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TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF AND PREPAREDNESS TO IMPLEMENT INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM SITUATIONS PRINCIPLES IN INCLUSIVE BASIC SCHOOLS IN WINNEBA, GHANA

Abstract

Inclusive classroom situation principles (ICSPs) are specially targeted at enhancing the ability of the special needs learners to learn in inclusive schools that are predominantly staffed by non-special education teachers. This study examines teachers' awareness of, and preparedness to implement ICPs in teaching in inclusive basic schools in Winneba, Ghana. A descriptive design involving a survey conducted on 41 purposively selected teachers from two inclusive basic schools in Winneba. A researcher-designed instrument-Teachers' Awareness of, and Preparedness to Implement ICPs (TAPIICSPs) (Cronbach alpha = .76 Awareness, .94 preparedness) was used for data collection. Percentage analysis of data generated showed that: all the teachers generally have different combinations of awareness levels, including very low, low, moderate, high and very high ICSPs; the qualified teachers, though deficient in fewer awareness level of ICSPs, tend to be comparatively higher in awareness level than their unqualified counterparts; the preparedness level of teachers to implement ICSPs is also eclectic but comparatively higher in qualified than unqualified teachers. Therefore it was recommended among others, that in-service awareness and capacity building workshops on inclusive teaching strategies be organized for all the teachers, while the unqualified are recommended for study leave for Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education to bring their awareness of, and preparedness to use ICSPs in teaching special needs learners in inclusive basic schools to functional level.

Key Word: Teachers' Awareness level, Teachers' Preparedness level, Inclusive School, Inclusive Classroom Situations Principles

Introduction

The policies and programmes of Education for All (EFA) all over the world

have been geared towards opening up the space and access to education to all categories of people indifferent countries. EFA has indeed become a major component of the Millennium Development Goal (MDGs) (ICF, Macro, 2010). Universal Primary Education for all under the MDGs has been targeted for actualization in 2015. Accordingly, all African countries who are also members of the United Nations have mounted free primary or basic education, universal primary education, free and compulsory primary or basic education or adopted some other nomenclature to capture and start the implementation of this policy thrust since 1970s.

One target group that had suffered discrimination and neglect in education in West and Central Africa, indeed all over Africa has been the physically challenged, disabled or special need children of school age. This group has been targeted for enrolment in primary or basic schools in special education schools. The restriction of their education to special schools (schools for special need children) has generated much debate over the years among advocates of special education schools, collaborative education schools and general education schools. However during the 1980s, major advocacy for educating special needs learners along with non-special needs learners in general education schools was brought to fore by various researchers, bodies and advocacy movements. Most notable in this regard include the Regular Education Initiative (REI) and Inclusive School Movement (ISM) (Hallaham & Kaffman, 2003; Bunch, 1997; & Lipsky & Gartner, 1997)

This development popularised inclusive schooling, mainstreaming or integration of the special needs learners into general education schools and collaborative education involving the participation of a team of stakeholders and professionals in education this group (Creamer, 1998; Friend & Cook, 1996). This development notwithstanding, special education schools have continue to cater for the education of special needs learners alongside designated inclusive schools in Ghana and other African

countries at the primary, junior and senior high schools.

Inclusive schools and inclusive classroom situations are general education schools or classroom condition in which every learner, irrespective of his/her peculiar challenges, learning disabilities, or need is accepted, supports and is supported by his/her peers and members of the school community in the course in the course of schooling (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; and Stainback & Stainback, 1992). Although mainstreaming or inclusion has become the in thing in the education of special needs learners, there exists a limit outside which learners with serious or extreme disabilities may not fit into the inclusive schools. The threshold for determining this limit varies among States.

Inclusive classroom situation which is the major focus of this paper is different from the other classrooms or classroom situations in non-inclusive schools because it is consciously created and targeted at accommodating and facilitating all learners, whether with or without special needs. The inclusive classroom situation depends very much on the teacher factor more than any other factor in the school system, provided the school plant and equipment are in place. The level of awareness and perception of teachers about the special requirements of the inclusive school and classroom situation and the degree to which they are prepared to transact the curriculum with all learners will determine the degree to which the school and classroom function effectively as one. This is particularly so in Ghana and other African countries where, inline with the tradition of inclusive schools, general education specialist teachers are in the majority (Gadagbui, 2008a, & Asare-Bediako, 2011). These teachers operate alongside a minority of special education specialist and very few care givers for the teaching and learning of all learners.

Statement of the Problem

Inclusive schools in Ghana at the basic school level are not many. The few ones available need to function effectively as one before government can, in furtherance of their commitment to non-discriminatory

access to basic education, create more of such schools to complement the special schools for the special needs learners. The replication of inclusive schools and classroom situations at all levels of education has become more imperative because the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992) guarantees equal access to non-discriminatory education and human dignity for all Ghanaian children of school age. The special education specialist teachers are competent to meet the requirements for teaching in inclusive schools in the few special education schools in Ghana. However, the general education specialist teachers who constitute an absolute majority of teachers in inclusive schools in Ghana are trained to teach in general education schools even when the inclusive schools requirements for teaching both the special and non-special needs learners are unique (Gadagbui, 2008a, & Asare-Bediako, 2011). Therefore, this study focused on ascertaining level of awareness of teachers in the inclusive school about the requisite variables of inclusive classroom situations and the extent to which they are prepared to implement them for effective teaching and learning of all subject areas, without marginalizing the target group of special need learners.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined teachers' level of awareness of, and preparedness to implement the requisite inclusive classroom situations principles (ICSPs) in inclusive basic schools. Specifically, the study focuses on ascertaining:

1. The awareness level of the qualified teachers about ICSPs;
2. The preparedness level of the qualified teacher to implement the ICSPs in teaching in inclusive basic schools;
3. The awareness level of the unqualified teacher about ICSPs; and
4. The preparedness level of the unqualified teachers to implement the ICSPs in teaching in inclusive basic schools.

Research Questions

Four research questions (RQ) for the study are:

1. What is the awareness level of the unqualified teachers about ICSPs?
2. What is the level of preparedness of the unqualified teachers prepared to implement the ICSPs in inclusive basic schools?
3. What is the awareness level of the unqualified teachers about ICSPs? and
4. What is the preparedness level of the unqualified teachers to implement the ICSPs in inclusive Basic schools?

Literature Review

Inclusive Schools and Classroom Situations

Inclusive classrooms are assumed to exist in all inclusive schools. However, based on the tradition in curriculum and instruction, teaching and learning curriculum transaction between the teacher(s) and learners may be carried out outside the four walls of the classroom in the school and also in other designated locations outside, but with the concurrence of the school. Therefore, inclusive classroom situations which include inclusive classroom is the classroom variable for teaching and learning in this study. In addition to the earlier definition of the concept, inclusive classroom situations is somewhat unique because there are prescribed behavioural patterns, including knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that teachers are expected to use for teaching and learning.

Experts in inclusive and collaborative education as well as special education specialists have identified some time tested principles or variables of engagement of teachers with all learners in such schools or classroom situations. The principles or variables have been adjudged by experts (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2000; to be the minimum requirements for the creation and sustainability of the inclusive classroom situations in any inclusive school setting.

These include:

Prioritisation of objectives (P) Adaptation of instruction, materials or the environment (A); Systematic teaching (S), maximized engagement and systematic evaluation and Systematic evaluation procedures (S) collectively labeled PASS, an acronym standing for the four elements. The other complementary set of principles also labeled SCREAM are the principles of systematic teaching in inclusive classroom situations, namely, structure (S), clarity (C); Redundancy (R); Enthusiasm (E); Appropriate Space (A); and Maximized engagement, including questioning and feedback (M). (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 1997; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1995, and Brophy & Good, 1986).

Prioritize objectives involve identifying, specifying and ordering lesson objectives to suit the peculiar needs of all learners considering the suitability and appropriateness of the lesson objectives for the special needs and non-special needs learner. Accordingly, the teacher is expected to individualize lesson objectives to cater for the needs of the special needs learners among the group of learners in any given lesson. Depending on the form of learning disabilities of special needs learners in the class, appropriate lesson objectives are to be adapted in complementary order to serve the needs of such learners.

Adaptation of instruction, materials or

the environment is an attempt to improvise instructional materials or classroom environment to suit the peculiar needs of special needs students without hindering the other students with special needs. Systematic instructional variables usage in inclusive classroom involves the application of five interrelated principles, namely structure, clarity, redundancy, enthusiasm, appropriate space or rare and maximized engagement (SCREAM).

To structure the lesson systematically is to prepare and present lesson in logical way such that the contents and/or learning experiences are closely interconnected from the exploration to presentation. Reflecting logical structure of subject matter, locale and order of occurrence, difficulty levels of subject matter and concrete-abstract continuum. Principle of clarity involves teachers' presentation of lesson in clear and understandable way and linkage of ideas with concrete examples. The principle of redundancy is an attempt to reinforce the presentation of major elements of a lesson in such a way that all learners will be able to clearly identify, explain or illustrate major facts, concepts or ideas of a lesson without unnecessary digressions.

Enthusiasm principle is a kind of teaching with zeal, excitement and meaningfulness towards ensuring that all learners find pleasure in what they are being taught. Appropriate pace principle involve presentation of lesson on a pace that accommodates the slow and fast as well as special and non-special needs learners ability to cope. This may involve individualized instruction and peer-cooperative learning. Maximized engagement principles means that all learners are assisted to maintain time on task during the lesson and that no one is passive in teacher-learner-materials engagement interactions. The last element of PASS represented by S stands for systematic evaluation. This involves the application of testing mode and materials as well as evaluation that suit the kind of impairment or peculiar needs of the special needs learners. This takes the form of adaptation of tests, test requirements such as time lines of engagement and final interpretation as well as judgmental opinion on test performances. One of these adaptations involves a move away from norm-reference to criterion reference and individual-reference testing for the special need learners. Another is granting of longer time frame for completion of tests to learners with writing and learning impairments, as well as getting feedback through their interpreters or transcription via electronic media.

Teacher's variable and Inclusive

Schools.

These principles or variables cannot exist or operate in inclusive schools and classrooms without the teacher. The teacher is the manager of teaching-learning situation, classroom space and equipment, learners, materials, specific curriculum content and time for specific lessons (Okunloye, 2004). Therefore, the transaction of the curriculum and the degree to which it is effectively transacted with all learners depend largely on the teacher. According to Brown-Nacino and Oke (1992) what is finally taught depends on what the teacher perceives and transacts as the curriculum. Teachers' perception, however, depends largely on their formative experience, professional qualification and competency (Okunloye, 2004). Therefore, when on account of teachers' misconception(s) or alternative conception(s) the curriculum is wrongly transacted, major and sometimes irreconcilable differences may set in between the official curriculum and the observed or transacted one. This may lead to a hidden curriculum that negates the intend objectives of the official school curriculum. Accordingly, it is important that teachers' awareness or perception of and predisposition to the curriculum should not be in doubt. This study is therefore an attempt to avoid such discrepancies and ineffective transaction of the curriculum in the inclusive schools.

Methodology

The description survey design was employed for the study. A research sample of 41 purposively selected basic school teachers from the two basic inclusive schools in Winneba was involved in the study. A researcher-designed instrument (Teachers' Awareness of, and preparedness to implement inclusive classroom situations principles (TAPIICSPs) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three education lecturers and subjected

to reliability test by administering it to five general education basic school teachers. The observed split half correlation values for sections B and C of the instrument using Cronbach Alpha were .76 and .94 respectively. The instrument was therefore considered to be reliable.

Procedure

The research instrument (TAPIICSPs) was administered to 56 teachers in two basic schools in Winneba, Effutu Municipal

teachers about ICSPs are as shown in *Table 2*

The teachers have a combination of levels of awareness on the ten ICSPs variable ranging from very low to very high. Their awareness levels on 6 out of the 10 ICSPs items were very high on 4 items and moderate on 2. These mean that their awareness is very adequate on items they recorded very high, such as disabilities, concept of inclusion peculiarities and special TLRs. Also, on items they recorded

Table 1: Distribution of Inclusive School Teachers by Qualification

Qualification	Frequency	Percent	Remarks
Cert A/Dip. B. Ed	11	26.8%	Qualified
B.A. Ed/B.Ed	20	48.8%	„
M. Ed	05	12.2%	„
M.A/MPhil	05	12.2%	„
Total	41	100.0%	

area of Central Region, Ghana within two weeks. 41 copies were however completed and returned by the teacher respondents.

Results

The demographic characteristics of the teachers of the inclusive school that participated in the study show that an absolute majority of them (36, or 87.8%) were professionally qualified to teach in the inclusive school. A minority of them, (5, or 12.2%) were unqualified to teach in the basic school. *Table 1* shows the distribution of teacher by educational and professional qualifications.

Research Question One (1)

What is awareness level of qualified teachers about ICSPs?

Results of awareness level of qualified

moderate level of awareness (ICSPs items 2 & 5) they have a tolerable or functional awareness about the classroom situations. However, on items they recorded low and very low, their awareness levels could be interpreted to mean inadequate and grossly inadequate functional awareness of inclusive classroom situations.

Research Question Two (2)

What is the preparedness level of the ICSPs fro teaching in inclusive basic schools?

The results of distribution of their preparedness levels are as shown in *table 3*.

The preparedness level of qualified teachers to implement the ICSPs as shown in *table 3* is a combination of low, very low, moderate, and very high. The items on which they recorded low level of preparedness mean inadequate level of preparedness and unwillingness to apply ICSPs in teaching. Moderate levels are manifestation of satisfactory or manageable level of preparedness to implement ICSPs. Items on which they recorded very low level preparedness are indications of grossly inadequate preparedness to implement ICSPs in the school. For example in the use of Special needs Teaching- Learning Resources (TLRs). It is important to note that all the qualified teachers indicated very minimal need to involve special need staff (Special Education Specialists) to implement ICSPs in the inclusive schools.

Research Question Three (3)

What is the awareness level of the

Table2: Qualified Teachers Awareness of ICSPs

ICSPs Items	Awareness Level (Number & Percentage)				Remarks
	Very Much	A Bit	Not at All		
Disability	25 (69.4)	9 (25.0)	2 (5.6)		Very high
Concept	31 (86.1)	3 (8.3)	2 (5.6)		Very high
Peculiarities	19 (52.8)	13 (36.1)	4 (11.1)		Moderate
Team work	25 (69.4)	9 (25.0)	2 (5.6)		Very high
Lesson Adaptation	19 (52.8)	6 (16.7)	11 (30.6)		Moderate
Special TLRs	26 (72.2)	5 (13.9)	5 (13.9)		Very high
Teaching Strategies	8 (22.2)	8 (22.2)	20 (55.6)		Low
Adopted TLRs	17 (47.2)	12 (33.3)	7 (19.4)		Low
Evaluation	10 (27.8)	14 (38.9)	12 (33.3)		Low
Related Principles	1 (2.8)	9 (25.0)	26 (72.2)		Very Low

Table 3: Qualified Teachers' Preparedness to implement ICSPs

ICSPs Items	Preparedness VM	Level (Number and Percentage)			Remarks SNSR
		AB	NAA		
Create	18(50.0)	12 (33.3)	3 (8.3)	1 (2.8)	Moderate
Adapt	17 (47.2)	12 (33.3)	3 (8.3)	1 (2.8)	Low
Individualize	13(36.1)	17 (47.2)	5 (13.9)	1 (2.8)	Low
Use TLRs	22 (58.3)	5 (13.9)	6 (16.7)	1 (2.8)	Very low
Improvise	21 (58.3)	4 (11.1)	9 (25.0)	2 (5.6)	Very low
Teaching Strategies	(5 (13.9)	6 (16.7)	21 (58.3)	1 (2.8)	Very low
Special Evaluation	14 (38.9)	12 (33.3)	7 (19.4)	3 (8.3)	Low
Related Strategies	2 (5.6)	12 (33.3)	18 (50.0)	3 (8.3)	Very low

Key: Very Much (VM), A Bit (AB), Not at all (NAA), Special Need Staff Required (SNSR)

unqualified teachers about ICSPs?

Results of data analysis are shown in Table 4

The unqualified teachers' awareness level of ICSPs range between low and high, but they are low on 6 and very low on 3 ICSPs. These observed levels are inadequate or grossly inadequate awareness levels for effective teaching in inclusive school except on 1 item (out of ten) requiring adaption of teaching-learning resources (TLRs) to suit the needs of the special needs learners in inclusive schools.

Research Question 4

What is the level of preparedness of the unqualified teachers to implement the ICSPs for teaching in inclusive basic schools?

Table 5: presents the results of data analysis on research question 4.

Table 5 shows that the level of preparedness of the unqualified teachers to implement the ICSPs for teaching is predominantly very low. This means they are least prepared to implement the ICSPs for teaching. Indeed about 40% of the unqualified teachers indicated that special needs staff (SNSR) will have to carry out 3 out of the 8 ICSPs in their respective classes in the cause of teaching in inclusive schools. Their inadequate level of preparedness seems to be a carry-over of their predominantly low level awareness of ICSPs as shown in table 4.

From the foregoing results of data analysis, the qualified teachers have comparatively higher level of awareness than their unqualified counterparts. However, both categories of teachers have different combinations of awareness levels with reference to the specific ICSPs items showing some levels of general inadequacies. The qualified teachers' levels of preparedness to implement the ICSPs are

also comparatively higher than the levels

Table 4: Unqualified Teachers Awareness of ICSPs

ICSPs Items	Preparedness VM	Level (Number and Percentage)		Remarks
		AB	NAA	
Disabilities	1 920.0)	4 (80.0)	Nil	Low
Concept	1 (20.0)	4 (80.0)	Nil	Low
Peculiarities	Nil	5 (100.0)	Nil	Low
Team Work	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	Nil	Low
Lesson adaptation	1(20.0)	3 (60.0)	(1.20.0)	Low
Special TLRs	2 (40.0)	3(60.0)	Nil	Low
Teaching strategies	1(20.0)	Nil	4 (80.0)	Very low
Adapted TLRs	3 (60.0)	1 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	High
Evaluation	Nil	3 (60.0)	2 (40.0)	Very low
Related Principle	Nil	Nil	5 (100.0)	Very low

Key Very Much (VM), A Bit (AB), Not at all (NAA)

observed in the unqualified teachers, but they are also generally inadequate.

Discussion of Findings

The fact that all categories of teachers showed varying degrees of awareness of the ICSPs from grossly inadequate (very low, inadequate (low), tolerable (moderate) to very high (very adequate) underscores the peculiarity of inclusive schools and classroom situations as recognized by Mastropieri and Scrug (2000). Indeed, the fact that the teachers showed evidence of inadequate or grossly inadequate awareness of teaching strategies, evaluation procedures and application of teaching-learning resources peculiarities of the school also confirms the position of

special education school advocates such as Deno (1970) and researchers and Asare-Bendiako (2011). The inability of the teachers to show adequate preparedness or willingness to apply the principles that are required for teaching in inclusive schools mean that the much advocated position of educating special needs or learners with disability in least-restrictive environment is being violated (Deno, 1970). When general education teachers are not aware of the peculiarities of the special needs learners and the ICSPs required to teach them effectively, they knowingly or unknowingly deny the learners from benefiting maximally from mainstream or inclusive education in designated inclusive basic schools.

The findings further showed that it was not just awareness levels of teachers about ICSPs that are low, moderate or high in some areas, but their level of preparedness to implement the requirements of ICSPs for

teaching as well. This again violates experts' position on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion. This is consistent with Dev & Scrug's (1997) finding that teachers who had exposure to course work in special education had more positive disposition towards inclusive teaching strategies or activities than those who were not exposed to special education. The comparatively better awareness and preparedness level of the qualified than their unqualified teachers on ICSPs agrees with the position of curriculum experts about the moderating influence of teachers' qualification in curriculum implementation (Brown-Nacino, et al 1992; Okunloye, 2004). Therefore teachers' qualification and formative

Table 5: Unqualified Teachers' preparedness to implement inclusive ICSPs

ICSPs Items	Preparedness VM	Level (Number and Percentage)			Remarks
		AB	NAA	SNSR	
Create	2(40.0)	2 (40.0)		1 (20.0)	Low
Adapt	Nil	2 (40.0)	1(20.0)	2 (40.0)	Very low
Individualise	Nil	2 (40.0)	1(20.0)	2 (40.0)	Very low
Use TLRs	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	Nil	Nil	Low
Improvise	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	Nil	Nil	Low
Teaching Strategies	1 (20.0)	1 (20.0)	3 (60.0)	Nil	Very low
Special Evaluation	Nil	1 (20.0)	2 (40.0)	2 (40.0)	Very low
Related Strategies	Nil	2 (40.0)	3 (60.0)	Nil	Very low

Key: very Much (VM), A Bit (AB), Not at all (NAA), Special Need Staff Required (SNSR).

experience in inclusive schooling need further improvement in inclusive schools.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, the following conclusion could be drawn. First, those general education teachers will continue to be predominant in teaching special needs learners in inclusive schools. Secondly that the awareness level of, and preparedness of qualified teachers to implement ICSPs that are comparatively better than of the unqualified teachers will need further improvement for successful mainstream and inclusion of special needs learner in general education schools. Thirdly, that the unqualified teachers' abysmally low level of awareness of, and preparedness to implement ICSPs are clear manifestations of lack of relevant professional formative experience in teaching special needs learners. Fourthly the unqualified teachers will need post-qualification formative experience in education or more specifically in special education to be able to teach in inclusive schools.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to address issues raised in this study on inclusive schools and classroom situation principles. First, all the inclusive school teachers should be exposed to the inclusive school and classroom situation principles, through workshops and seminars.

Secondly, teachers training colleges and universities should introduce inclusive school and classroom situations as topics in relevant course(s) or mount it as a course, given the commitment of Ghanaian government to inclusive schooling for special needs children.

Thirdly a token of remuneration allowance should be given to qualified teachers in inclusive school to motivate them and particularly to give them a little compensation for extra lesson planning, use of inclusive teaching strategies, test and evaluation activities and collaborative engagements of teachers in inclusive schools.

Fourthly, the few unqualified teachers who in spite of their qualification are still on the job should be given one-year study leave with pay to pursue Postgraduate Diploma in Special Education. Finally, the number of special education teacher in inclusive schools should be increased to about five per basic school as the minimum for effective collaborative and intervention engagements with other teachers for effective teaching of the special need learners

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