

**EFFECT OF STUDY SKILL COUNSELLING PROGRAMME ON
ACADEMIC ADJUSTMENT OF SLOW LEARNERS IN
SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN
NSUKKA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ENUGU STATE**

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Abstract

The study determined the effect of study skill counselling programme on academic adjustment of slow learners in secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. Quasi experimental pre-test, post-test design was employed in the study. One research question and two null hypotheses guided the study. The population of the study was all slow learners in secondary schools in the study area. The sample for the study was 32 slow learners. Multi-stage sampling technique was utilized for the study. Instrument used for data collection was "Academic Adjustment Rating Scale" developed by the researcher. The instrument was face validated by experts in Faculty of Education, University of Nigeria Nsukka. Cronbach Alpha Statistic was used to test for the internal consistency of the instrument and a reliability of 0.82 was obtained. Mean and t-test statistic were used for analysis of data. The findings of the study among other things revealed that the intervention programme was effective in improving academic adjustment of slow learners and there is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of male and female slow learners. Based on the findings of the study, recommendations were made amongst which is that study skill counselling programme should be utilized in secondary schools in Nigeria to help the slow learners overcome their problems.

Keywords: Study Skills, Counselling, Academic Adjustment, Slow Learners

Introduction

Education is a vital instrument for all round development of individuals in Nigeria. One of the objectives of secondary education as stated in the National Policy on Education is to inspire students for self-improvement and achievement of excellence (FRN, 2009). All educational processes aim at all round development of individuals. In the education industry, the most

important factor is the learner. To ensure maximum success of the education industry, every attention and resources on service delivery is focused on and tailored to meet the needs of the learner ((Gwany, 2014). Thus, it is expected that a learner should perform well in academic activities such as obtaining good grades in school subjects. If a secondary school student performs poorly in academic subjects like Mathematics, English and other compulsory subjects, it bothers both the parents and teachers so much knowing fully well that the student must obtain at least credit pass in all these subjects for him to further his education. Observations have shown that more often than not, teachers punish the student who cannot learn at the same frequency with their class mates and call them all manner of names like “good for nothing”, “empty head”, “coco nut head” and so on. All these names and many more affect their self- esteem, emotional stability, and academic adjustment. Consequently, most of these students find the school environment hostile for study. In psychological literature, students who perform below average in the class and therefore need to be helped to develop their study skills are referred to as learning disabled, under achievers or slow learners.

Scholars have articulated different definitions of slow learners. Chintamanika (1992) defined slow learner as children who cannot keep up scholastically with their age mates. Thus, slow learners are students who find it difficult to keep pace with their classmates because they are below average cognitive abilities. On the other hand, Reddy and Ramar (2003) argued that slow learners are students whose ability is not quite so limited but nevertheless who have more difficulty in learning than average students. Abang (1995) and Woods (1998) earlier described who slow learners are by identifying some their characteristics. According to the scholars, the characteristics of slow learners include: low test scores, low self-esteem, constant failure in class, work on all tasks slowly and they have few internal strategies. Also, their ability to retain and recall information for short periods is highly impaired and they find it difficult to relate events to each other and this makes them rely heavily on external help since they lack confidence in their problem solving skills. Inefficiency and slowness are also traits of slow learners. This why Urusulu and Eluwa (2013) noted that most slow learners are bored and restless in the class, sometimes hang their head down and wonder when the teacher would shut up and leave the class. Contextually, slow learners are students in secondary schools who have problem with their academics resulting from inability to learn quickly. These students cannot keep pace with their class mate academically because they are limited in their capacities and this impedes their school progress and personal development. However, these

students are not disabled but struggle to cope with the traditional academic demands of a regular classroom.

It should be pointed out at this juncture that slowness in learning could be identified in a child right from when he/she is in nursery or primary school. Early identification and correction of this trait in a child before he/she enters secondary school will help in the child's academic adjustment. Despite the fact that the various governments have favourably responded to the United Nations conventions on the need for observance of children's right and provision for education for all (EFA), the slow learners especially those in secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State still lag behind in academic activities. Observations from individuals and electronic media reveal that the results of West African Senior Secondary Certificate Examination of candidates who obtained credit passes in at least five subjects, including English language and Mathematics over a period of ten years is on the down trend. This could be attributed to the fact that some students are slow learners and lack study skills that are meant for academic excellence. Also, the results of candidates who sat for Joint Admission and Matriculation Board this year is very poor. Additionally, most of these slow learners drop out of school and end up in mechanic villages, hawking on the streets, or doing menial jobs. Some of them engage in anti-social behaviours such as prostitution, armed robbery, and drug abuse. Consequently, most of the in-school slow learners patronize miracle centres where they cheat in order to pass external examinations. It would therefore appear that the slow learners lack study skills that are needed for effective study. It seems also that teachers and parents do not have patience with them because they require more time to internalize teaching.

To study means to make deliberate effort to remember and use what you have read or learned. Another name for study is careful reading (Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya, 2010). Ikechukwu-Ilomuanya further asserted that it is expected that when one is studying, the person should understand the main ideas of what he/she is reading and the details or examples which support these main ideas. Also one is expected to remember what he /she is reading. Skill could be seen as ability to carry out a task with determined result within a given time. On the other hand, study skills are the approaches that are applied to learning that enable a learner to learn effectively. Study skills are related to study habits. Iyamu and Alude (2014) posited that study habits are learning tendencies that enable students to work privately. They could mean the systematic way the students go about their studies in order to achieve excellent results. Effective study habits are measured through students' reports

in examination or assessment. This suggests that study habits are attitudes, behaviour, and styles the learners adopt in the process of learning.

Bad study habits are portrayed by learners in the process of learning in the following ways: avoidance and delay, noise making during study periods or discussion of irrelevant topics during study time, ineffective time management, inappropriate techniques for review of learners' materials, incomplete notes or bad note taking, use of unfamiliar styles of studying and drug use and abuse (Joe, 2004) The scholar further asserted that learning without thought is a labour lost. Oyetunde (2000) posited that for effective study to take place, one should answer literal questions on what he/she has read, remember and tell in his own ways what he has read and answer inferential questions on what he has read. Oyetunde further outlined some methods of study which include: SQ4R and SCQP methods.

In SQ4R method of study, "S" stands for survey, "Q", question and "4R" stands for read, recite, repeat and review. On the other hand, in SCQP method, "S" stands for summarize, "C" clarify, "Q" Question and "P" stands for predict. Joe (2004) supported the above illustration by asserting that students good study habit must include forming questions on every topic and answering the questions. On the other hand, Hassan and Sunda (2004) argued that activities a learner must take to have good study include: regular class attendance, good note taking, good study place, concentration, development of memory and spaced revised. In line with the above argument, Ikechukwu-Iloмуanya (2010) contended that things that are necessary for effective study include: taking responsibility for your study, deciding where to study, when to study, how to study, establishing a purpose for study and working with others. Thus, study skills will help the slow learners to develop an inner conviction that they have the ability to practice, retain and recognize learning materials. Study skills are related to study habits. There is need to help the slow learners to break the circle of failure using varied techniques that foster their learning of concepts that culminates in academic adjustment.

Adjustment is renewal to emphasize individuals struggle to get along or survive in his or her environment (Nweze, 2001). According to Nachi (2003), adjustment is a psychological term that relates to an adaptive capacity of the organism to an environment. The adaptive change brings an individual's behaviour into conformity with the norms of a social group, institution or set up. Adjustment involves how people live a healthy and emotionally balanced lifestyle. It also involves how people relate well with the demands of the individuals to strive to satisfy their personal needs and as well deal with the demands and constraints that are placed on them by their environment such as school. Ifelunni, Ncheke and Enajedu (2015) posited that adolescents need

adjustment to enable them function maximally in the society. The scholars further stated that since the progress of any nation depends on the maximum exploitation of its human resources, the maintenance of healthy living among its people thus reflects the health of that nation.

Academic adjustment is very vital to slow learners in secondary schools. Ikechukwu-Illomuanya (2010) defined academic adjustment as a process in which a child attempts to adapt to the demands of the school environment. It is the extent to which a child becomes interested, comfortable, successful, and engages in his or her academic activities. Academic adjustment in the school is reflected in the degree to which the child develops positive versus negative perceptions toward academic activities (Rod & Haig, 2011). Thus, a child feels comfortable, or distressed when performing some activities in the school and as well become involved or avoids school activities. It consists of two processes, that is, fitting oneself into a given academic activity and changing academic activity to fit one's needs. The student who achieves what is expected of him/her is considered adjusted. On the other hand, a student who does not learn and fails to achieve what he is expected to achieve is considered to be maladjusted. An adjusted adolescent is one who attacks problems directly, accepts and tolerates normal amount of frustration and acts rationally (Rod & Haig, 2011). Contextually, academic adjustment refers to the ability of the slow learners to develop interest and achieve academic success in secondary schools. It should be pointed out that some indices of academic adjustment include: interest in performing academic activities, succeeding in performing those academic activities, passing examinations, and participating actively in the class.

It should be pointed out that gender may be a factor in the academic adjustment of the slow learners in secondary schools. Gender could be seen as a socio- cultural construct of ascribing characters and roles to sex, such as male or female. The study will find out whether male or female will respond more to the treatment. Also, the place of location in the academic adjustment of slow learners is important to this study. Location could be seen as a situation of an area which can be classified as rural or urban. Some slow learners are found in schools that are located in rural areas and others in schools in urban areas. It is therefore necessary to find out whether slow learners in rural areas will experience academic adjustment more than their counterparts in urban areas. The slow learners have special needs that ought to be addressed using counselling intervention to get the best learning outcome out of them. Carew (2003) however suggested that these students need cognitive small push approach which implies that someone who is a slow learner could be assisted with good study skills to have improved academic

achievement. The need therefore arises to utilize study skill counselling programme to help slow learners in secondary schools to develop academic adjustment.

Counselling is a process of helping an individual to develop and accept an integrated picture of his aptitude, abilities, interest and personal needs so that he/she will understand himself or herself, achieve personal needs, and adjustment to the environment (Ikechukwu-Iloмуanya, 2010). Thus, counselling helps in total development of the individual. It facilitates maximum adjustment that guarantees purposeful life full of excitement. Carew and Tukur (1994) and Fajnyomi (1997) observed that study skills counselling involves providing systematic coordinated instructions and teaching how to gain greater access to learning materials and developing better study skills. The implication is that students become more confident and develop better self image and less anxious about examinations.

Research Question

The following research question guided the study.

1. What is the effect of the study skill treatment on the academic adjustment of secondary school slow learners?

Hypotheses

For the purpose of this study, the following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

1. There is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of male and female slow learners.
2. There is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of slow learners from rural and urban areas.

Methodology

The study employed quasi-experimental one group pre-test and post-test design. The justification for the choice of this design for the study was informed by the fact that it is valuable in assessing the effect of treatment (independent variable). The population of the study consisted of all slow learners in 30 public secondary schools in Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. It was not possible to get the actual total number of the slow learners in the study area because it is not documented. However, the school guidance counsellors helped the researcher to identify the slow learners in the schools.

A sample of 32 slow learners was selected for the study. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the sample size. Firstly, stratified

random sampling technique was used. The Local Government Area was stratified into two (rural and urban areas). Secondly, purposive sampling technique was used to select SSII slow learners from one mixed secondary school with the highest number of slow learners from each of the stadium in the local government area through the help of school guidance counsellors. This consisted of 16 boys and 16 girls. The rationale for using only SSII class for the study was informed by the fact that it is a preparatory class for external examinations. The justification for using the same number of boys and girls for the study was to ensure equal representation of gender.

The instrument used for data collection for the study was Academic Adjustment Rating Scale (AARS) designed by the researcher. The instrument consisted of 30 items arranged in respect of 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA: 4), Agree (A: 3), Disagree (D:2) and Strongly Disagree (SD:1). The scoring system was reversed during post- test. SA (1), A (2), D (3), SD (4). Face validity of the instrument was established. The instrument was further subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha Statistics. The reliability coefficient yielded 0.78 which was considered reliable.

A pre-test was administered at the beginning of the programme in order to ascertain the participants' level of academic achievement. The participants were thereafter exposed to study skill treatment for a period of four weeks after which a post-test was administered to them to determine the effect of the treatment on the participants. Mean scores were used to answer the research question while t-test statistic was used to test the hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What is the effect of the treatment on academic adjustment of slow learners?

Table 1: Showing Effect of Treatment on the Academic Adjustment of Slow Learners

| Period | N | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|-----------|----|-------|--------------------|
| Pre-test | 32 | 58.7 | 3.34 |
| Post-test | 32 | 90.21 | 5.57 |

Results in Table 1 show that the participants obtained 58.7 mean score in pre-test 90.21 in post-test. The participants mean score in post-test is greater than that of the pre-test. High mean score in post-test means academic adjustment. Studying This is an indication that the participants responded well to study skill programme.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant mean difference in the academic adjustment post- test group mean scores of male and female slow learners.

Table 2: Showing Academic Adjustment Post-test Group Mean Scores of Male and Female Slow Learners.

| Gender | Mean | N | Std | df | t-cal | t-crit |
|--------|------|----|------|----|-------|--------|
| Male | 87.7 | 16 | 8.61 | 28 | -0.49 | 0.63 |
| Female | 88.9 | 16 | 4.21 | | | |

Evidence from Table 2 reveals that t-value of 0.49 is less than t-critical value of 0.63 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is no significant difference in the post test group mean scores of male and female slow learners in secondary schools in Nsukka LGA.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of slow learners from rural and urban areas.

Table 3: Showing Academic Adjustment Post-test Mean Scores of Slow Learners from Rural and Urban Areas.

| Class | N | Mean | Std | df | t-cal | t-crit |
|-------|----|------|------|----|-------|--------|
| Rural | 16 | 88.3 | 6.68 | 58 | -1.03 | 0.31 |
| Urban | 16 | 90.4 | 9.38 | | | |

Result in Table 3 reveals that t-value -1.03 is far below the critical t-value of 0.31 at 0.05 level of significance. The null hypotheses which states that there is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of slow learners from rural and urban areas is accepted. This implies that there is no empirical evidence to conclude that slow learners from urban areas responded more to the treatment.

Discussions

In Table 1, the academic adjustment group mean score of the participants was low before treatment and high after treatment. The high mean score in post-test shows that study skill counselling programme was effective in modifying academic maladjustment of slow learners in secondary schools. The study corroborates with the findings of Fajonyomi (1997) and Carew (2003) that good study skills are effective in improving academic performance in anxiety ridden students. This observation is also in consonance with the observations of Oyetunde (2000) and Ikechukwu-Iloмуanya (2010) who maintained that study skills help students to develop an inner conviction that

they have the ability to practice, retain and recognize learning materials. This finding also tallies with the findings of Ifelunni, Ncheke and Enajdu (2014), and Ursula and Eluwa (2014) who asserted that teaching students study habits promotes their academic adjustment.

Result in Table 2 indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test group mean scores of male and female slow learners after treatment. One would have expected that the scores of males will differ from that of the female slow learners, but there is no empirical evidence that shows that female participants did not respond in the same way to the study skill treatment.

Evidence in Table 3 indicates that there is no significant difference in the academic adjustment post-test mean scores of slow learners from rural and urban areas. However, there is no empirical evidence to conclude that slow learners from urban areas responded more to the treatment.

Conclusion

Conclusively, the author maintains that study skill counselling programme is effective in modifying academic maladjustment and promote academic adjustment among slow learners in secondary schools. Its efficacy in equipping slow learners in secondary schools with relevant study skills that guarantee academic adjustment has been empirically proven. Therefore, study skill counselling programme should be utilized in secondary schools in Nigeria to help all categories of learners to adjust properly in schools. This will undoubtedly help them to function adequately in the society.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Seminars and workshops on study skills should be part of the school programme for both students, teachers and parents.
2. Study skills should be taught as a subject in schools and made compulsory for all students.
3. The school counselors should be organizing study skill programme for students especially the slow learners on regular bases.
4. More counselors should be employed and redeployed to secondary schools by the government to help the slow learners overcome their academic maladjustment.

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