

INNOVATIVE ROLES OF GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING FOR MANAGING CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM BY INCLUSIVE TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study was designed to determine the roles of guidance and counseling in assisting the inclusive teachers manage and handle learning disabled children in an inclusive classroom. The study was a descriptive research design guided by two research questions. The design adopted for this study was an evaluation design. The area of study is Nagpur, Maharashtra. A total population of 200 secondary school inclusive teachers was used and inclusive teachers drawn from in the educational zones of the State. A purposive sampling technique was used in each zone to select the schools and a simple random sampling technique was used to draw 100 respondents. Multiple choice questions were used as an instrument designed by the researcher. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for each research question. Findings among others revealed that handling or dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest challenges within school classrooms. Inclusion can be organized in quite a few ways and on different levels, but finally, the inclusive teacher must deal with larger diversity within the class and have to adapt or prepare the curriculum in such a way that the needs of all pupils, those with learning disabilities, gifted pupils and their peers, are sufficiently met.

Keywords: Guidance and Counselling, Learning Disabilities, Inclusive Classroom

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Introduction

Inclusive classroom is a class with a mix of students of both disabled and non-disabled. This refers to a class where inclusive education is well practiced. Inclusive classroom is an educational system, which allows special child students to be included in normal classes alongside their peers. Lipsky and Gartner (1999) defined inclusive classroom as the provision of services to students with disabilities, including those with severe impairments in general education classes, with the necessary support services and supplementary assistance for the child or the inclusive teacher to ensure the child success in terms of academic, behavioral and social. Ochai (2011) asserts that inclusive classroom could also be defined as a place to prepare the child to participate as a full student to acquire knowledge and skills to contribute to the development of the society. From the definitions, one can infer that inclusive classroom is learning place for students with disabilities in regular classrooms, rather than in special schools' classroom or a separate location; this is a place prepared in teaching and learning setting to accommodate the special needs pupils.

On the other hand, inclusive education according to Obani (2006) is the most current system of providing education for children with special needs. Inclusive education according to Nguyet and Ha (2010), have been implemented successfully in many countries; such countries have successfully promoted inclusive practices and policies that eliminate barriers and create enabling conditions for all learners to learn. For example, New Zealand has a range of policy and legislative initiatives that support the rights of children with special needs to an inclusive education. According to Carroll-Lind and Lees (2009) in Chireshe (2011), the New Zealand's Special Education Policy Guidelines states that children with special needs education have the same rights to high quality education as their colleagues without special needs education. Other countries with inclusive education policies include Australia (Department of Education and Training, 2004) and Finland (Jarvinen, 2007; Takala, Pirttimaa and Tormanen, 2009). Takala et al. (2009) reveal that almost every school in Finland has one or more permanent special education inclusive teachers. Where such inclusive teachers are not available, for example in rural schools, peripatetic inclusive teachers are available. Peripatetic inclusive teachers also known as itinerant inclusive teachers are inclusive teachers who travel around local mainstream

schools and communities to offer advice, resources and support to children with disabilities, their inclusive teachers and their parents (Lynch and McCall, 2007).

Inclusion is now the corner stone in the education of persons with disabilities. In its implementation, there is need for mentorship to allay negative attitude and empower the mentee with coping skills for learners with diversity. This study however looks at how best to manage children with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting and the roles of the guidance and Counsellors in ensuring that such students with learning disabilities are well managed in schools. In recent years, the exercise of inclusive education has been widely embraced as an ideal model for education internationally (Maher, 2009). However, this acceptance of ideal practices does not necessarily translate into what actually occurs within the classroom. Successful inclusion depends on the attitudes and actions of school principals and the investment of other school personnel as they create the school culture and have the ability to challenge or support inclusion (Ainscow, 2002). Research has found that although inclusive teachers often report that they agree with the idea of inclusion, they actually believe that the needs of learners with disabilities are best met in separate classrooms (Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003), particularly those learners whose conditions can be said to be severe (Scruggs and Mastropieri, 1996). According to Bornman and Rose (2010) general lack of support and resources, as well as the prevailing negative attitudes toward disability, contributes to the general bewilderment schools have towards inclusion.

Goals of Inclusive Education Ozoji (2005) cited in Oluka and Egbo (2014) identified the goals of inclusive education as follows: - To provide education for children with diverse learning needs within their structured school community.

- ✓ To make special needs children active members of the school community and then to help them achieve quality educational outcomes and to achieve social competence.
- ✓ To build a supportive school community that is able to identify and minimize barriers to learning and participation.
- ✓ To educate more children better.
- ✓ To ensure successful learning and social experience competence.
- ✓ To enable students to participate in mainstream education to the best of their abilities.

- ✓ To build inclusive schools that can respond to diverse needs.
- ✓ To study the pressures that lead some people in schools to feel excluded and separated.
- ✓ To develop exemplary units of planning for diversity and to understand this diversity.
- ✓ To dismantle barriers to access and participation and facilitate achievement in schooling and training.

For Nagpur and other developing states to have what an inclusive classroom looks like, the above goals must be achieved. Also, this form of education is a special approach to teaching and learning process that shows us how some learners e.g. children with disabilities can be integrated in normal education, but it looks into how to transform the regular education system in order to respond to different learners in a constructive and positive way.

Learning Disabilities Learning disabilities is an umbrella term used to refer to category of exceptional children with heterogeneous group of learning disorders. According to Babatunde (2013) the problem of learning disabled children may extend to non-academic skills and such skills may be those needed for performance of assigned task related to social subjects, social and behavioral competence. The difficulty in learning is not caused primarily by the presence of any disability such as the usual hearing impairment, mental retardation etc. Ozoji (2003) observed and summarized various conditions of the learning disabled children as follows:

- ✓ Such child has disorder in one or more area of basic psychological processes-mental, such as memory, auditory perception, visual perception, tactical perception, oral language and thinking.
- ✓ The child has difficulty in learning especially in speaking, listening, writing, reading and word recognition skills, comprehension, mathematics, calculations and reasoning.
- ✓ The problem is not impairment due to other causes such as visual or hearing impairment, motor handicaps, and mental retardation, and emotional disturbance, economic, environmental or cultural disadvantages.
- ✓ A severe discrepancy existing between the child's apparent potential for learning and his low level of achievement. In other words, there are evidences of under achievement.

Children with learning disabilities sometimes have fixation to some routines, have problems with attention and can also be very moody. Individuals with learning disabilities can be successful if

they understand their disabilities, remain well motivated and continue to have good self-image, though this can be possible through the assistance of the guidance counselor.

Statement of the Problem:

It has been observed that children with learning disabilities often face lots of difficulties in classrooms especially, feeling of depression and sometimes rejection. Many a times, inclusive teachers do not want to have such students in their classes. The learning disabled child is faced with uncountable challenges coping with such situation. This necessitated this study; to determine roles of the guidance and Counselors in assisting the classroom inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom.

Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this study is to determine roles of the guidance and Counselors in assisting the classroom inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities in an inclusive classroom. Specifically, the study tends to;

- ✓ Determine the rates classroom inclusive teachers identify characteristics of children with learning disabilities in their classrooms.
- ✓ Determine the rates Guidance/Counselors assist classroom inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities.

Methodology

The design adopted for this study was an evaluation design. The area of study is Nagpur, Maharashtra. . A total population of 200 secondary school inclusive teachers was used and inclusive teachers drawn from in the educational schools of the State. A purposive sampling technique was used in each zone to select the schools and a simple random sampling technique was used to draw 100 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a multiple choice test questions designed by the researcher. Data collected was analyzed using mean and standard deviation for each research question. The decision to determine the extent of attainment was based on a criterion measure as indicated under determination of criterion of attainment. Mean for each section was calculated and compared with the cut-off scores for each section to determine the extent of attainment.

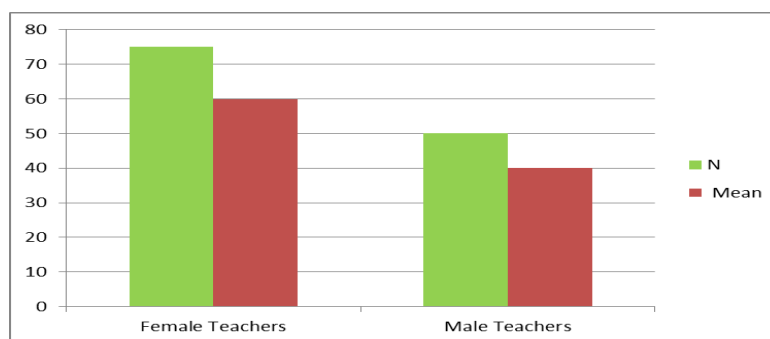
Results

Based on the result on table 1, the mean on the extent of inclusive teachers identifying characteristics of children with Learning Disabilities in Classroom is 60.00 and this falls within the range of 40.00 indicating low rate. The mean 100.00 when compared to the criterion of 48 obtained during trial testing indicates that the rate at which inclusive teachers identify students with learning disabilities is very low. Many students suffer from the inability of the classroom inclusive teacher to identify their disabilities. Many inclusive teachers interacted with in the course of this study expressed their view and acknowledged that none of them really want to have a pupil with learning disabilities, for this, it may be somehow difficult for them identifying the learning disabled child.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of the Pre rates inclusive teachers identify characteristics of children with Learning Disabilities in Classroom

Identifying characteristics of children with learning disabilities in the classroom	N	Mean	SD	Remarks
Female Inclusive teachers	75	60.00	17.35	Low rate
Male Inclusive teachers	50	40.00	19.25	
Total Population	125	100.00	20.10	

Figure 1: Pre Inclusive teachers identify characteristics of children with Learning Disabilities in Classroom



However, some characteristics of children with learning disabilities according to Dala (2008) include;

- Motor skills and coordination problems

- Memory deficits
- Attention deficit and hyperactivity
- Social-emotional problems
- Language deficit especially in oral expression and listening comprehension - Meta-cognition deficits especially inability to control and direct one's own attention and mental processes.
- Perpetual differences

Having identifies the characteristics of the learning disabled child in and a classroom, the inclusive teacher must look out for such characteristics if the efforts towards ensuring that children with learning disabilities are well managed and handled. The school guidance/counselor on the other hand should assist the inclusive teachers since majority of the inclusive teachers are not professionally trained counselors. During counseling times in schools, guidance/counselors are expected to interact with pupil privately and be able to identify if anyone has such characteristics of learning disabilities.

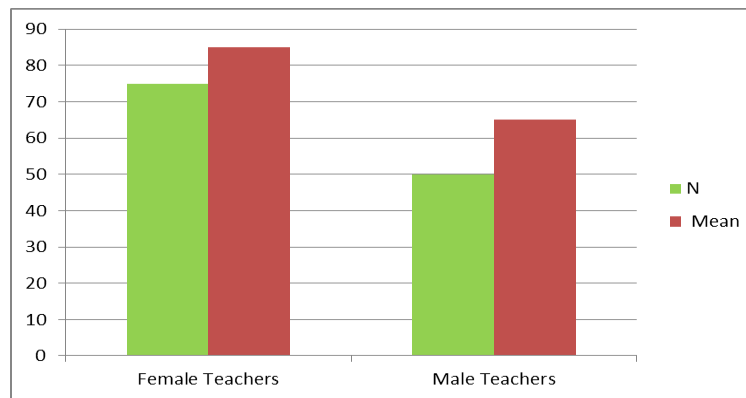
Teaching pupils with special needs / disabilities in the normal classroom no doubt implies adaptation of the standard curriculum. Inclusive teachers are most times faced with challenges of how to instruct such pupils. Pupils with learning disabilities may require more teaching and learning period or other learning methods and professional knowledge. In that case, inclusive teachers will feel the need for more time, materials and knowledge. Generally, this can be achieved in two ways: by increasing the resources (more time allocated to inclusive teachers) or by re-arranging available resources (alternative use of available time). Increasing available time (e.g. through the use of educational assistants) or enhancing inclusive teachers' professional knowledge (e.g. by IST, colleagues or consultation teams) are ways of increasing the necessary resources for inclusive education, but inclusive teachers may also need to rearrange available resources across the pupils in the classroom. For instance, inclusive teachers can encourage above-average pupils to work more independently, to work with computers and to help each other (peer tutoring), so that more teaching time is left for pupils with learning disabilities.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Post rate Guidance/Counselors assist inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities

Guidance/Counsellors' roles in assisting inclusive teachers manage	N	Mean	SD	Remarks

children with learning disabilities				
Female Inclusive teachers	75	61.00	19.19	
Male Inclusive teachers	50	43.00	21.78	
Total Population	125	112.00	20.51	

Figure 2: Post Guidance/Counselors assist inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities



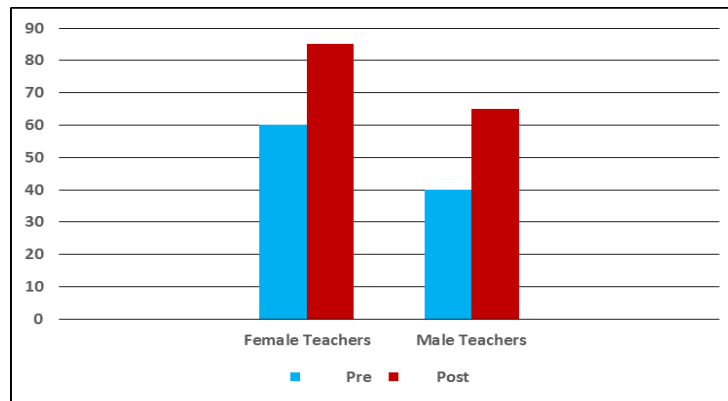
Based on the result on table 2, the mean on rate of Guidance/Counselors assisting inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities is 52.24 and it also falls within the range of 35-56 indicating low rate also. Therefore, the rate Guidance/Counselors assist inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities is very low. Handling or dealing with differences or diversity in the classroom forms one of the biggest challenges within school classrooms. Inclusion can be organized in quite a few ways and on different levels, but finally, the inclusive teacher must deal with larger diversity within the class and have to adapt or prepare the curriculum in such a way that the needs of all pupils, those with learning disabilities, gifted pupils and their peers, are sufficiently met.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Pre and Post rate Guidance/Counselors assist inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities

Guidance/Counselors' roles in assisting inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities	N	Pre		Post		Remarks
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Female Inclusive teachers	75	60.00	17.35	85.00	19.19	

Male Inclusive teachers	50	40.00	19.25	65.00	21.78	
Total Population	125	100.00	20.10	110.00	20.51	

Figure 3: Pre and Post Guidance/Counsellors assist inclusive teachers manage children with learning disabilities



The guidance and Counsellors can assist the inclusive teachers manage and handle children with learning disabilities helping the school management provide professional development trainings for the classroom inclusive teachers. Such training will enhance performance and competencies of the inclusive teachers in handling children with learning disabilities in the classroom setting. With such professional courses provided by qualified counselors, inclusive teachers will develop skills, competencies and knowledge in curriculum implementation, instructional material application and collaborative teaching strategies etc. with the assistance of the counselors, inclusive teachers will be encouraged to promote peer interactions in inclusive classroom. Inclusive teacher Vision (2011) cited in Ochai (2011) asserts that inclusive teacher may need to consider a developmentally appropriate method for managing the behavior of the children with learning disabilities; it further suggested that common approach could include a system that allows students to self-regulate and manage their behaviors, combined with reward system that reinforces the students' positive behaviors.

Conclusion

Successful inclusive classroom are those that are taught by the inclusive teachers who have accepted the academic potentials of the learning disabled children. The inclusive teacher must create an enabling ground for such disabled children to learn alongside their peers in the

classroom. This study looked at the roles of school guidance and Counselors in assisting the inclusive teachers manage and handle learning disabled children in an inclusive classroom. The findings of the study had proven that the rate at which guidance and Counselors assist inclusive teachers in this task is high and therefore must sit up to their duties in inclusive education will be a success in Nagpur and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the paper, the following recommendations were made; - Inclusive teachers should encourage children to make choices as often as possible; good inclusive teachers should allow students some time to flounder as some of the most powerful learning stems from taking risks and learning from mistakes. - Pupils with disabilities must be free to learn at their own pace and have somewhere to stay and other evaluation plans in place to meet their unique needs. - Students have to experience achievements; education goals should also be specific, attainable and measurable and have some challenge to them. - The guidance and Counsellors should be encouraged to supervise the affairs of the class inclusive teachers since majority of them finds it difficult identifying and managing students with learning disabilities.

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