

Full Length Research

Efficacy of Training Special Education Teachers On Classroom Management In Inclusive Settings In Nigeria

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Abstract

Effective training of special education teachers is an essential component of Special Needs Education in Nigeria.. Special Education teachers are often overwhelmed with the various challenges of working with students with a wide range of sensory, physical and intellectual/cognitive impairments as well as students with multiple impairments. This makes classroom management inevitable to enable these categories of students benefit maximally from classroom instruction in general and inclusive classroom settings. This paper examines the efficacy of training special education teachers on classroom management in inclusive settings. To set the tone for the discussion, the concept of classroom management was presented. Classroom management in inclusive settings was examined. Similarly, teacher preparation programmes for effective management in inclusive settings is presented. Finally, it is therefore recommended that the National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria should be adequately developed and implemented and to ensure that inclusive education programmes are developed based on the stated philosophy of education in planning education programmes.

Keywords: E-resources, Academia, Usage impact, University, Researchers, Libraries

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INTRODUCTION

Classroom management in inclusive settings is an inevitable task that must be employed by special education teachers. Teachers are required to acquire basic skills in classroom management that will ensure successful implementation of inclusive education. Classroom management is often described as the process of ensuring that classroom teachers coordinate and supervise all classroom activities effectively. There is need for effective classroom management in the regular classroom most especially in inclusive settings. An inclusive setting is referred to as an environment where learners with and without special needs are placed in the same classroom with some modification in physical structures, teaching resources as well as methodology to suit the special and unique characteristics of the learners. According to Okuoyibo (2011), inclusive education is

process whereby students with disabilities (regardless of the nature or severity of their unique special needs) are put into all planning activities in general school setting such as the school setting as well as in their immediate environments. The principle of inclusive education ensures that all children (irrespective of their unique impairment) are brought together to learn in one classroom setting, are active members of the classroom, have a sense of belonging and also participate in all classroom activities. All accommodations and modifications carried out in the classroom are adequately implemented to meet their unique learning needs. Inclusive education is the most effective medium of combatting discriminatory attitudes, creating a welcoming community, building an inclusive society and thereby achieving education for all. In Nigeria, the fourth edition of the Nigerian National Policy on Education advocated for access to inclusive education along with integration and

special education provision. (United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1994, 2002).

Effective training of special education teachers is an essential component of special needs education. The teacher coordinates and supervises various classroom activities in a bid to promote meaningful learning outcomes for all students. There is need therefore for teachers to acquire relevant skills for effective classroom management that will ensure meaningful learning. As opined by Dada (2006), special education teachers use specialized teaching strategies/methods, learning materials (adopted or adapted) and also flexible techniques that will facilitate teaching and learning in the classroom. Similarly, Ozoji, Babudoh and Dala (2015) outlines some attributes/qualities of a special teacher to include the following: well trained, high degree of patience/tolerance, flexible and resourceful, exhibit personal warmth and friendliness, respect opinion of other professional, make decisions about teaching methods and strategies, flexibility in using teaching materials and above all respect and observe professional ethics amongst others.

Concept of Classroom Management

There is no agreed definition of classroom management however, in trying to define classroom management, a current and widely accepted view by Evertson and Weinstein in Kratocwill (2013) asserts that classroom management seeks to establish and sustain an orderly environment (that students can engage in meaningful academic learning) and also to enhance students social and moral growth. Classroom management refers to the orderly control of students, the class environment and teaching materials in order to obtain the desired learning objectives which can enhance the academic achievement of students (Adzongo and Olaotan 2019).

According to Brophy (2016), classroom management refers to actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive for successful instruction (arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students' attention to lesson and engagement in activities). As opined by Okorie (2020), classroom management embodies the arrangement of teachers and students classroom structure (seats and adequate proper walk-ways within the classroom) to facilitate a conducive learning atmosphere. In addition Ibode (2004) summarized effective classroom management to include the following strategies: (a) involving all students actively from the beginning of any lesson (b) ensuring that the classroom is tidy, ensure availability of learning materials (displayed and arranged) and also ensure that necessary instruction are written on the board and/or explained verbally to students, (c) adopt an appropriate methods of sitting

arrangement amongst students, (d) maintaining an appropriate position in the class preferably standing while lessons are on, (e) maintaining decorum in the classroom, (f) reaching out to any misbehaving student and (g) planning lessons in a way that will ensure that the objectives are achieved at the end of each lesson.

According to Igbacha (2013) classroom management is process that involves planning, organizing, coordinating, motivating and controlling the actions of learners and materials in order to achieve instructional objectives. It is also a process of organization of certain classroom tasks that are essential for effective teaching and learning in a specific classroom setting with the sole aim of attaining certain goals and objectives.

Classroom Management in Inclusive Settings

The full inclusion of children with special needs in inclusive settings provides an opportunity for teachers to identify classroom management principles and practices that promotes diversity and acceptance. Teachers can develop self-awareness in students by not hiding from their differences. To do this, teachers should use inclusive teaching strategies and technique to actively engage students in the classroom. As posited by Wong H. and Wong R. (2014), creating a learning environment for inclusive classrooms that is well managed with clear structures and routines is of utmost importance for students' success. This implies that the learning environment of the students will determine the academic performance of the students in that classroom.

Vogel (2016) outlined five strategies for inclusive classroom and these include the following: (a) developing each students' Individualized Educational Plan (IEP), (b) implement Universal Design for Learning (UDL), (c) support important Daily Living Skills (DLS) and also (d) develop a strong behavior management plan.

Developing each students' Individualized Educational Plan (IEP): The IEP is an aspect of the educational plan that involves a cluster of programmes and resources dedicated to supporting the educational needs of exceptional students in order to enable them access, participate and achieve maximally in the classroom. These programmes are available for all categories of exceptional students who have unique learning needs. It involves, objectives, contents, methodologies/approaches etc. Therefore, individualized educational programmes (IEPs) for persons with different/unique special needs are developed. The Individualized Educational programme (IEP) is an accountable checklist that translates the educational needs of children with special needs into reality. It contains five major steps which include the following: (a) Assessment: (identifying the nature, characteristics of impairment), (b) Goal setting: (setting long and short term goals), (c) Planning for instruction (d) Implementation and also (e) Evaluation (to access the

effectiveness of programme).

Implementing Universal Design for Learning (UDL): The Universal design for learning that accommodates the needs and abilities of all learners irrespective of their unique learning needs. According to Harper (2018), universal design can be used in inclusive as it allows students with special needs to learn together. The use of UDL can be of benefit for all students (with and without special needs as well as varying degrees of impairment) because there are multiple pathways to learning. Presentations of learning materials are presented in visual, auditory and tactile formats which increases motivation of students due to these varying methods of instruction. In 2017, the National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria aims to harmonize and create a unified system. It aims to realize inclusive education by rehabilitating and upgrading special schools to serve as resource centres (UNESCO, 2002)

Supporting important Daily Living Skills (DLS): These are skills that are required by students with special learning needs that enable them function maximally in carrying out daily activities independently. Some daily living skills are learned through imitation and while others need to be taught over time. It is therefore necessary that special training is provided to enable them acquire relevant daily skills. These skills include the following: (a) Social skills: This involves effective communication skills, developing self-confidence and self-esteem, good etiquette and acceptable behaviours as well as curbing undesirable (unacceptable) behaviours, engaging in leisure or recreational activities, etc. (b) Organizational skills: This involves time management, money management, home management etc. (c) Hygiene and safety: This involves engaging in body grooming activities (frequent baths, shaving, manicure and pedicure, dressing properly etc. They are also taught safety tips on protecting oneself from accidents in different environments, safety measures in indoor and outdoor environments as well as in familiar and unfamiliar environments.

Developing a strong behavior management plan: The behavior management plan is a plan that a special or regular teacher develops to ensure that he/she has full control of the classroom environment. The strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and interest of students are taken into consideration in developing a behavior management plan for students with special needs. According to Polirstok (2015), creating an emotionally safe classroom environment where students can be successful involves not only high approval interactions between students and teachers, but also requires an emphasis on structure and routine. A study carried out by Taiwo and Florian (2019) seeks to examine how classroom teachers in Nigeria are developing inclusive practice. Findings of the study reveals that a mixture of beliefs and knowledge influence what teachers do in classrooms.

The purpose of classroom management according to Anyanniyi in Igunnu (2008), is to realize the purpose of the schools objectives, prevent wastage of resources at the teachers disposal and also to enable the students achieve the highest level of their potential abilities. These objectives are realized through conscious efforts by the teacher in the utilizations of the available resources in the classroom, coordinating classroom activities and also guard against unforeseen administrative problems in the classroom which are the core requirements of an inclusive classroom setting.

Teacher Preparation Programmes for Effective Management in Inclusive Settings in Nigeria

Teacher preparation is required to improve the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers by enhancing effective teaching practices and pedagogies (methods) of conveying contents for instruction. The need to prepare teachers to successfully implement inclusive education in Nigeria is inevitable and thereby calls for effective preparation. Teacher preparation for special education and regular teachers (teachers of students without special needs) is very necessary in order to manage the classroom effectively. The ability of the teacher to adopt classroom management strategies and also use a variety of instructional materials, class arrangement, develop lesson plans and modifying curricular is very necessary and important. Thus, conscious efforts must be made by the teacher to acquire additional skills for effective inclusive classroom practices.

In order to acquire relevant skills as professional classroom teachers, there is need for effective training of teachers. As opined by Elemukan and Amwe (2013), teachers play major roles in determining the success of inclusive education in the Nigerian educational system. Therefore, teachers in special education should be provided with adequate information in managing classroom resources geared towards ensuring resources geared towards ensuring equal participation of children with special needs and their counterparts (without special needs) in all classroom activities in inclusive classrooms. To effectively manage the classroom, a teacher is expected to possess a variety of classroom management skills which are necessary for attaining classroom objectives. Classroom management skills enables the teacher to create a healthy and conducive atmosphere for learning irrespective of the unique needs of students in the classroom setting. For inclusive education practice to succeed, the teacher must be conversant with classroom management strategies that would enable him/her attain classroom objectives. Polirstok (2015) highlights effective strategies in inclusive classrooms to include: creating and reinforcing classroom environment, using selective ignoring, focusing on structure and routine, de-escalating behavioural crisis, increasing

students, limiting the use of punishment amongst others.

Teachers need to be trained in methodology, practices and also in the area of curriculum modification and implementation on inclusive education practice. Professional development of teachers vital towards achievement of quality education in inclusive education helps them in coping with the demands of inclusive classrooms are often determined by the sufficiency of training of teachers for inclusion (Isah, 2012).

According to Groove, Sharma, Laletas, Laktionova & O'Toole (2022), teacher preparation should be based on the principles of inclusive education and includes the following: (1) Diversity in the classroom enriches and strengthens education (2) A strength-based and personalized curriculum (3) Student engagement agency and voice (4) Engaging with critical stakeholders (6) Inclusive teachers need commitment, knowledge and practical skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to ensure the effective training of special education teachers on classroom management in inclusive settings in Nigeria, there must be periodic training and retraining of special education teachers and regular teachers. Therefore, it is important to provide special teachers and non-special teachers with adequate capacity building and adequate resources to meet the diverse learning needs of students with special needs in the classroom. From the foregoing it is recommended that:

- (1) The National Policy on Inclusive Education should be adequately implemented and developed to ensure that programmes are developed based on the stated philosophy of education in planning education programmes.
- (2) Teacher training programmes in Universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, diploma and certificate programmes as well as short courses in Nigeria should provide training for prospective special education and non-special education teachers in team teaching, co-teaching, peer tutoring programmes etc.
- (3) Collaborate actively with parents, caregivers and other members of the multidisciplinary team in the decision making process for each student with special needs. Collaboration with other developing countries (such as Nigeria) is essential to adopt inclusive practices that have recorded tremendous success.
- (4) For inclusive education to be successful, special and non-special teachers should be trained to acquire a variety of teaching strategies and know how to use them effectively.

CONCLUSION

The successful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria will require training and retraining of teachers in classroom management. When special education teachers and regular teachers are adequately trained, the sustainability of the programme will be ensured. Therefore, teachers have an enormous responsibility in acquiring skills that will ensure the full implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria.

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