



CHAPTER 25

TEACHING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: THE UNIQUE AND CROSS-CUTTING STRATEGIES

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Introduction

Education is a tool that provides people with knowledge, skills and information to enable them become useful members of their society. Abdullahi (2020), regarded education as a factory where people are shaped and then released into the workforce for personal and societal advancement. Education is a continuous process of impacting knowledge, values, beliefs and skills to individuals so that they can develop their potentials and make the society better than they met it. Education is the biggest industry that touches on every fabric of our human endeavour. On this note, Inko-Taria (2010, p.30), considered education as “a process of developing a person in all aspects of life, to be able to function effectively as an individual and be useful to the society in which he lives”. In no small measure, education has contributed to raising the standard of living in all societies. Education has been defined by Okero (2010), as a process of developing the individual morally, socially, emotionally, physically, aesthetically and for their welfare as well as the welfare of the society. Education may be seen as what is left in man after assessment. Education is the cornerstone of a nation; something is obviously wrong with any society that does not take its educational institutions seriously. Education eradicates poverty, provides safety and security, prevents war and terrorism, and promotes trade and commerce. Education cannot be complete without effective teaching and learning.

Teaching and learning are complementary opposites. Without teaching, learning cannot occur, and without learning, teaching cannot be considered complete. According to Kimble and Garmezy (1963, p. 133), learning is the consequence of reinforced practice and is described as a "relatively permanent change in a behavioural tendency." Learning can also refer to a transformation resulting from the acquisition of a new skill, a shift in perspective, or a deeper comprehension of a subject. Since learning does not happen by accident, a learner intentionally acquires knowledge. Similar to learning, teaching can be defined as "assisting someone in learning how to do something, offering instruction, assisting in the study of anything, providing with knowledge, causing to know or comprehend" (Aslan, 2016, p.56). On the other side, teaching involves directing and



facilitating learning, making it possible for the learner to learn, and creating the circumstances for learning. Teaching can be summed up as interaction with students that enables their comprehension and application of facts, ideas, and procedures. Teaching involves immersing students in the active development of knowledge since to teach is to involve students in learning. The philosophy of education, teaching style, strategy, methods, tactics, and classroom practices will be based on an understanding of how learners learn. According to Sequeira (2012), teaching is a series of activities that take place away from the students but are intended to support their internal learning process. Learning is intrinsic whereas teaching is extrinsic. Without teachers, the goal of education cannot be achieved as teachers hold the key to teaching and learning.

A teacher is a person whose expertise, skills, competence, experience, and education are required to provide others with information to improve their lives. Nwafor (2021) defined a teacher as a carrier of knowledge, a guardian and a molder of life. Anyone who contributes to the development of learners is a teacher. Lending credence to this, a teacher may be referred to as an organizer, coordinator, supervisor, stakeholder, motivator, facilitator, leader and predictor of the teaching and learning process. A teacher can also be defined as a professional whose job is to instruct and guide learning to ensure that learners acquire knowledge, competence and virtue. The skill and dedication of teachers can be used to gauge the effectiveness of the educational system. The brains behind instruction and learning are teachers. The process of teaching and learning is led by teachers. Therefore, a competent teacher should be qualified in his or her area of specialisation. Thus, he or she must have content and pedagogical competencies in the subject area. A teacher is deficient if he or she possesses only the content competence without the pedagogical competence or vice versa. For effective teaching and learning, the classroom teacher may decide to use different teaching strategies depending on the topic and learners' characteristics. In order to make teaching and learning effective and the lesson goal-oriented, teachers may come up with varieties of creative strategies.

Instructional strategies are tactics teachers adopt to drive home the lesson efficiently. Nicholls (2016), described strategy as a complex network of ideas, insights, experiences, goals, knowledge, memories, perceptions, and expectations that serve as overall direction for particular actions taken in pursuit of particular purposes. Depending on the students' demands and the learning process, teaching strategies foster the delivery of instruction. These strategies are developed by teachers to reinforce necessary knowledge. If teachers make good use of classroom management strategies, negative behaviours which impede learning would be minimized and positive behaviour which enhances learning will be maximized. The needs of the students should be put at the center of the development of teaching strategies, taking into account children with special needs. There are many different learning styles and preferences and not everyone fits neatly into one group. There are various types of learners; learners with disabilities, exceptional



learners, gifted learners, learners with multiple impairments, learners who are intellectually and socially underprivileged, learners with special needs, and many more. Being aware of these disparities can have a significant impact on how teachers interact with their students, particularly students with special needs.

Special need students are those who have challenges with both learning and training and their physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development may be affected by this problem. In light of this, Danlami (2015), described learners with special needs as those who are either gifted or physically disabled. Suffice it to say that every individual is disabled in one way or another. Contrarily, Obani (1997) observed that while in the past only people with evident physical and functional disabilities like blindness, deafness, physical handicaps, and intellectual retardation were considered to have special needs, modern viewpoints have expanded the range and lengthened the list. The author continued by saying that many of these impairments frequently go unrecognized. This comprises those with severe behavioural, emotional, and attention disorders that impair their ability to study and function in school. Other people with social disabilities include those who are impoverished or poor, afflicted with chronic illnesses, street children and urchins (almajiris), or those who live in rural places with little or no opportunity to acquire quality education. The following group of persons could be regarded as persons with special needs according to the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013): visual impairment (blind and the partially sighted), hearing impairment (deaf and the partially hearing), physical and health impairment, intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe and profound), emotional and behavioural disorders (hyperactive, hypoactive and socially maladjusted), speech and language impairment, learning disabilities (psychological/neurological, phobia or challenges), multiple disabilities and the gifted, talented and albinos (vision, skin problems, lack of self-esteem, stigmatisation and stereotype). Students with special needs require more individualized attention, modifications to the standard curriculum, and hands-on teaching and learning strategies in order to reach their full potential as learners and individuals. For these types of students to learn well, the teacher must go above and beyond by providing them more individualized attention, make some adjustments to the standard curriculum's routines and practices, and use practical teaching and learning methods and strategies. Some of these students learn more effectively when their teachers have the patience to acknowledge and comprehend whatever issues they may be having. One of the key factors in determining the effectiveness of creative teaching activities in special needs education has continued to be the attitude of the teachers. In order to treat students with special needs fairly and offer them a sense of belonging in an inclusive classroom, teachers in this twenty-first century must work extra hard to incorporate creative and distinctive teaching strategies for effective teaching and learning process.

A special education programme is one that has been specifically created to address the exceptional needs of students who fall outside the scope of the general



education curriculum. The Federal Government of Nigeria defines special education as the instruction of children and adults who experience learning challenges due to various disabilities, including blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hard of hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, and limb disfigurement brought on by birth conditions, inheritance, and other mental or physical health issues (FRN, 2013). On this note, Ozoji (2006), viewed learners with special needs as children just like other children who vary from one another in terms of age, ability, learning style, and other factors. In a similar perspective, Osakwe (2010), defined special education as a form of instruction that is specifically tailored to address the individual requirements of people with disabilities. The disabled and the brilliant and talented are the two primary groups of students with special needs.

The discussion on special needs education cannot be possible without mentioning inclusive education. Inclusive education enables learners with special needs to attend class alongside "normal" students. Learners with special needs are no longer just seen in special education classrooms or in the lunchroom or playground. Inclusive education is a process of enhancing the capacity of the education system in any country to reach out to diverse learners. Instead of enrolling a learner in a separate school or class, inclusive education enables the integration of students into the main school system or classroom. This means that in order to accommodate the learning demands of students with special needs, ordinary schools must make certain modern alterations and adaptations to their infrastructures, curricula, personnel, administrative techniques, and instructional materials to accommodate the diverse learners. The fundamental tenet of inclusion is that students with special needs should have the same access to general education as their counterparts without disabilities and this includes any necessary adaptations and support. According to Obi and Ashi (2016), inclusive education is considered as a situation where people with disabilities are not subjected to discrimination on the basis of their disability or their race, ethnicity, or religion. Disable learners confront numerous challenges to acquiring education; this includes inaccessible schools, inadequate teaching and learning resources, and negative attitudes of teachers and classmates (Ukpepi & Opuwari, 2019). Special classes, separate education, or other forms of removing learners with disabilities from the regular environment should only be used when a child's disability is so severe that it prevents them from learning in regular classes (with the aid of additional services). Teachers, parents of kids with disabilities, policymakers, and other stakeholders are still debating the advantages and drawbacks of this educational paradigm in Nigeria today. The overall objective of inclusive education is to fight discriminatory attitudes, create a conducive atmosphere, build inclusive society and achieve education for all. Inclusive education is necessary for peaceful co-existence since it brings about the development of the country by bringing all types of learners together; indicating that all learners are equal and that they can learn together thereby removing every form of barriers on the part to equal



education for all. It is against this backdrop therefore, that this chapter addresses unique teaching strategies, crosscutting teaching strategies, paradigm shift, challenges of teaching children with special needs in inclusive classrooms and implications.

Unique teaching strategies for learners with special needs

How would 21st century teacher meet the needs of different types of learners in their classes? Part of teachers' responsibilities include being ever ready to adjust their lessons to the unique group of learners they are working with at any given time. This is best achieved when the teacher is innovative enough to find the most appropriate teaching strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners in the class. Teaching strategies are thoughts, behaviours, beliefs, or emotions that facilitate the acquisition, understanding, or transfer of new knowledge and skills. Teaching strategies make teaching and learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations. According to Mallillin, Laurel, Mallillin, Arroyo, Carag, Guingab-Carag, Macapallag, Galasinao, Dalupang & Tarayao (2021), teaching strategies bring academic concepts to life with visual and practical learning experiences by helping learners to understand the lesson into real life situations. Good teaching strategies contribute to the learning of a lesson. Teaching strategies are also seen as a means of enhancing self efficacy, motivation and self-confidence of learners. Not all teaching strategies work for every learner. Some strategies are specific and unique to certain learners in the classroom.

Unique strategies as the name suggests are exceptional, unequal, peculiar, extraordinary, uncommon and spectacular teaching strategies teachers can adopt in the classroom while dealing with learners with special needs to make learning desirable, interesting and enjoyable. Unique teaching strategies are spectacular, innovative, novel and interactive strategies for instruction with the aim of meeting the needs and characteristics of certain learners in the classroom. Unique teaching strategies provide delivery mode of teaching in accordance with the learning process. They lay the foundation of why and how to conduct the lessons and help set expectations, creating a shared class culture where learners take more responsibilities for their class participation. Unique strategies encourage students to work together by introducing various class activities to enhance the learning process.. Strategies are considered unique when they are not commonly used in teaching and learning. Below are some of the unique teaching strategies for teaching learners with special needs.

1. Unconditional Positive Regard Strategy

Unconditional positive regard strategy is a strategy used by a psychologist Carl Rogers. This strategy requires teachers to consistently and unconditionally view learners as capable and competent. When learners make mistakes, fail or misbehave, it is the role of the teacher to continue to let them know that they believe



in them and their abilities. It involves showing complete support and acceptance of a person no matter what that person does or says. There may be scenarios where teachers only show conditional positive regard towards their learners; probably when they perform excellently well in school but fail to encourage them when they fail. How does this affect the learners? Learners with special needs may find it challenging getting tasks at first instance. Some of these learners are slow learners and may require some conscious trial upon trial to achieve success in lessons. It is the duty of the classroom teacher to be patience with the learners and appreciate their little efforts in learning. These learners may be more likely to explore their environments and discover new things about the world they live in when they do not fear judgment from their teacher because of their bad behaviour. Therefore, the unconditional positive regard strategy empowers learners with special needs by letting them know that their teacher believes in their ability to constantly do better. It shows empathy and builds trust in the learners because when they know their teacher is supportive and motivating, their trust and self esteem increases. This strategy is necessary in teaching learners with special needs as it allows them to build a higher self-esteem and self actualization in many situations regardless of the actions they have taken in the past or their bad behaviour. Unconditional positive regard strategy focuses on the feelings associated with a negative behaviour other than the bahaviour itself.

2. Modeled Teaching Strategy

Modeled teaching strategy is an instructional strategy that involves representing things in the real world. It is central to all activities in the process for building or creating an artifact of some form or other. In modeled teaching, the teacher displays visual examples of an activity or skill for the purpose of teaching others through the visual channel. Here, the teacher leads by example by showing the learners how to do a task. In doing this, learners learn through concrete experiences other than learning abstractedly. The modeled teaching strategy is suitable for learners with special needs as it encourages learning by imitation. Students are more engaged when they have something to look at. Modeling a lesson or an activity will get learners immerse in the lesson. The teacher maintains control when introducing a new idea to ensure learners have appropriate understanding and proper knowledge of it before trying for themselves. This strategy will help learners to see how to complete a given task.

3. Entry Behaviour Strategy

Entry behaviour strategy requires the teacher to ask the learners few questions before properly embarking on the day's lesson to actually ascertain what the learners already know or what they are confused about. Assessing learners' prior knowledge of a topic at the beginning of a unit of lesson will give the teacher an insight of what to teach at an appropriate level. If prior knowledge does not take



place, the teacher may teach content at a level that is either above or below the learners' optimal learning capacity. This strategy ensures that the content being taught is appropriate for the learners. It equally respects the fact that learners are not tabula razar as they come into the classroom with pre-existing knowledge but it is the duty of the classroom teacher to measure the extent of their previous knowledge. Entry behaviour teaching strategy identifies misconceptions learners may have about a given topic.

4. Recording Strategy

Recording strategy means adopting the use of videos, audio or audio-visual resources to save the lesson for future use. This method is very useful for students with learning disabilities who may require more time to process information. They can re-watch later on and make use of pause, rewind and slow functions during the revision. This strategy is equally great for learners who may miss a class so that they can watch the video or listen to the audio tape to catch up with the lesson. Teachers should utilize multi-sensory modes of teaching which include visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile components.

5. Game Play Strategy

Game play involves implementing elements of games in a lesson. Games are effective ways to take a child's love for play and turn it into a love of learning. This can be as simple as creating a competition out of any given lesson. The classroom teacher can divide learners into two groups and have them compete in a trivia contest based on the lesson content. Give learners table groups and reward tables with points depending on how well they perform. Games can help learners focus and build essential skills. Games keep students motivated and engaged in the classroom. Game play strategy can make boring lessons fun by increasing the engagement and motivation of students.

6. Instructional Resource Strategy

Instructional resources are materials used in the classroom to attract learners' attention and immerse them more into a lesson. These materials refer to collection of teaching resources including animate and inanimate objects and human and non-human resources that teachers use in teaching and learning situations to help achieve desired learning objective. These materials include lecture notes, textbooks, electronic board, flannel board, projector, multimedia components, the teacher, students, and other resources. Instructional resources are aligned with all other elements in a course, including the learning objectives, assessment and activities. Instructional materials engage learners cognitively and affectively as learners are more likely to pay attention if they have something to look at. Some learners may benefit from visualising a concept to help them order ideas in their minds while some learners prefer learning visually than aurally.



7. Providing Recognition/Reinforcement Strategy

Reinforcement is an act of encouraging something or someone. Reinforcement strategy requires the classroom teacher to reward and encourage learners' efforts in the classroom. When learners are reinforced, their efforts into learning activities are encouraged. Special needs learners struggle to learn and improvements may not come easily. As a teacher, the more you learn about your learners' individual challenges, the better you will be able to identify small successes and, when they happen, they are worth celebrating. Learners' efforts and good behaviours should be recognised and encouraged by the classroom teacher while handling special needs learners. Reinforcement could be in the form of praise and rewards. Reinforcement works wonders for special needs learners. To help continue learning, it is pertinent to acknowledge even the smallest victory and offer rewards for each milestone.

8. Larger Text Size

This is a strategy that requires the teacher to print teaching materials or resources in larger or bolder formats so that learners with sight related issues could be carried along in the classroom. Some special needs learners find it very challenging reading a printed text of small print size. Learning activities should be printed in bold letters for clearer visualization by the learners. This strategy is equally beneficial to learners who sit at the back of the classroom as it will enable them to clearly see printed text with ease without having to stretch their necks.

9. Classroom Arrangement Strategy

Since learners with special needs require maximum attention from the classroom teacher, the sitting positions of these learners matter. Teachers may arrange the seats in a manner that they can move freely back and front the classroom. This will give the teacher an opportunity to have contact with every individual learner.

10. Shorten Activities

Special needs learners may have difficulty learning for a long time. Therefore, the classroom teacher should develop learning activities that are concise and short so that learners with special needs will not find classroom activities boring and challenging. With the use of acronyms, learners may learn to shorten phrases and sentences for easy memorization. For example, instead of struggling to memorising this list of mathematical terms= Bracket of Division, Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction; the teacher can tell the students to memorise the acronym BODMAS to aid comprehension and retention.

11. Peer Tutoring Strategy

This is one of the most effective strategies for learners with special needs in an inclusive classroom. Peer tutoring involves the learners studying in groups with the help and guidance of the teacher. When learners study in groups, their self



esteem increases, they learn to socialise and participate actively in the classroom. Parents and teachers should encourage special needs learners to study in groups. The more learners interact with others of their age, the more confident they become.

Crosscutting Teaching Strategies

Crosscutting means applying to the general. Crosscutting strategies are strategies that touch on the broader perspective or at every stage of the teaching scenario. They include those strategies whose relevance are not solely restricted to one category of learners but transcend or cut-across multiple learners. On the other hand, crosscutting strategies could also refer to strategies that can be applied to a range of courses and contexts to suit learners of all types. This is to say that crosscutting strategies are important strategies teachers can apply in most or all subject areas irrespective of individual differences of the learners. This type of strategy works for all learner type. It takes cognisance of learners' characteristics and challenges. Below are some of the crosscutting teaching strategies.

1. Intentional Mistakes Strategy

This strategy allows the teacher to make intentional mistakes just to see if learners will notice the mistakes. Intentional mistakes strategy is another way to get learners engaged in a lesson. Here, teachers can intentionally make mistakes in their powerpoint presentations or in lesson delivery; such mistakes like mispronunciations and misspellings to test learners' depth of knowledge of the course content as well as their active participation in the class. This strategy makes teaching moments memorable while keeping learners critically engaged. When learners know they are to look out for the mistakes in advance, it triggers curiosity in them thereby making them anxious to learn. Teachers can also offer a reward for the person who identifies the mistake. It can lead to critical discussion about common mistakes that learners make in a course. This strategy works for all types of learners and it could be applied in any subject area.

2. Dictation

Dictation is the act of dictating words to the learners by the teacher. In doing this, the teacher dictates some words for the learners to write down. These words could be typed, written down or recorded by the learners. Dictation helps to develop aural comprehension and assists in self evaluation. Dictation gives learners valuable practice in note taking. It helps to develop the four language skills in an integrative way. Dictation enhances short term memory by allowing learners to retain meaningful phrases or whole sentences before writing them down. Dictation promotes students' active participation and motivation. This approach enhances learners' listening skill and enables them to discriminate sounds and learn spellings. It equally improves logical thinking, stimulates creativity, improves concentration, promotes memory, enhances vocabulary growth and improves listening and reading comprehension.



3. Impromptu Assessment Strategy

Impromptu assessment strategy is a quick assessment strategy that takes place with no prior information. The assessment can be formative (could come at the beginning) or summative (could come at the end). The assessment could also be attached with rewards to keep students motivated to do well and be prepared for impromptu assessments at any given time. This strategy also keeps learners busy by tasking them to read and do their home work. The essence of the impromptu assessment strategy is to motivate learners to compete with themselves and others and also encourage them to read at all times.

4. Role Play Strategy

Role play is a teaching strategy that allows learners to act out a role in learning. It helps learners develop creative thinking. It gives learners practice in thinking real-life roles and dealing with real world problems. Role plays could be scripted or non-scripted. Scripted role plays are role plays from already made scripts or manuscripts while non-scripted role plays are acted without reading from any manuscript. A good role play instruction requires good preparation and management.

5. Use of modern technologies

Incorporating technology into teaching is a great way to actively engage learners, especially as young people are surrounded by digital media in the 21st century. With the advent of technological tools like computers, smart phones, smart boards, projectors, and various online teaching platforms, such as Zoom, Google classroom, Skype, Telegram, and YouTube, teachers could make their lessons interesting, realistic and creative by adopting technological tools in teaching. A reading activity that may be boring could be converted into a video and played for the learners to watch and interpret. This strategy will have learners engaged the more. By including video clips, news programmes, interview segments, and documentaries into lessons, teachers can help their learners become better listeners. The use of Information and Communication Technology places teachers behind while making learners the most important figure in the teaching exercise. Also, technology bridges the gap between and among varied learners in the classroom.

6. Acronym strategy

Acronym is a word formation process in which words are shortened to get new words. The use of acronyms may enable learners to shorten long sentences and paragraphs for easy memorization. For example, instead of memorising this list of mathematical terms= Bracket of Division, Multiplication, Addition and Subtraction; the teacher can coin the acronym BODMAS to aid comprehension and retention.

7. Picture or sentence clue

Picture or sentence clue is a strategy where a picture is associated with a write-up to describe it more and for easier correlation. Learners learning to read may be guided by picture clue while they perfect with time. Bringing dull academic concepts to life with visual and practical learning experiences and helping your



students to understand how their school activities apply to real world is a good way to promoting learning. For instance, the teacher can encourage the learners to get out of their seats with classroom experiments and mini field trips. The use of placards/real pictures or interactive whiteboard to display, audio clips and videos can help learners comprehend easily more especially autistic learners.

8. Giving marks for responding to questions and class participation

Poor students' achievement has often been attributed to lack of motivation and reward. Classroom participation results in insightful comments and interesting connections made by students which can foster a high level of energy and enthusiasm in the classroom environment. Teachers often include the assessment of classroom participation or contribution in an assessment strategy to encourage students to participate in class discussions and to motivate students to do better by reading ahead of lessons in preparation for class sessions. When teachers assess participation in classroom discussions or award marks to questions correctly answered, they encourage and reward the development of oral and group skills such as interacting and cooperating with peers and teachers.

9. Note taking strategy

Note taking helps learners pay keen attention to lessons. It promotes more thorough elaboration of ideas and encourages learners' efforts to organise materials about the learning content. Note taking helps students to process information more deeply. Most learners learn from taking notes and reviewing them. As teachers, showing concern for note taking in your classes, exhibit your interest in helping students' learn. When you are faced with learners who find your course challenging, asking them to bring their lecture note may be remedial as poor or no note may be the root of their academic problems.

10. Group work strategy

It is often said that "two good heads are better than one" and "more hands for lighter work." According to Caruso and Wooley (2008), group work helps learners develop host of skills that are increasingly important in the professional world. Group work can be a powerful strategy in the classroom as it addresses the gaps and misconceptions in knowledge by improving learners' public reasoning and team based skills. Group work as the name suggests requires learners working in groups to accomplish certain classroom tasks. Group work promotes interaction and retention among learners. Properly structured group work can reinforce skills specific to collaboration by allowing learners to tackle more complex problems than they could tackle on their own, delegate roles and responsibilities, plan and manage time, give and receive feedback on performance, develop stronger communications, feel challenged by peers' positive contributions and probably find intelligent peers to emulate. Group work is suitable for all types of learners in the classroom.



Challenges of teaching children with special needs in inclusive classrooms

While implementing various strategies for reinforcing learners in the classroom, teachers face challenges teaching and managing learners with special needs. Below are some of the challenges faced by teachers while interacting with special needs learners.

- 1. Slow pace in learning:** slow pace in learning is not a learning disability but a challenge in teaching learners with disabilities. It is the ability to acquire all academic skills at a pace way below that of an average learner. Children who for various reasons fall behind in their school work and require special teaching are slow learners. The brain development may be inadequate, causing delay in learning. Some of the learners may be short-sighted while some may have hearing difficulties which may hinder effective learning in an inclusive classroom. Learners with special needs require more time, more repetition and more resources from teachers to be successful learners since it takes them time to understand and grasp concepts.
- 2. Poor learning environment:** the practice of an inclusive education gives all learners the fair chance of being taught together in a normal classroom. Based on this style of teaching and learning, the normal classroom is expected to be equipped with the necessary teaching and learning materials to cater for all learner type irrespective of their needs. Some of the public schools do not have classrooms with proper doors and windows. Many learners sit on the floor due to a lack of desks. A classroom is a place where students with developmental disabilities feel safe and happy. Therefore, a good learning environment helps learners with special needs to concentrate on their classroom activities while improving their academic performance. But most times, teaching materials are not available and even when they are available, they are either old or insufficient.
- 3. Parental issues:** parents expect too much from classroom teachers in terms of improving the skills and capabilities of their children. Many parents are anxious to see developmental changes in their children soon after they start school. Some parents see teachers as solution to their children's learning difficulties. By doing so they fail to understand that they too have a part to play in the learning process. If parents accept that their children have learning difficulties then it becomes much easier, but most of the time parents do not accept that their children are special need learners. Some go as far as attributing their child's condition to some sort of witchcraft. Some even go as far as forcing their children into becoming medical doctors or Engineers without considering whether they are academically capable to offer such professional courses.
- 4. Behavioural issues:** teaching learners with special needs can be challenging as majority of the children may have little bit of behavioural issues. Sometimes they do not obey instructions or pay attention in the classroom.



Some of them may have mood swing and this may be because they are aware of their shortcomings and their difficulties. Some of them also have low self esteem and find it difficult to understand anything in the classroom, thereby affecting their performance.

5. **Insufficient teaching time:** teaching learners with special needs requires patience. Some of the learners are slow learners who may need time to understand classroom instruction. Therefore, the time allotted to courses/subjects is not enough to attend to special needs learners in an inclusive classroom as teachers struggle to cover the scheme of work within the allotted time.

Special needs education calls for a paradigm shift

The paradigm shift shall be discussed in terms of pedagogy, curriculum design, instructional technology, teaching aids, learning outcome and evaluation.

Teachers play major role in teaching learners with special needs as they are responsible for instructional delivery while combining various strategies to achieve intended instructional outcomes suggested in the school curriculum. It is therefore important for teachers to incorporate different types of teaching strategies such as the ones mentioned in the body of this chapter for a holistic and goal oriented teaching and learning in an inclusive classroom. Teachers may not change the recommended curriculum but can be flexible in choosing the course contents and materials suitable for all learners.

Appropriate curriculum design for learners with special needs that involve accommodation of content, teaching and learning strategies in a learner-centred environment is necessary. It is therefore important to note that accommodation does not mean changing of the educational input crafted for general curriculum, but a modification of instructional methods and strategies which are targeted to meet individual needs of learners with special needs. The curriculum designers should bear in mind the practice of an inclusive classroom when designing the curriculum so that the curriculum would be designed in isolation but in accordance with the realities of the classroom.

Special needs learners need to be encouraged to pursue education by creating an environment that is suitable for learning for them. Normal learners may cope without learning materials and resources but special needs learners cannot cope without instructional materials and resources that aid learning as they need and rely on these resources to effectively participate in the classroom. The National Policy on Education made numerous recommendations for instructional materials and tools to help learners with special needs function in an inclusive setting. It is important to help these learners recognise their strengths despite their disadvantages.

The mode of assessing learners with special needs should differ significantly from the assessment of other learners in the classroom. Knowing the appropriate evaluation method that best suits learners with special needs is key to their



performing well in any lesson. The evaluation could be in form of questioning, completing a task, role play or class participation other than the traditional method of writing examinations.

Implications of teaching learners with special needs with unique and crosscutting strategies

The implication of this chapter will be looked at in three perspectives; implications for teachers, learners and the learning content.

Suffice it to say that learners with special needs often do not go extra mile, pay closer attention to their teachers or improve motivation on their own; they need the help of their classroom teachers to cope with their studies. Teaching special needs learners with unique and crosscutting strategies will necessitate moving away from autonomous teaching practices and incorporating new strategies to teaching, including a teacher commitment to personalised learning for learners where learning experiences are learner-oriented. Most of these learners may be unaware of their talents and skills but with the teacher adopting innovative and unique strategies to teach and coach them, they will realise their potentials and learn with ease.

The implication for learners with special needs is that they will continuously improve academically, participate more actively in the classroom and understand the learning content better when taught with unique and crosscutting strategies. The goal of special needs education is for all learners to be educated and have quality education that enables them to achieve their full potentials while providing a solid foundation for adult life.

Also, by outlining the various unique and crosscutting teaching strategies for teaching learners with special needs, the delivering of the learning content will be more satisfactory and advantageous to all categories of learners.

Conclusion

Special needs education aims at providing assistance and opportunities for learners who have learning challenges to better learn and develop within and outside the classroom. But these learners most times face daunting challenges within the education system, particularly in an inclusive classroom where all learners are mixed-up irrespective of their disorders. Teachers need to be able to provide the necessary support students need to overcome their challenges. Using different mediums and strategies to present information and engage students is important. Some students may be visual learners, some may grasp information better when it is presented through text or orally, some may do best with the combination of the above and some are gifted/talented. It is better to diversify instruction for a better inclusive education. This chapter discussed some of the teaching strategies teachers can adopt in teaching learners irrespective of their disorders. These unique and crosscutting teaching strategies outlined in this chapter are effective for teaching learners with special needs. But no teaching



strategy is the best; it depends on the teacher's resourcefulness or initiative and the learners' characteristics. When deciding which strategy to adopt in teaching learners with special needs, it is important to remember that in as much as innovative strategies aid effective teaching and learning, they are only means to an end and not an end in and of themselves. Teachers should select teaching strategies that will best help learners with special needs understand the learning contents and that will help facilitate learning in an inclusive classroom. It is also pertinent to remember that without professionalism and competence on the side of the teacher, even the most effective teaching strategy will not be successful in teaching learners with special needs.

Suggestions

1. Teachers should know their learners and what their needs are. It is one thing to know the needs of your learners and it is another thing to work hard to meet their needs. Teachers are care-givers and as such, they should be ready and willing to assist and deliver.
2. Teachers at all levels are encouraged to adopt innovative and unique strategies in meeting the different characteristics of learners in their classes by introducing various unique and innovative class activities and tasks.
3. Teachers should learn to encourage their learners' efforts and good behaviours. Appreciating good behaviour does not only imply buying gifts or giving money. Reinforcement could be in forms of praise, clapping or singing for the learner who demonstrated the desired behaviour, shaking of hands with the teacher, or/and any other form of reinforcement that does not require money.

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