their physical shortcomings, then parents must commit themselves in provision of mobility devices and educational resources for children in school. Therefore, co-operation between parents and teachers is a necessary ingredient which helps all young children to succeed in school and later in life (Epstein, 2008).

Kamau (1986) and Mwathi (1997) found that majority of the children who are disabled in Kenya rely on their kin and well-wishers for their survival. This can be attributed to the lack of support which can enhance development of independence at the family level. This happens when members of family believe that nothing can be done to change the lifestyle of the physically challenged. Over dependent on family members makes the child to develop an attitude of helplessness, loss of identity and fails to adjust to life appropriately (Wamocho, 2003).

## **7.0 Research Methodology**

The study was a case study design in which data was collected from parents who have children in JoyTown special school. An Interview schedule was constructed to gather direct information from the parents about how they are supporting their physically challenged children in providing mobility devices and educational resources. Parents were interviewed during a visiting day and a closing day when they came to pick their children. Parents were informed about the planned interview in advance to enhance their cooperation when they arrived to school. The data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Qualitative data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrative form while quantitative data was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages which were later presented using tables and graphs.

## **8.0 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **8.1 Demographic Information about the Subjects under Study**

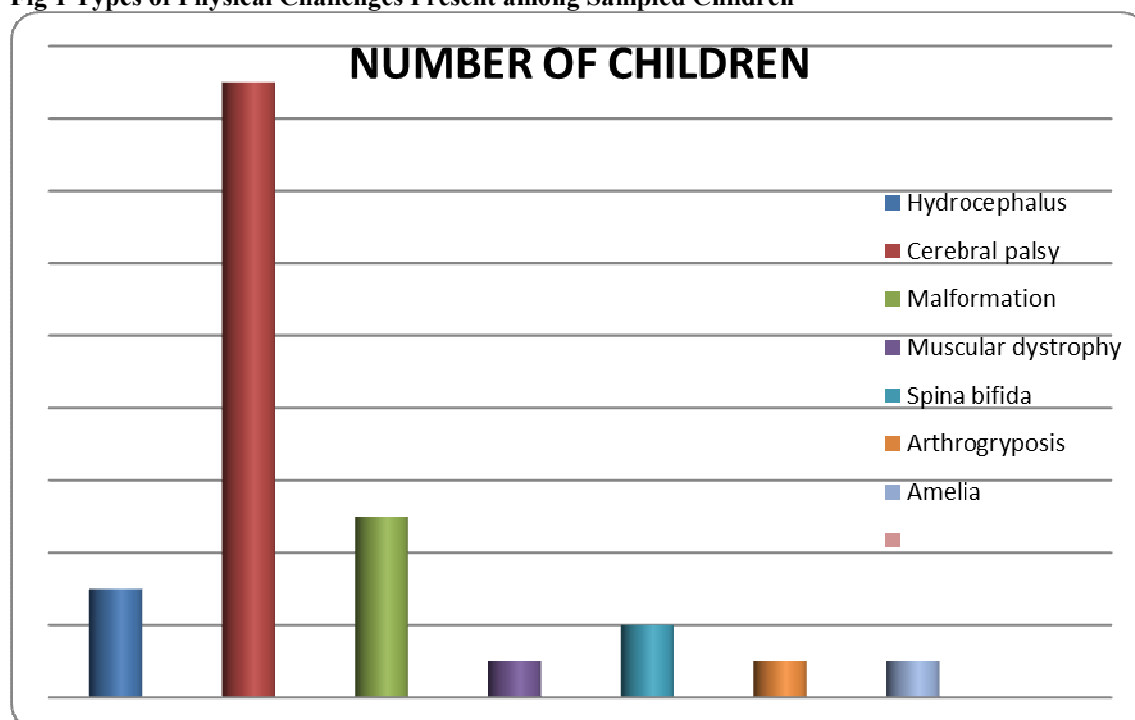
From the 30 children sampled for the study, the following categories of physical challenges were distributed as follows; 17(57%) cerebral palsy, 5(17%) malformation, 3(10%) hydrocephalus, 2(7%) spina bifida. Others disabilities were arthrogryposis, Amelia and muscular dystrophy each represented by 1(3%) of the children. The information is as illustrated in the table below.

**Table 1 Types of Physical Challenges Present among Sampled Children**

PHYSICAL CHALLENGES	NUMBER OF CHILDREN
Hydrocephalus	3
Cerebral palsy	17
Malformation	5
Muscular dystrophy	1
Spina bifida	2
Arthrogryposis	1
Amelia	1
Total	30

The table above shows that majority of the children sampled suffer from cerebral palsy as further elaborated by the graph below.

**Fig 1 Types of Physical Challenges Present among Sampled Children**



From the graph above it is clear that majority of children in Joy Town Special School suffer from Cerebral palsy since more than 50% of children sampled had the condition. This poses a great challenge to material developers since cerebral palsy varies in severity from one child to another as it depends on the part of the brain that was affected.

### 8.2 Parental roles in Provision of mobility devices and educational resources

The theme above was derived from the first objective which was to establish parents' role in provisions of mobility devices and educational resources. The responses were derived from both the parents and teachers.

### 8.3 Mobility devices and educational resources provided by Parents

Parents' responses for various questions in the interview schedule were as follows;

Question 3 (which mobility devices and educational resources do you provide to your child at home and at school). Majority of the parents interviewed that is 54% reported that they provide mobility/assistive devices such as calipers, walkers, wheelchairs and crutches which enable their children to participate in various play activities at home and 21% provides devices for use at school. About 33% of the parents do not provide any mobility or assistive devices for their children at school. This show that once the child is at school the teacher takes the responsibility of giving the child mobility or assistive device to use. 25% of the parents provide balls for use at home and 7% provides for use at school. 21% of the parents provide toys at home, 7% of the parents provide charts and 4% of the parents provide books. Parents reported not to provide any toys, books and charts for use at school. It appeared that parents were not bothered about mobility devices and educational resources which their children may need to use while at school to enhance their active participation. 13% of the

parents interviewed confessed that they do not provide any mobility devices and educational resources for their children and they were unaware about mobility devices and educational resources that their children may require. Only 10% of the parents reported to have special facilities like parallel bars developed which allows the child to exercise while strengthening muscles that are rarely used therefore, motivating the child to try engaging in other play activities. Such parents revealed that they sought advice from therapist attending to their children about what they can do at home to enhance active involvement of their child in various play and learning activities. The table below illustrates mobility devices and educational resources identified by parents as what they avail to their children.

**Table 2 Mobility devices and educational resources provided by parents both at Home and at School.**

PLAY AND LEARNING MATERIAL/ASSISTIVE/MOBILITY DEVICES		FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Mobility Devices	HOME	15	54%
	SCHOOL	6	21%
Balls	HOME	7	25%
	SCHOOL	2	7%
Toys	HOME	6	21%
	SCHOOL	0	0%
Books	HOME	1	4%
	SCHOOL	0	0%
Charts	HOME	2	7%
	SCHOOL	0	0%

As per the responses it was clear that parents concentrated more with provision of mobility or assistive devices and little attention is given to educational resources.

Question 7 required parents to explain how the government supports in provision of mobility devices and educational resources. Majority of the parents that is 90% were unaware about how the government supports them in providing mobility devices and educational resources to their children despite the fact that their children are in government sponsored school benefiting from free primary education. Only 10% acknowledged that government supports them especially in provision of learning materials since they do not buy books which their children are provided with once they are in school.

From Question 12 which was stated as follows, where else do you get support for providing all the required mobility and educational resources to your child? About 67% of the parents reported that they do not get support from other sources apart from the family. 33% had support from outside the family that is from individual sponsors and organizations like APDK as well as the community. However, they all reported that the support received is quite inconsistent and insignificant for example one respondent confessed she obtains Kshs2000 per year from APDK and other services are offered at a cost.

Question 5 required parents to give their own view about whether their children are provided with adequate mobility devices and educational resources at school and at home. About 70% of the parents felt that their children are not provided with adequate mobility devices and educational resources both at home and at school. They cited lack of appropriate mobility and assistive devices as the major challenge, 30% were satisfied with materials provided both at home and at school and 3% did not know whether their children are provided with adequate materials or not. It emerged out again that parents were merely concerned with provision of mobility and assistive devices.

#### 8.4 Rating of Parents Involvement in Provision of Mobility devices and educational resources by Teachers'

Question 5 required teachers to rate parents' involvement in the provision of mobility devices and educational resources using the terms good, average and below average. The results were as follows; 20% of the teachers felt that their involvement is good while another 20% rated their involvement as below average while 60% felt that parents' involvement is average. This information is as illustrated in the table below.

**Table 3 Rating of parents' Involvement in provision of mobility devices and educational resources by teachers'.**

REMARKS	Good	Average	Below average
PERCENTAGE OF TEACHERS	20%	60%	20%

#### 9.0 Conclusions

Involvement of parents in provision of mobility and educational resources is imperative in support of children with physical challenges in Kenya. This is because, majority of the children with physical challenges suffer from cerebral palsy a condition whose degree of severity varies from one individual child to another depending on the



extent of damage to the brain. This study revealed that majority of the parents tends to be ignorant in the area of providing educational resources. The scenario is evidenced by the fact that majority of them concentrate on provision of mobility devices and care less about educational resources required for their children learning. It was clear that provision of mobility and educational resources is a challenge in Kenya and this call for collective effort from various stakeholders being led by the government. Parents in Kenya currently bear a great deal of the burden in taking care of children with physical challenges without any support from outside the family. Consequently, their involvement in provision of educational resources is below average and it's recommended that teachers should involve them more in school to make them more sensitive to the learning need of their children with physical challenges.

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