

Teaching Strategies for Teaching Students with Dysgraphia in an Inclusive Classroom; The Case of GSB LA GRACE Emana in Yaounde 1 Subdivision

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Abstract: Teaching students with Dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom requires specific strategies and accommodations to help them succeed academically. The purpose of this research project was to bring out the various Teaching strategies teacher's use or are supposed to use in teaching students with Dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom in Yaounde1 subdivision. This qualitative study used descriptive survey research design. Interview guides were used for data collection. The findings revealed that majority of the respondents were females, 40% of the population were between the ages of 18- 29, most of the teacher respondents had CAPIEMP which made fit and qualified teachers and 40% of the respondents indicated that they have been teaching for about 7 years and above. Recommendations were addressed to the Ministry of education, the parents, and to the school administration where everyone should play his role to make sure teacher's attend necessary training on how to teach students with Dysgraphia.

Keywords: Teaching strategies, Dysgraphia, and Inclusion, accommodation, inclusive c;lassroom.

Introduction

Dysgraphia is a learning disability face by most students in our schools today. Frye mentioned that dysgraphia is a learning disability that influence handwriting and fine engine abilities of a student. It is characterized by student difficulties on how to write and hold the pen while writing. This therefore makes the process of writing very slow and the written product difficult to read (Frye,2017). However, students suffering from dysgraphia usually struggle with school work as most teachers do not know which teaching strategy they can use in order to effectively teach students with writing disability. It is for this reason that the researcher decided to carry out a study on the topic the teaching strategies for teaching students with dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom. Etymologically, dysgraphia comes from the Greek word "dys" meaning "impaired" and "graphia" meaning "writing ". Thus it can be defined as a learning disability where a person finds it hard to form or write within a defined space. Learning disabilities is a relatively new field of exceptionality because the prior to the late 1960s, it was virtually unrecognized. It became popular when the association of children with learning disabilities was organized in 1963. In Cameroon, special need education became a reality in the 1960s, yet the Cameroon government is still very timid about its institutional provision. Yuh (2008) asserts that, special needs education in Cameroon was introduced by western Christian missionaries who condemns harsh believes and traditions towards people with disabilities as these children were thought alongside those without disabilities.

With the creation of Cameroon's ministry of social affairs in 1975, a department of National Solidarity was established to oversee the wellbeing of people with disabilities and aged persons. The department in collaboration with the of ministry of basic education has put in some efforts to

improve the education of persons with disabilities. for instance creation of 58 government pilot inclusive primary schools in each division of the Country where children with special needs are taken care. Alongside privately owned special needs schools or institutions in almost all regions of the country, with some receiving yearly subventions from the state.

Statement of the Problem

Dysgraphia is a learning disability that affects 7-15% of the school aged children (Dohla and Heim, 2016). The problem is preponderant in underdeveloped countries (Aghamelu. 2015). Negative attitudes of teachers towards inclusion is of great concerned. According to the world. Bank (2008), inclusion is still at a start and this requires teachers who have already been teaching to carry out in-service training and those who are not yet trained to carry out pre- service training (Handicap International, 2012). The inclusion of learner's with dysgraphia and other learning disabilities in general poses some problems (Hanson, 2002). In many inclusive classrooms today, students with Dysgraphia are often discriminated upon as the teacher's focus on their weaknesses forgetting their strengths (phaka,2017). In many Cameroon primary schools, students with Dysgraphia are often label by the inclusive schools to be "dull" and "difficult to teach" and are seen as incompetent and a burden to the teacher (Samburu. 2016). When it is the case, teacher terms them to be severe and advise parents to send them to a special need schools which goes against the role of inclusion and as such the rights of students and children with this disabilities like dysgraphia are undermined (Aghamelu, 2015). Most of our inclusive classrooms have students suffering from dysgraphia and who are often neglected by the teachers. This teachers who have not received any formal training on handling inclusive classrooms are seen doing so, and consequently they often consider students with dysgraphia to be dull students. The central problem here is, what are they strategies these teachers use to handle learners with dysgraphia given that it is a learning difficulty. This study has as objective to investigate and explore the different teaching strategies teachers use to teach students with dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom in Yaounde1 subdivision. In this study template and scaffolding, evaluation, classroom organization were indicators of the independent variable.

Method

This study uses the descriptive research design. Descriptive research studies are those studies which are concerned with describing the Characteristics of particular individual, or of a group under study.

Area of the study

This research was conducted Yaounde1 subdivision of the Mfoundi division which is bounded to the North by the Adamawa region, to the south by the south by the south region, to the east by the east region, and to West by Littoral and west region. It has a population of about 1,651,600 and a Population density of 24 people per square kilometer

The Population

The general population for this research is primary school teachers of Yaounde1 subdivision.

Sampling technique

The random sampling the technique was used and a sample size of five teachers was selected

Target population

Bobbie (2015), says a target population is the entire people or objects in which the researcher wishes to generalize the study of his findings. The population of the study were teachers of GSB la Grace, Emana in Yaounde1 subdivision in the Mfoundi division.

Table 1: Distribution according to the sample population of the study GSB la Grace Emanu

Class	Number of teacher	Percentage
Class2	2	40%
Class3	1	20%
Class5	1	20%
Class6	1	20%
Total	5	100%

Instruments for data collection

Interview guide were used to collect the qualitative data from the respondents. The interview helps in understanding and also letting the researcher to feel the emotions, experiences, motive which is possessed by the respondents because it is happening directly and face to face.

Teaching strategies to handle students with Dysgraphia

There is no medication for treating dysgraphia, but some ways/strategies to help children with dysgraphia include; Proper organization of the classroom in such a way that learners with dysgraphia can sit in front of the classroom and his or her sit should be comfortable enough to promote writing, Providing students with dysgraphia templates and scaffolding assistance.

Multi-sensory approach. Teaching through a multi-sensory approach engages multiple sensory modalities such as visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. This includes writing exercises, tracing letters and shapes as well as using materials such as sand and clay. According to the multi-sensory approach, students learn best when information is presented in differentiated modalities (Mercer & Mercer,1993). They believe that students learn best when their senses are taken into consideration, therefore to effectively teach students with dysgraphia any lesson taught should take into consideration the five senses (Murphy,1997).

Teaching letter formation with hand over hand assistance. Handover hand assistance can help children with dysgraphia understand how their fingers should move.

Chunking information. Breaking down instructions into smaller more manageable parts can help children with dysgraphia process information effectively. Chunking helps students approach challenging text by breaking down content into manageable pieces. Short term verbal memory is improved when words can be chunked into larger units (Miller, 1956).

Using technology and other assistive devices. Children with dysgraphia can benefit from using digital devices and software that enable them to write, type and manipulate text formats. This can include digital note taking, speech to text and text to speech software. Assistive devices like pencil grips, wide ruled notebooks, digital type writers, and use of computers for typing.

Encouraging the use of graphic organizers. Graphic organizers are Teaching tools used to organize information and ideas in a way that is easy to comprehend (Paivi, 1971). Graphic organizers help children with dysgraphia organize their thought ideas before putting them into written form.

Providing extra time for assignment and exams. Children with dysgraphia benefits from time to complete their work which can lessen the pressure and improve the quality of writing (Spieses, 2006).

Focusing on the strengths. Children with dysgraphia may have talents and abilities in other areas such as drawing or music. Teachers can encourage and incorporate these strengths in the learning process (Berninger, 1999)

Mirror reading. Most students suffering from motor Dysgraphia often reverse their numbers and letters when writing. This makes the written product difficult to read and for the teacher to avoid penalizing the child the teachers should use a mirror in reading what the child has written (Hale & Fuh, 1901, David, 1960)

Encouraging students with Dysgraphia to engage in physical activities before writing exercises may help children with dysgraphia to prepare for activities by boosting blood circulation and improving concentration (spieses2006, Berninger and wolf, NCLD,2009).

Accommodations is another strategy to help students overcome dysgraphia. Accommodations is providing alternative to written expression. There are some classroom accommodations that will really help the students with dysgraphia. For example, allow students start assignments early, provide papers with required headings like name, date, titles already filled, neatness and spellings should not be considered as a grading criteria on assignments and evaluations, let the students try different kinds of pens and pencils to see which work best (Torreno, 2012).

Ethical consideration

The researcher assured the respondents the data which was collected during the research will only be used for academic purposes. For the purpose of security and trust, the names of the respondents were not deemed important as such not mentioned on the interview guide.

Findings and Discussions

The demographic information of teacher respondents

To assess the demographic information of teacher respondents in GSB la Grace Eman, the researcher examined the gender of the respondents, and their chronological ages. Findings revealed that 60% of the teacher respondents were females and 40% were males. Based on the fact that majority of the population were females means the researcher could readily collect data as females know the best strategies to better handle children with dysgraphia. Also based on age, findings revealed that 40% of the teacher respondents were between the ages of 18-29, 10% between the ages of 30-39, 10% between the ages of 40-49 and 10% from 50years and above.

Qualifications and teaching experience of respondents

In terms of qualifications, findings showed that 60% of the teacher respondents in GSB la Grace Eman has the grade one certificate CAPIEMP which makes them fit and qualified to be teacher's, 20% of the teacher respondents had the Advance level certificate, and 20% has the Ordinary level certificate.

In terms of experiences, the results revealed that 40% of the teacher respondents has been teaching for about 7-10years, 20% has been teaching for about 1-3years, 20% has been teaching for about 4-6years and 20% has been teaching for more than ten years. In fact the findings revealed that most of the teacher respondents have between 7 to 10 years of teaching experience.

Macumu (2016), said that being trained in subject of Teaching for teachers enhances the capability of teachers and lead to high performance of students. The researcher concluded that majority of the teachers Teaching in GSB la Grace Eman have teaching qualification and what they need is in-service training where they will be thought strategies of Teaching students with Dysgraphia and how to use assistive technologies like digital notes taking, text to speech and speech to text software.

To find out whether teachers provide template and scaffolding to students with Dysgraphia in written task in an inclusive classroom.

The second objective was to “find out whether teachers provide template and scaffolding to students in written task in their classrooms”. The study discovered that all teacher respondents do provide template and scaffolding to students in written task. The teacher respondents provides scaffolding in different ways. Some teacher respondents said they do copy Short sentences and passages for Students with Dysgraphia to recopy from time to time while others said they drill students with Dysgraphia on handwriting.

The above summary is in agreement with Lev Vygotsky theory of scaffolding of 1978 which states that the teacher is the more knowledgeable order and the student a less knowledgeable order. This therefore implies that through scaffolding the teacher is oblige to teach students with Dysgraphia

handwriting by even holding their hands and assisting them to write. Therefore, in the teaching and learning process the more knowledgeable is bound to direct the students in order to help him or her accomplish a task (wright 2016).

To find out how teachers evaluate students with Dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom.

The third and final objective of this study was to “Find out how teachers evaluate students with Dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom”. From the findings, it was revealed that in order to effectively evaluate students with Dysgraphia, the teacher respondents said they do give extra time for dysgraphia students to accomplish task. Other teacher respondents said they reduce the bulk of the assessment so that students with Dysgraphia can complete their work on time too.

In agreement with Berliner (1980), for students with Dysgraphia to effectively finish their task, they need extra time. Students suffering from dysgraphia often finds it difficult to accomplish task like normal learner’s especially during examination. In order to help them accomplish task they need extra time. Therefore, giving students extra time and continuous follow-up during evaluation will enable them to accomplish their written task just like any other student without Dysgraphia.

For interview item one,

The researcher confirmed that the teacher respondents used good strategies in teaching students with Dysgraphia in their inclusive classrooms. The strategies are good but not enough for the students with Dysgraphia. In order to effectively solve the problem of Dysgraphia teacher’s should use multi-sensory Teaching approach, teach the students letter formation, breakdown instructions, use assistive technology in teaching like digital notes taking, encourage them to use graphic organizers and above all provide students with extra time to accomplish task.

For interview item two

All the teacher respondents have agreed that they provide templates and scaffolding to students in written task. They provide scaffolding by giving students short sentences and passages to recopy, and by drilling students with Dysgraphia on handwriting.

For interview item three

The teacher respondents confirmed that to better evaluate students with Dysgraphia, they must be given extra time to accomplish their task just like normal learner’s. Schools and administrators should check and endeavor to caution all teachers to always give students with Dysgraphia extra time during exams in order to enable them accomplish their task.

Recommendations

On the basis of conclusions drawn therefore, the following recommendations were made.

To the ministry of education

The ministry basic of education should ensure necessary training of teachers. In the course of training the ministry of basic education should ensure that teachers are train on what it takes to teach in an inclusive classroom, they are taught on how to use related resources.

To the school administration

For Dysgraphia problems to be solve competent, empathetic, optimistic, devoted and patient teachers are needed and for a teacher to devoted, patient and willing to sacrifice his or her time for a student, he needs to be motivated in terms of salary, praises and the working environment should be conducive and welcoming. So the school administration should endeavor to motivate their workers and create a conducive working environment for learners.

To the parents

students with special needs often fell rejected as those around them especially their parents experience confusion, fear, self-pity and even self-hate just because they have them as children. This often causes tension and a feeling of rejection on the side of the students who need love, care,

guidance and protection from their parents. So this study recommend parents to accept their children for who they are, to show love to their children, listen and assist their children, seek advice from counsellors, therapist and teacher's on how to help their children overcome writing problems, provide them with be necessary materials needed to practice writing at home and above all give them time to accomplish their task.

To the teachers

Teachers are called upon to act as second parents to children no matter their disability. Teachers need to be aware of the fact that the Teaching profession requires total commitment, sacrifices, love, willingness to teach, and the desire to always help others especially students with learning difficulties. So Teachers are recommended to portray a positive attitude towards the concept of inclusion and secondly shows positive attitude towards students with disability like dysgraphia.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn as a result of the research work that was carried on the topic "teaching strategies for teaching students with Dysgraphia in an inclusive classroom the case of GSB la Grace Emanu in Yaounde1 subdivision.

Suggestions for future research

For learners with dysgraphia to integrate mainstream classrooms in Cameroon, there is need to direct future research on barriers/challenges faced in employing teaching strategies for learners with dysgraphia in mainstream classrooms. Also, there is need to assess the impact of teaching strategies and academic performance of learners with dysgraphia.

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