

TEACHER COMPETENCIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THE CASE OF MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL FUNCTION

Emmanuel Agbo Owobi

Jikkuka Lengnen Jurmang

*Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences
University of Jos*

&

Umeh Callista Onwuadiebere

Ganaka International School, Jos

Abstract

In this paper, attempt was made to explain some of the teacher's competencies for inclusive education: A case for management and instructional function. In an effort to bring out the main points clearly, the authors examined management competencies for teachers in inclusive classroom, instructional function skills teachers need for inclusive classroom were explained, the relevancies of teacher competencies in inclusive education classroom were not left un-discussed, Every theory or philosophy can be good but some things may be a hindrance to its success and so factors that affect teacher competencies in an inclusive education management and instructional function were x-rayed, as conclusion was arrived at, the authors enumerate two recommendations respectively.

Introduction

A teacher is a person who provides schooling for pupils and students. Teachers' aim is to make students learn effectively and efficiently. An ideal teacher in an inclusive classroom setting is then expected to possess some attributes like proficiency in handling heterogeneous group in his or her class. Teaching is what the teacher performs for organizing learning experiences as well as for providing the supporting climate necessary for effective learning. Kiyemet (2010) said that "teachers need to improve knowledge of management and instructional skills to enhance improvement and exploration of their teaching practices. However, Kiyemet (2010) define teacher competencies as "the set of management and instructional knowledge, skills, and experiences teacher's posses for necessary job performance.

There are a large number of management and instructional functions to be performed by teachers in an inclusive setting. These to include: knowledge of content, processes, methods and content.

Glasser (2000) said that inclusive education is all about meaningful education for all. It is the full acceptance of all students including the special needs students into the

regular school classroom that leads to a sense of belonging. Inclusion is not the same as mainstreaming or integration. Mainstreaming moves students from special education classroom to regular education classroom only in the situation where the children with special needs are able to keep up with others in that class. Integration on its part provides only part-time inclusion. It does not give the child the opportunity to be a full member of the classroom community but inclusion classroom takes the special needs student as a full member of the class like any other student.

In this paper, the authors detailed their discursion on the following sub-topics:

1. Management competencies for teachers in inclusive classroom.
2. Instructional function skills teachers need for inclusive classroom.
3. Relevance of teacher competencies in inclusive education classroom:
4. Factors that affect teacher's competencies to function in an inclusive classroom.
5. Conclusion.
6. Recommendation

Management Competencies for Teachers in Inclusive Classroom

Managing special needs children in an inclusive education classroom can be challenging to teachers accustomed to teaching in regular schools because the teacher will be dealing with different abilities at the same time. For teachers to be able to manage this class effectively they need to poses efficient professional competencies. Mastropieri and Scruggs (2004) said that for teachers to be able to manage inclusive classroom effectively, the following should not be undermined:

1. Ability and skills to plan for the content coverage and take into account the differences between students by scope and sequence.
2. Ability to recognize unethical, illegal, and inappropriate assessment method.
3. Ability to use assessment information.
4. Able to know the assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions.
5. And ability to use the child results when making decisions about the inclusion planning, teaching, and developing curriculum and school improvement.

Furthermore, Westwood, (1995) and Ozoji (2005) outlined some competencies needed by a teacher in inclusive classroom as follows:

1. Ability to figure out informally what skills a child needs to succeed.
2. Ability to take advantage of children's individual interests and use their internal motivation for developing needs.
3. Knowledge of instructional strategies and how to use them effectively.
4. Ability to adapt materials and to re-write objectives for each child's needs.
5. Ability to work as a team with other special teachers, regular teachers and all specialists in whatever way to provide the best teaching approach in the classroom.
6. Ability to be flexible, to develop a high tolerance for ambiguity.

It is very important that the teacher should have the ability to solve problems without affecting the students personality and take time to understand the problem and should be able to make decision in suitable time(e.g discovering a child who is hard of hearing or cannot read print and placing them accordingly). The ability to collaborate and team up with other professionals to be successful in the classroom is a management skill a teacher should not lack. The teacher should have the ability to respect the students; this is very much helpful in an inclusive classroom. Effective teachers in an inclusive classroom should be patient, respect their students, organize their classrooms, and as a result their students are enthusiastic, says these functions complement each other as they cannot work in isolation. In practice, it is very hard or difficult to separate the two and often one performs both functions simultaneously.

Instructional Function Skills Teachers Need for Inclusive Classroom

Instructional side of teacher's role in an inclusive classroom involves different presentations and communication skills the teachers provides like teaching, explaining, dramatizing, using audio visual aids and all that can enhance teaching and learning in an inclusive classroom. The teacher is either seen providing instructions to students at any given time or by setting up learning activities in the classroom, he/she is often required to play a functional role which includes motivating, organizing the learning group, and then evaluation. These may not be part of teaching but they are seriously needed for teaching to take effect.

Finally, teachers should be able to provide instructional competencies through training, teaching methodology, psychological knowledge. This will help him or her to be able to provide audio-visual aids and evaluation techniques to handle inclusive classroom effectively. When an inclusive program is well planed, curriculum, infrastructure, legislatives will be successful without any problem.

Relevance of Teacher Competencies in Inclusive Education Classroom

The relevance of teacher competencies in inclusive education classroom cannot be overemphasized. An inclusive curriculum is as good as its application in the classroom, and thus the teacher. This is because no matter how wonderful an inclusive curriculum may be, if there are no competent teachers who can manage it and carry it out accordingly, the curriculum remains only a document for the shelf. Quality teachers training for inclusive education is central to inclusive management and equitable teaching and fostering a broadened concept of inclusive education.

Teacher competencies help the management of the potential of the special needs children, for the future, and for the teacher himself. Therefore, teachers should note that learning how to manage or provide instructions in the inclusive classrooms setting does not only play in the accumulation of knowledge and skills but in utilizing them for better teaching for the good of the special needs child. Saleh (2008) recommends that teachers ought to have the courage to try new skills without apprehension, so that they are able to

act as agents of change to fulfill the aspiration enunciated in Salamanca philosophy of inclusion.

When teachers are skilled in communicating information to parents, children and audience, it helps the understanding of instructions that teacher tried to pass across and enable children be able to articulate the meaning, limitation and they themselves will be able to apply the information to their learning situations. A teacher who possesses a strong communication competence in an inclusive classroom setting will be able to carry along all the children in the class irrespective of who they are and what they have.

Factors affecting teacher competencies in an inclusive education classroom:

The following are factors that have accounted for lack of teacher's competencies in an inclusive classroom:

1. Wrong placement of students in a particular class.
2. Lack of provision of supportive staff by school management such as an assessment staff to help place special need students in classes where they can benefit from.
3. The specific number of special needs children for a particular class to help teachers meet collaboration; co-teaching and individualized approach is not being taken into consideration.

Spasovski (2010) said that teacher competencies for managing or providing instructional functions may be affected when the teacher is unskilled in a particular instructional material that is needed in the classroom, example of this includes: audiotape books, computer networking and software which keep changing and improving every day and this make the teachers to be left out of the global world and his work suffers. Murphy & Edwards (2004) further said that non-conducive classroom setting can affect teacher competencies. If the school is not well planned and the needs of individual in the class are not taken into consideration, the teacher will have hard time getting the attention of the students. For example, when a child on wheelchair cannot easily assess the class or there is no ventilation in the classroom, it will be really difficult to carry out any meaningful instruction in these conditions.

Another serious factor is that most teachers tend to develop negative attitude towards inclusion as this overwhelms many teachers because they see it as increasing their workload in several ways. They tend to view the academic needs of these children more different in quantity and quality when compared to general education children. For instance, teachers may already feel they don't have enough prep time to prepare for their daily lessons, so when the idea of having children with disabilities in their classroom arises, they may feel overwhelmed that they simply will not be able to accommodate the individual needs of children. Shade and Stewart (2001) argued that teachers report frustration, burden, fear, and inadequacies because they don't believe they have the abilities to meet the individual needs of children with special needs in their classroom.

Conclusion

This paper has tried to discuss some of the teacher competencies for inclusive education classroom and as you can see some terms that will always come to mind when talking about this have also been discussed. The fact remains that teacher competencies and their relevance are vital for successful implementation of inclusive education. Secondly, the attitude of teachers towards inclusion will either promote or disturb inclusion process and so all the obstacles that can negatively affect inclusion should be eradicated to enable it to flourish. Teacher competencies for inclusive classroom or all that go with it cannot be exhausted here thus the study continues.

Recommendation

It is very important that all the institutions that train teachers should include programs that will adequately prepare the future teachers in inclusive education system. There should be seminars and in-service trainings for teachers who are in schools already to give them that confidence that they can do it.

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