

Teachers and Classroom Management as Tools for Actualizing Inclusive Education in Nigerian Educational Institutions

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Abstract

Inclusive classroom being a general education classroom, is where students with and without learning differences learn together. Teaching special need students is a unique task that demands commitments from educators. Effective classroom management by teachers in inclusive classroom is greatly benefiting all students, including those with and without special educational needs. Teachers used a series of classroom management strategies in order to achieve complete classroom control for optimum learning environment for students to engage with their studies and work to the best of their ability. Therefore, this paper deals with the role of teachers in effective classroom management in teaching special need students together with the so call normal student at the same time, in the same classroom under the same learning environment in Nigerian educational institutions. Attempts were made to highlight the conceptual definition of the key terms. The paper adopted social learning theory propounded by Alfred Bandura in 1962. Inclusive education at a global glance was discussed. The paper pointed out the significant roles that teachers play in handling inclusive education in Nigeria. To this end, the paper recommends among others, Parents, Community, Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations should give all necessary supports on appropriate policies, incentives and practices that teachers can acquire knowledge and skills necessary to manage inclusive classroom effectively to benefit the special needs students that receive education concurrently with the normal students in Nigerian educational both lower and tertiary institution.

Keywords: Teachers, Inclusive, Classroom Management, Special Education, Special Need Students.

Introduction

Special Needs Education is the practice of educating students with special needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Students with special needs, such as learning differences, mental health issues, specific disabilities (physical or developmental), and giftedness are those whose needs are addressed within the classroom setting. Inclusion, exclusion, mainstreaming, segregation and the like can be considered among the appropriate pedagogy in classroom for learners with special needs in Nigeria

Nearly every teacher agrees that classroom management is an important aspect of successful teaching. Fewer agree on how to achieve it, and even fewer claims the concept of classroom management is operating in their own classrooms. Classroom management and discipline, terms often used interchangeably, are not synonymous. Teachers asked to define classroom management in one word have given the following responses: discipline, control, and consequences. Discipline was always the first word they chose. In the last few

years, however, teachers have responded with the following words: organization, control, positive climate, and incentives. In effect, discipline has become a much smaller part of the term classroom management. Classroom management is much more than any one of these words or the sum of all these words. Classroom management means how the teacher works, how the class works, how the teacher and students work together, and how teaching and learning happen. For students, classroom management means having some control in how the class operates and understanding clearly the way the teacher and students are to interact with each other. For both teachers and students, classroom management is not a condition but a process. "Effective teachers differ from ineffective teachers not in the way they respond to students' misbehavior, but instead in how competently they manage the group activities." (McLeskey & Waldron 2000)

The focus of this paper is to situate classroom management as an indispensable tool for effective conduct of inclusive education by teachers in teaching special need students in Nigerian contemporary society. Practicing inclusive teaching in our Nigerian schools will contribute immensely for developing the special need students and the nation at large. The role of teacher in classroom management is as important as backbone that without it, combine student with and without disabilities by teachers in the same classroom cannot be possible. Teacher's ability to manage classroom provide effective learning environment into inclusive classroom and impact on student outcomes and related benefits.

Conceptual Review

Special Needs Students - Special needs according to terri (2000) is an umbrella term for a wide array of diagnoses, from those that resolve quickly to those that will be a challenge for life and those that are relatively mild to those that are profound. Children with special needs may have developmental delays, medical conditions, psychiatric conditions and/or cognetical condition. These special needs require accommodations so children can reach their potential. No matter the reason, the special needs designation is useful. It can help you obtain needed services, set appropriate goals, and gain an understanding of your child and the stresses your family may face.

The concept of special need student is used to describe student(s) that have impairments in following areas: physical, visual, hearing, speech and language, cognitive, and learning. Foreman (2000) stresses that advocacy groups, and others representing people with disabilities in recent years, have appealed to professionals, the media and schools to discontinue or stop the usage of disability terminology that devalues people with disabilities. They prefer terms such as: a person with a disability; people with disabilities; the child with cerebral palsy; people with physical disability and a person with hearing impairment. The principle to be followed is *people first, then disability second*.

Special needs children or students are classified into two categories: the physically challenged and the gifted and talented children or students. The physically challenged are those who are impaired (physical, sensory), and whom because of this impairment cannot cope with conventional school/class organization and methods without formal special

educational training and facilities. They include: visually impaired (blind and the partially sighted); hearing impaired (deaf and the partially hearing); physically and health impaired; mentally retarded (educable, trainable, bed ridden); emotionally imbalanced (hyperactive, hypoactive/the socially maladjusted/ behaviour disorder); speech impaired; learning disabled (have psychological/neurological educational phobia or challenges); multiple handicapped. On the other hand, the gifted and talented are people (children and adults) with very high intelligent quotient and are naturally endowed with special traits and therefore find themselves insufficiently challenged by the regular school, college/ university programmes (National Policy on Education, 2009).

Inclusive Education - The term "inclusive education" is most often used to mean the inclusion of persons with physical and mental impairments, such as sensory or mobility limitations, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, language disorders, behavior disorders and autism spectrum disorders. Some educators and theorists also use "inclusion" in a broader sense, to refer to an educational system designed to ensure access for all groups that have been marginalized in society and in schools. Thus, inclusion is sometimes envisioned as the deliberate and self-conscious structuring of whole-school and classroom environments so that they are accessible and congenial not only to students with impairments, but also to those who can face exclusion or disempowerment due to their ethnicity, social class, gender, culture, religion, immigration history or other attributes. Because inclusion also has this broader meaning, it is sometimes endorsed as a means of achieving a more comprehensive form of social justice. Advocates of inclusion argue that it is a form of schooling that puts the values of a democratic society into practice. Although there are multiple theories of democracy and numerous perspectives on how to achieve social justice, it is generally accepted that contemporary democratic societies are founded on the premise that all human beings have equal worth and should have equal rights, including the right of access to education. Proponents of inclusion emphasize an additional democratic moral imperative, which is a responsibility to respect and respond to human diversity, including people's limitations or 3 impairments. They contend that in order to ensure truly universal access to education, a principle of equity must be followed. Inclusion is grounded in the view that such equity or fairness is best achieved by designing an educational system in which physical and social environments, curricula, teaching methods and learning materials recognize and support students' diverse capabilities and needs.

There is no universally accepted definition of inclusion and no consensus on a standardized set of procedures that must be followed in order to practice it. One way to distinguish inclusion from another non-segregationist approach called mainstreaming is that in an inclusive classroom, there is a strong emphasis on trying to meet the diverse learning needs of all students without removing them from the classroom. By contrast, when children with special needs are mainstreamed, it usually means (at least in principle) that everyone in the class is expected to follow one standard curriculum regardless of their differences, or that particular children are taken out of the class for a large proportion of the day to receive their lessons and services.

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Classroom Management - Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior by students. The term also implies the prevention of disruptive behavior. The process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior by students closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. (Frayen, & Iverson, 1999)

Classroom management is the term we will use to highlight all of those positive behaviors and decisions teachers make to facilitate the learning process of their students. It refers to all those activities necessary to create and maintain an orderly learning environment such as planning and preparation of materials, organization, decoration of the classroom and certainly the establishment and enforcement of routines and rules (Krause, Bochner & Duchsne 2003).

In short, classroom management can be defined as: teachers' strategies that create and maintain an orderly learning environment and discipline means teachers' responses to student's misbehavior. Classroom management is closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. According to specialists in the field of education: "School and classroom management aims at encouraging and establishing student self-control through a process of promoting positive student achievement and behavior. Thus academic achievement, teacher efficacy, and teacher and student behavior are directly linked with the concept of school and classroom management. Classroom management is certainly concerned with behavior, but it can also be defined more broadly as involving the planning, organization and control of learners, the learning process and the classroom environment to create and maintain an effective learning experience." (Froyen, & Iverson, 1999. Krause, Bouchner & Duchesne, 2003)

Effective classroom management plan assists students to keep task focus, reduce distraction from learning, organize and facilitate the flow of learning activities.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts social learning theory propounded by Alfred Bandura in 1962 later developed in 1971. The theory is considered as inner motivational factors and challenged

the assumption that learning represents a change in behaviour. Bandura (1971) proposed that observational learning and modelling is the basis for a wide variety of children's behaviour, such as aggression, helping, sharing, and gender responses. Children acquire skills in the absence of direct rewards and punishment by watching and listening to others around them. The theory outlines three requirements for people to learn and model behaviour: retention (remembering what one observed), reproduction (the ability to reproduce the behaviour), and motivation (good reason to want to adopt the behaviour). The theory also includes other cognitive elements that focus on intrinsic reinforcement through such motivational factors as a sense of pride, satisfaction, and accomplishment. The theory advocates for families and teachers to promote self-efficacy of the child which is considered as very important in education. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a particular situation, and it has a powerful influence on how people think, behave, and feel.

In this context, social learning theory is relevant to this study because it sets up practical procedures that combine reinforcement, modeling, and manipulation of situational cues that will eliminate people with disabilities and increase their adoption of socially acceptable responses. This implies that inclusive educational practice will offer students with special needs an intrinsic reinforcement through motivational factors as a sense peer interaction with non-disable colleague, satisfaction, and accomplishment of their educational successes or attainments through teacher's effective classroom management strategy.

Inclusive Education at a Global Glance

According to Suzanne R. Kirschner (2015) Inclusive education is an outgrowth of several social and political movements that have emerged since the middle of the 20th century. In the United States, the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s intensified awareness that even in liberal democratic societies; many individuals were still being excluded from social institutions, including schools. By the late 1960s and 1970s, movements such as second-wave feminism, gay rights, and disability rights arose in order to also combat other forms of exclusion such as those due to gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or disability. One significant outcome of these movements, both in the United States and in many other countries, was the passage and implementation of laws and policies designed to ensure citizenship rights and opportunities of all kinds, including access to education. In the United States, federal and state laws were passed, mandating that children with disabilities were entitled to public education and that the government and its schools must actively facilitate these opportunities. The first such federal law was the Education for Handicapped Children Act (EHA) in 1975. Legal theorist Martha Minow has pointed out that until the 1970s, many children with disabilities did not have access to formal education, and the majority of those who did attend school were educated in separate classrooms or even segregated in special schools. During the 1970s and 1980s, owing to the passage of the EHA as well as a number of state laws, a larger percentage of children with disabilities were provided with educational opportunities and support. Much of this support continued to take the form of

special education classes or schools. In 1990, the EHA was replaced by another federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The IDEA reflected and extended three already existing trends. First, there was a growing insistence that communities be responsible for educating children in their neighborhood schools, rather than segregating them in separate schools or even in separate classrooms. Second, there was a related demand to educate children in the "least restrictive environment." Third, there was a move towards more individualized assessment of children, in order to devise education plans that could accommodate each child's distinctive needs. The IDEA has undergone several revisions and expansions in the years since it was first passed. Many countries around the world have passed laws and instituted policies implementing inclusion. Inclusive education has been also mandated by international and non-governmental organizations. For example, the Salamanca statement of the United Nations (1994) and the UNESCO Dakar "World Declaration on Education for All" (2000) note the importance of inclusive schooling, both as a means of ensuring access to educational opportunities for all children, and as a way to combat discriminatory attitudes and to socialize rising generations to be more accepting of all kinds of diversity. In addition to these social, political and legal developments, there is another factor contributing to the recent emphasis on inclusive education. This is an increase in the number of children diagnosed with disabilities, specifically neurological and psychiatric disorders. It is possible that there are more children with autism, ADHD and other neurological impairments than there were in the past. However, the rise in such diagnoses appears also to result from the increased focus on assessment and early detection, along with an expansion in the number of diagnostic categories, the development of new assessment technologies, and a lowering of diagnostic threshold. For all these reasons, there are currently many students in the United States who are receiving services and are eligible for accommodations and modifications in educational settings.

Inclusive Education and Classroom Management in Teaching of Special Need Students in Nigeria

Inclusion can be organized in several ways and on different levels, but in the end, the teacher has to deal with a larger diversity within his or her class and has to adapt or prepare the curriculum in such a way that the needs of all pupils, those with special educational needs, gifted pupils and their peers, are sufficiently met. In other words, handling diversity is the key issue at the classroom level. When dealing with differences in the class, teachers need an extra pair of hands or extra support from either colleagues (or special education teachers) or other professionals. At times a pupil with Special Education Need needs specific help or instruction that cannot be given by the teacher during the daily classroom routine. Here other teachers and support personnel come on to the scene and the issue of flexibility, good planning, co-operation and team-teaching forms a challenge. This is not only relevant at the level of the classroom in the case of co-operative teaching, but also on the school level. In some cases, professionals from regional support services are needed and

this amplifies the need for flexibility, good planning, co-operation and co-ordination. Inclusive education implies more than just dealing with diversity in classrooms. It leads to the challenges of co-teaching (classroom level), team teaching and the need for good cooperation between teachers on the school level and coordination with professionals from other support services. (Hick & Thomas, 2008)

Management in the Inclusive Classroom, according to Suzanne R. Kirschner (2015), Teachers want to create environments in which all students can accomplish their best learning. This can be especially daunting when the goal is a fully inclusive classroom. Students often have widely disparate capabilities, learning styles, ways of expressing themselves and modes of interacting with their physical and social environments. They can diverge significantly in their abilities to focus and pay attention, sit still, make sense of and respond to social cues, and regulate themselves in response to stimulation. Sometimes, a student's limitations and needs only become evident in the context of particular classroom activities and interactions. Three types of challenges or dilemmas associated with inclusive education are especially relevant to classroom management. First, there is the challenge of how to create and maintain the order, structure, and safety that are necessary for a successful learning environment. Classrooms, like all other social situations, involve routinized activities and patterns of interaction. Teachers seek ways to include all their students in the social rituals through which learning and community building take place; they also strive to find creative, constructive ways to handle potential disruptions. Effective management thus is not only about accommodating students' learning needs, but also about helping them regulate their behavior. Second, there is the challenge of how to meet the learning, social and developmental needs of all students, both those who are typically developing and those with special needs and impairments. Here, the goal is to devise and implement academic and social curricula that can reach every child while also maximizing each individual's potential. Third, there is the challenge of how to confront the ever-present risk of stigmatizing those who are perceived as "different." In other words, there is a need to recognize and to try to lessen the many forms of literal and symbolic exclusion that may emerge, even in a setting that is devised to minimize these problems.

Behavior, social and/or emotional problems are the most challenging within the area of inclusion of pupils with Special Education Needs. Secondly: dealing with diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest problems within classrooms.

Teachers' Roles in the Inclusive Classroom Management

Save the Children Sweden (2008) opined that, effective teachers know that behavior problems are far less common in classrooms where children are actively involved and interested, and in which they are appreciated for *who* they are, *where* they come from and *what* they are able to contribute. Effective teachers have also learned that they need to know their students' background to be able to understand non-academic factors that may impact behavior, participation and learning.

The following can be considered as summarized roles of teachers in inclusive classroom management:

1. Creation of a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.
2. Retention of control in the classroom.
3. Presentation of work in a way which interests and motivates students.
4. Providing conditions so that students understand the work.
5. Making clear what students are to do and achieve.
6. Judging what can be expected of a student.
7. Helping students with difficulties.
8. Encouraging students to raise expectations of them.
9. Development of personal and respectful relationships with students

As children do not learn at the same pace or in the same way, schools must accommodate this reality and consider the extent to which education policies and practices lead to the labeling of children such as 'slow learners' or to promoting the view that learning abilities are limited or fixed. Also, the relevance of the syllabus and the language medium of instruction are factors that children respond to through certain behaviors. Educating the whole child – academically, socially and emotionally – is an important goal of education in itself and teachers play their role in this process by taking into account and responding to individual learning differences in every classroom.

Teachers decide where children sit in the classroom. This may appear an unimportant decision, but it is not. The seating arrangement in a classroom can enable or disable interaction, as well as impact student behavior and attitudes. Thus, it is important to decide who will sit where and during which activity, based on the teacher's knowledge of his/her students. Research shows that children sitting farthest away from the teacher have the fewest interactions with them, are the least involved in classroom activities, and have the lowest achievement scores. Teachers need to find ways to be physically close to their students, especially those who experience problems with learning. A teacher who manages his classroom by *walking around* can be close to every learner at different times. Therefore, a pair of comfortable walking shoes may be a necessary teaching tool. (McLeskey & Waldron, 2000).

Conclusion

This paper advances ways in which Classroom management effectively by teachers contributed toward smooth implementation of inclusive education that benefit special needs students in Nigeria. The paper pointed out that, teachers' ability to organize classrooms and manage the behavior of their students is critical to positive educational outcomes. Comprehensive teacher preparation and professional development in effective classroom organization and behavior management is therefore needed to improve outcomes for students in general and special education.

Recommendations

Based on the above submissions, the aim of every society is to equip its members with worthwhile skills that would enable them become responsible to themselves and the society where they live. Teachers are indispensable for realization of this goal. This is far from being realized in almost all the States in Nigeria. In this regard, the consideration of the following points is imperative for special need education in Nigeria:

1. Inclusion in schools is greatly supported where there is a clear national policy on inclusion. For the process of implementation of inclusive education, the government should firmly support inclusion and make clear what the goals are for the educational community. Furthermore, governments should create the conditions for inclusion in education. More specifically, funding arrangements should facilitate inclusive education and not hinder them. Necessary provisions should be made available in a flexible and co-ordinated way. Funding arrangements and the incentives that are included in these arrangements play a decisive role as was demonstrated in the Agency study *Financing of Special Needs Education (1999)*.
2. Inclusion can be more easily achieved within a decentralized funding model as compared to a centralized approach. From a centrally prescribed plan, too much emphasis may be put on the organizational characteristics of that specific model without inclusive practices being realized. Local organizations with some autonomy may be far better equipped to change the system. Therefore, a decentralized model is likely to be more cost-effective and provide fewer opportunities for undesirable forms of strategic behavior. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the central government concerned has to specify clearly which goals must be achieved. Decisions concerning the way in which such goals are to be achieved may then be left to local organizations.
3. Behavior, social and/or emotional problems are the biggest challenge within the area of inclusion of pupils with Special Education Needs, adequate provision of teacher's professional development on classroom management is therefore very essential tool.
4. There should be regular teachers' inclusive education training. This will enhance the skills on them. Also, teachers of special need students should be enlightened on the best way and the importance of using classroom management in teaching special need students. This will go a long way to inculcate on them good attitudes.
5. Ongoing professional development should be created to assist educators with establishing school wide behavior system.
6. Finally, parents, community, Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations should give all necessary supports through appropriate policies, incentives, and practices put in place. This approach will ensure that teachers can acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to manage classrooms effectively, thereby maximizing learning opportunities for all students, preventing disruptive behavior, and responding appropriately to the inappropriate behavior that inevitably will occur. Improving teachers' quality through effective classroom management skill will go a

long way in achieving desired result of development of services to all special education schools in the country.

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