

STRATEGIES FOR COUNSELLING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN NJIKOKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to determine the counselling strategies for students with special needs in secondary schools in Njikoka Local Government of Anambra state. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted. The entire population of this study of 9 counsellors in the 11 public secondary schools in Njikoka Local Government of Anambra State was studied with sampling. A four point rating scale validated questionnaire containing 28 items was used for data collection. Cronbach alpha co – efficient used to establish the reliability of the instrument which yield coefficients of 0.79, 0.72 and 0.81 for different clusters with an overall coefficient of 0.77. The researcher administered the instrument using direct method to the respondents with the help of four research assistants. Mean scores were used to answer the research questions. The study discovered that counsellors in Njikoka Local Government of Anambra State agree that the majority of the items raised are strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disabilities. The researcher concluded that breaking down of instruction into smaller, manageable task; maintain an organized classroom and limit distraction, use of multi – sensory strategy such as auditory cues, providing emotional support services and giving the physical disabled career education are the strategies for counselling students with special needs in secondary schools.

Keywords: Strategies, Counselling, Students, Special Needs, Secondary Schools.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

Nowadays, schools serve students with unique abilities, varied characteristics and motivations for learning. While some students are academically engaged, and participate energetically in classrooms and in co- curricular activities, others are less engaged and achieve

below average (Blum & Libbey, 2014). There continues to be a rising trend in the student's population identified as students with special needs, having learning disabilities (National Center Education for Statistics, 2011).

According to Nasiri (2018), special needs can be explained as particular educational requirements resulting from learning difficulties, physical disability, or emotional and behavioral difficulties, special needs (or additional needs) refers to individuals who require assistance for disabilities that may be medical, mental, or psychological. Uzor (2017) explained special educational needs (SEN) as education given to people who are either disabled in one way or the other or inability to participate in education. For the purpose of this study, special needs students are youth who has been determined to require special attention and specific necessities that other students do not. The state may declare this status for the purpose of offering benefits and assistance for the child's well-being and growth.

According to Garuba (2010), students are said to be the future of every nations as they ensure continuity in whatever capacity. Students are the future and the one to which the adult pass unto the baton of every aspect of life. Students with special needs are some of the most marginalized and excluded group in the society (Wilson, 2016). Estimate suggest that there are at least 93million students with special need in the world (UNICEF, 2011), Or could even be much higher. They are less likely to attend schools, access medical service or have their voice heard in society and as such require special education services.

According to Obiyo (2015), education for special needs students has not been given special attention in Anambra state in particular and Nigeria in general. Students with special needs refers to students who need special attention, modifications of methodology, curriculum, special equipment, special education service and special personnel to help them maximize their potentials (Obiyo, 2015). The Federal Government of Nigeria (2010) defined special education as the education of students and adults who have learning difficult because of their different sorts of blindness, deafness, mental retardation, social maladjustment, physical disability, health problems or accident in later life . Students with social deficits have their school performance negatively affected; both inside the classroom and in social relationships.

According to Oluka (2003), students with special educational needs and physical disabilities have unique characteristics like autistic spectrum disorders, emotional disturbance and behavior problems that require extra care.

However, education for persons with Special Needs Act(2010) defined special needs as restriction capacity of a person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability or any other condition which result in such individual learning differently from one without that condition. Special needs relate to terms like disability, impairment and other special needs. The world Health Organization (2016) refers to people with special needs as those that have emotional, behavioral, sensory, physical or mental disabilities. Students with speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, visual impairment and multi-sensory impairment among others also fall within the category of students with special educational needs (Greville, 2019). Apart from visual impairment, students with hearing impairment fail to develop an overall effective personality that may result in social isolation. Just like all the other three impairments

(mental impairment, visual impaired and physically deformed), hearing impairment also advert language development through hindering the linguistic input which is considered essential for overall language development.

According to Uzor (2017), hearing impaired students are not only at risk for delayed language development and communication skills, but are also more prone to develop behavioral problems as compared to the normal hearing students of the same age group. However, it is quite likely for this impairment to evade the notice of the family members, this avoiding an early detection. Most often, partial hearing - impairment is identified by the Montessori or primary school teachers (Oluka, 2003), Hearing impairment can be broadly divided into sensor neutral hearing impairment (damage to the inner ear), conductive hearing impairment (damage to the outer and middle ear), and mixed hearing impairment (damage to both the inner and the outer ear). The fourth type of hearing impairment results from the damage to the nerves or nucleic of the central nervous system, either in the pathways to the brain or in the brain itself.

In addition, students with physical disability are subjected to a multitude of obstacles and barriers (that is, non- acceptance, discrimination, stereotypical thinking). In some cases, these students experience more than their normal share of frustration and difficulty in attempting to resolve the issues that are encountered with daily living activities (Blum & Libbey, 2014). It is not uncommon for students with physical disabilities to experience chronic hopelessness as a result of anxiety and depression. Sometimes they have access and performance problems in schools, which could or could not be related to the disability. Also, they show delayed development of self- concepts that can influence one's sense of self - worth, and viewing one's self as dumb, damaged, weak, and vulnerable.

According to Garuba (2010), students with physical disabilities are often misunderstood and frequently less served by the counselling profession, these students need services just as much as other students (Each, 2011). In addition, all counselors have a professional and ethical responsibility to facilitate conditions that promote the full potential for all individuals, including exceptional groups. Kavale and Mostert (2012) explained that for learners or special needs to excel in life, social competence plays a very big role. Ozoji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016) stated that as a result of the inclusion of students with special needs in regular schools, there would be an increase in the provision of more direct and systemic services, including guidance and counselling which is one of the related services. There is need to look into different types of special needs.

Holistically, the Federal Government of Nigeria (2010) categorized persons with Special needs into visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically and health impaired, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed. Another category of persons with special needs include the disadvantaged which entails students' of nomadic pastorals, migrant fisher folks, migrant famers, hunters and so on, who are unable to have access to the conventional educational provisions and therefore require special education/counselling to cater for their particular peculiar needs and circumstances. And lastly, the gifted and talented: these are people (students and adults) who have very high intelligent quotients and are naturally endowed with special trait and therefore find themselves insufficiently challenged by the regular school programme.

Given their special needs and the global acceptance of the need for education for all without limitations, special education is provided to give equal education opportunities to enable students with special needs contribute their own quota to the development of the nation. However, most of them are still left to compete with other students in the regular school system where there are not enough qualified teachers and instructional material to meet their special needs.

According to Oliver and Williams (2012), the mentally handicapped child requires special needs - counselling and is this often regarded as special in the sense that they required assistance, counselling and support to overcome contextual, social and individual. These difficulties may also include slow cognitive development (reasoning problem - solving, remembering and generalizing), as well as slow language development (Oluka, 2003). The learner with special needs finds it difficult to cope with the demands and expectation of the society, possibly because of his perceived lack of performance or potential. They are often treated with little interest or sympathy, with uneasiness, fear, embarrassment and/or even disgust.

Special needs exist where learners require special help and support if they are to overcome the particular contextual, social and individual disadvantage they face (Donald & Lolwana, 2014). The concept of special needs should include personal and social needs, as well as educational need. Special needs require the provision of different or additional resources for students on account of some degree of disability or impairment (Riddle & Brown, 2014). The person with special needs include: those with hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, social maladjustment, learning disabilities and multiple impairments. The study, therefore, examine strategies for counselling students with special needs in secondary schools in the Njikoka local Government Area in Anambra state as it regards to students with hearing impairment, visual impairment and physical disabilities which is the gap the study intend to cover.

Statement of the problem

The special needs students, especially the disabled, seem to be denied access to tools and assistance that will make them to become more effective and self - sufficient. They experience challenges and barriers with parents, who sometimes neglect them while some seem to have little passion on the female at the expense of their male counterpart. Also, their supposed teachers who ought to empathize with them and fellow students who should show love and acceptance are also making life difficult for them.

Wilson (2016) observed that educating students with special needs is problematic. This is because students with special needs are confronted with a number of challenges ranging from participation in social activities, locomotion, and education to mention a few. It is more expensive to educate students with special needs than their sighted peers and this as a result of high cost of equipment and material used in educating them. Uzor (2017) observed that the cost of Braille machine, type writers, moving to and from the school, church, home and other places of importance is definitely higher for students with visual impairment than the sighted students, since they have needs for a companion most of the time. It is also noticed that a child with physical disability such as blindness may not be able to move around easily and may have to be carried for a longer time than non- disabled child.

Students with special needs share similar needs as their non - disabled peers and this therefore calls for guidance and counselling services to enable learners with different impairments feel comfortable in the classroom and learn using with normal students without fear and intimidation. From the researcher's observation, there seems to be paucity of empirical studies on counselling strategies for students with visual impairment, hearing impairment and physical disabilities in Njikoka local Government Area in Anambra State. It is against this backdrop that this research aimed at exposing strategies of counselling students with special needs in Njikoka local Government Area in Anambra State.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of this study is to determine strategies for counselling students with special needs in secondary schools in Njikoka local Government Area in Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to examine;

- i. The strategies for counselling students with visual impairment in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State.
- ii. The strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State.
- iii. The strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State.

Scope of the study

The study was delimited to the strategies for counselling students with special needs in secondary schools in Anambra State. Furthermore, the study is delimited to secondary schools in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State. The study covers strategies for counselling students with visual impairment, strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment, and strategies for counselling students with physical disability in Anambra State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State?
2. What are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State?
3. What are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State?

METHOD

Research Design

The study adopted descriptive survey design. According to Nworgu (2015), descriptive survey research design is a research design which aim at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts of a given population. The area of the study for this research is Njikoka local Government. The population of the study consists of the entire male and female Counsellors in Njikoka local Government Area which is 15 Counsellors in the 11 public secondary schools in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State (ASUBEB). The sample consists of the entire 15: Counsellors in Njikoka Local Government Area. This is because the population is not large, and there was no need for sampling..The research instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire

which was constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire titled “Strategies for Counselling students with special needs in secondary schools” (SCSNSSQ). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. In doing this, the topic, purpose of the study and the research questions were given to two experts from guidance and counselling and an expert in measurement and evaluation all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Akwa for validation. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test. Copies of the instrument were administered to 20 Counsellors in Onitsha Education Zone who were not part of the research population. Data collected were analysed using Cronbach's Alpha formula to determine the internal consistency of the questionnaire items and co-efficient of 0.79, 0.72 and 0.81 for clusters B1 to B3 respectively were obtained with an overall reliability co-efficient of 0.77. The data was collected through direct delivery approach with permission of principal. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed and collected with the help of four research assistants. The administered questionnaires after collection were analyzed using mean scores so as to achieve answer to the research questions.

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question 1 : what are the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State.?

Table 1:

Respondents' mean ratings on the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment

S/N	Strategies for counselling students with visual impairment	×	Remarks
1.	Through the use of individual/group Counselling	3.1	Agree
2.	Through advice giving.	3.5	Agree
3.	Encouraging them to have a positive self - concept	2.8	Agree
4.	Provides special needs/service such as referrals.	2.6	Agree
5.	Teaching them new ways of interacting with people.	2.7	Agree
6.	Teaching them new ways of responding to their ever Changing environment through the use of sound skills.	2.6	Agree
7.	Using Braille machine and bold print typewriters for tracing and reading dots	2.7	Agree
8.	Through the employment of open- ended questions to enable students - client dialogue or discussion.	2.9	Agree
9.	Use of online systems to provide individual and group Counselling	2.2	Disagree

The analysis in table 1 shows that the respondents agreed that through the use of individual/group Counselling, advice giving, encouraging them to have positive self - concept, provides special needs/ service such as referral, teaching them new ways of interacting with people, teaching them new ways of responding to the environment through the use of sound skills, Using of Braille machine and bold print typewriters for tracing and reading dots, use of open - ended questions to help the student - clients enter into a dialogue and disagree on use of online systems to provide individual and group Counselling are the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment with the mean score of 3.1, 2.6, 2.8, 2.6, 2.7, 2.6, 2.7, 2.9 and 2.2 respectively.

Research Question 2: what are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State?

Table 2

Respondents' mean ratings on the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment

S/N	Strategies for counselling students with hearing Impairment	X	Remarks
10.	Making them understand that they are loved.	3.0	Agree
11.	Counselling both parents and siblings on the need to Help the visual impaired students	3.3	Agree
12.	Enlighten them on how to cope with their studies through the use of hearing aids and sign language	2.8	Agree
13.	Making them understand the need to develop self-love	2.9	Agree
14.	Making them know they are loved.	3.1	Agree
15.	Increasing their social skills	3.2	Agree
16.	As a Counsellor, I understand and respects the society Created by students	2.2	Disagree
17.	Being sensitive to all style of communication being Used by student with hearing impairment	2.7	Agree
18.	Through individual Counselling.	3.3.	Agree

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that making students understand that they are loved, counselling both parents and siblings on the need to help the visually impaired students, enlighten them on how to cope with their studies through the use of hearing aids and sign language, making them understand the need to develop self-love, telling them that they are loved, increasing their social skills, sensitive to all style of communication being used by the student with hearing impairment, use of individual Counselling are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State with a mean score of 3.0, 3.3, 2.8, 2.9, 3.1, 3.2, 2.7 and 3.3 respectively. The respondents disagree that understanding and respecting the society created by students are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State with a mean score of 2.2.

Research Question 3 : What are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State?

Table 3

Respondents' mean ratings on the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities

S/N strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities.	X	Remarks
19. Through the use of encouragement approach on Physically disabled students.	2.5	Agree
20. By breaking down instructions into smaller Manageable tasks.	3.5	Agree
21. Maintain an organized classroom and limit distraction.	2.8.	Agree
22. Use of multi -sensory strategy such as auditory cues.	2.6.	Agree
23. Providing emotional support services	3.0	Agree
24. Giving physical disabled career education.	3.2.	Agree
25. Through the use of dynamic interactions on a group Of students approach.	2.3.	Disagree
26. As a school Counsellor, I use small - group Counselling approach	2.3.	Disagree
27. Through the use of therapeutic intervention approach.	3.3.	Agree
28. Through the use of client - centered Counselling approach.	2.7	Agree

Table 3 above shows that the respondents agreed that use of encouragement approach on physical disabled students, breaking down of instructions into smaller, manageable tasks, maintain an organized classroom and limit distraction, use of multi -sensory strategy such as auditory cues, providing emotional support services, giving the physical disabled career education, use of therapeutic intervention approach and use of student - focused interventions are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities with a mean score of 2.5, 3.5, 2.8, 2.6, 3.0, 3.2, 3.3 and 2.7 respectively. The respondents also disagreed that through the use of dynamic interactions on a group of students approach and Counsellor use of small - group Counselling approach are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities with a mean score of 2.3 and 2.3.

Summary of Findings

Findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Counsellors in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State agree that the majority of the items raised are strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment.
2. Counsellors in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State agree that the majority of the items raised are strategies for counselling students with visual impairment.
3. Counsellors in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State agree that the majority of the items raised are strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities.

Discussion of Findings

Strategies for counselling students with visual impairment

The first research question sought to examine the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment in Njikoka local Government Area of Anambra State. The findings revealed that the respondents agreed that through the use of individual / group Counselling, advice giving, encouraging them to have positive self - concept, provides special needs/ services such as referral, teaching them new ways of interacting with people, teaching them new ways of responding to the environment through the use of sound skills, Using of Braille machine and bold print typewriters for tracing and reading dots, use of open - ended questions to help the student - clients enter into a dialogue and disagree on use of online systems to provide individual and group Counselling are the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment. This was in line with the study carried out by Blum and Libbey (2014) which states that individual/group Counselling and teaching new ways of interacting with people are the strategies for counselling students with visual impairment.

Strategies for Counselling students with hearing impairment

The second research question focused on the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State. The findings revealed that the respondents agreed that making students understand that they are loved, Counselling both parents and siblings on the need to help the visually impaired students, enlighten them on how to cope with their studies through the use of hearing aids and sign language, making them understand the need to develop self - love, telling them that they are loved, increasing their social skills, sensitive to all style of communication being used by the student with hearing impairment, use of individual Counselling are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment is in agreement with Uzor (2017) which discovered that telling them that they are loved, increasing their social skills, understands and respects the society created by students are the strategies for counselling students with hearing impairment.

Strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities

The third research question examined the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State. The findings shows that the respondents agreed to the use of encouragement approach on physical disabled students, breaking down of instructions into smaller, manageable tasks, maintain an organized classroom and limit distraction, use of multi -sensory strategy such as auditory cues, providing emotional support services, among others. The respondents also disagreed that through the use of dynamic interactions on a group of students approach and Counsellor use of small -group Counselling approach are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities. This was in accordance with the study carried out by Wilson (2016) which states that manageable tasks, maintain an organized classroom and limit distraction are the strategies for counselling students with physical disabilities.

Conclusion

From the findings, the research concludes that the strategies for counselling students with special needs in secondary schools in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State include the use of individual /group Counselling, giving them advice, teaching them on ways of interacting with the environment, teaching them new ways of responding to the environment through the use of sound skills, making them understand that they are loved.

Recommendations

From the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. When parents see any health challenges beyond their understanding and management, they should report to the hospital for proper check and direction.
2. Hospital should be equipped and professionals employed to take care of the special needs.
3. For the visual impaired in developing countries / cites such as Nigeria and Anambra State in particular may not be able to afford all the auditory devices/ services state above, so funds should be made available to them by international organizations such as the World Health Organization.
4. The government should sit up in partnering with foreign and private companies in providing the needed educational and instructional materials and devices for the Special needs.

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