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INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF DEAF-AND-DUMB STUDENTS IN VISUAL ARTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO, NIGERIA

Akaninyene John Sampson
Department of Fine and Industrial Arts
Faculty of Environmental Studies
University of Uyo, Uyo
Nigeria
+234 706 447 7397
ajohnsampson@yahoo.com

Abstract

The deaf-and-dumb in many societies, especially, the developing countries, are overly neglected in spite of the fact that they deserve as much love, care and education as do the normal citizens. This study investigated the effects of inclusive classroom on the academic performance of deaf-and-dumb students in Visual Arts in the University of Uyo considering their gender. Quasi-experimental research design was used for the study. The entire population of all the15 Year 2 students studying Fine and Industrial Arts at University of Uyo, comprising 6 deaf-and-dumb students (4 males; 2 females) and 9 students without disabilities (6 males; 3 females) was used as the study sample. Researcher-developed instrument: Achievement Test on Visual Arts (ATVA), a 10-item practical test designed to measure the students' achievement in the five areas of Visual Arts – Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textiles and Graphics – offered in the University was used for data collection. ATVA had a reliability coefficient of .82 determined using test retest method after face and content validation. Data generated were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and independent t-test statistics. The results showed that deaf-and-dumb students do not differ significantly in their academic performance from their classmates without disability when integrated into inclusive education plan. Also, gender was not a significant determinant of students' academic performance given the inclusive education environment. Consequently, it has been recommended, among others, that teachers, school administrators and education planners should embrace inclusion

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education, and desist from discriminating and stigmatizing the deaf-and-dumb learners.

Keywords: Inclusive classroom, deaf-and-dumb students' performance, Visual Arts

Introduction

The deaf-and-dumb in many societies, especially, the developing countries such as Nigeria, are exceedingly neglected and stigmatized. Consequent upon this development, a teeming population of this group of individuals resort to begging on the streets, city gates, road junctions, especially at traffic lights intersections, and many such locations that are thickly populated. Parents, relatives and neighbours who, themselves, may be poor, illiterate or semi-literate, usually do have little or nothing to support them, but take the cheaper option of sending these rather unfortunate ones to the streets. In any culture, the deaf-and-dumb deserve as much love, care and education as do the normal citizens. In support of the documented provisions by the United Nations (UN) entitled 'children with disabilities to a full and decent life…which would facilitate their active participation in the community', Barak Obama, former president of the United States submits: "The future belongs to young people with an education and the imagination to create" (Obama, 2009). This acclamation by Barak Obama presupposes that every child of the world, irrespective of social class or health circumstances – abilities or disabilities – is at liberty to benefit from, and effectively participate in, sustainable education.

The exclusion of children with disabilities from education has historically been rooted in false assumptions about their ability to benefit from, and effectively participate in, education (Booth, 2003). Attitudinal barriers created by negative beliefs among teachers and school administrators, parents, and peers, persist in all societies and continue to hamper the effective inclusion of persons with disabilities in education (Wheeler, n.d.).

Socially, the gap between hearing children and deaf children widen with increasing age; this, Marschark (2007) observes, "can influence a deaf child's chances for success in academic and social circles, and has the potential of creating difficulty in integrating this category of citizens in the academic and productive agenda of the

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society". Thus, the United Nations Division for Social Policy Development (DSPD), Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), (n.d.) observes that for them, "marginalization within the education system often marks the beginning of a lifetime of marginalization in mainstream society, contributing also to the disproportionate representation of persons with disabilities among the poor". However, in recent times, provision has been made by the Nigerian government for the formal education of the deaf-and-dumb in the society. Apart from the segregation model where the deaf-and-dumb spend their time in a separate school, there is the improved development where these students spend all, or most, of the school day with non-deaf students - this is the inclusive education plan.

The right to inclusive education, according to Reyes (n.d.), means transforming culture, policy and practice in all formal and informal educational environments to ensure education is for all learners. Under International Human Rights Law, particularly, Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, asserts that, states are legally obliged to include children with disabilities in education. The full inclusion of persons with disabilities in education, according to the Division for Social Policy Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations, is critical for a number of reasons, some of which are:

i. Education contributes to personal well-being and is the gateway to full participation in society.
ii. Education is an investment in the future and contributes to both social development and human capital formation;
iii. Inclusive education promotes inclusive and tolerant societies, with benefits for students with and without disabilities, families of students with disabilities, and the larger community;
iv. Excluding persons with disabilities, particularly children with disabilities, from education has high social and economic costs that endure for a lifetime;
v. Countries cannot achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without ensuring access to education for children with disabilities.

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Inclusion is a philosophy that seeks the acceptance of all learners (Henderson & Lasley, n.d.). It is concerned with developing a sense of belonging, value and being valued as well as accepting differences (Allen and Cowdery, 2011; Salend, 2010). In the view of Booth and Ainscow (2000), inclusion in education, is concerned with breaking down barriers to learning and increasing participation for all students, treating all learners on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, the inclusive education plan for the deaf-and-dumb is intended to address the differences and individual needs of this class of people. In this process, individually-planned, systematically-monitored teaching methods, adaptive materials, accessible settings and other interventions are designed to help students achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency in the school and society than they would achieve with a typical classroom education (Bruner, 2009). Since there are varying degrees of hearing loss – slight, mild, moderate, severe or profound – the inclusive plan requires a considerable modification of the curriculum. The moderate, severe and profound categories of the deaf-and-dumb are often mixed up in the same learning situation in the developing countries, including Nigeria, probably, due to insufficient infrastructure and funds.

Classroom inclusion, according to Salend (2001), is a philosophy that brings learners, families, educators and community members together to create classrooms based on acceptance, belonging and community. The broad benefit of classroom inclusion resides in the strategy of designing supports which are built around innovative approaches to learning, differentiated instruction and curricular adaptations for every learner in the classroom (Lipsky and Gartner, 1997). In this sense, classroom inclusion is also a philosophy which allows all learners to be valued and supported to participate in whatever they do.

There are relatively great potentials in enlisting the deaf-and-dumb in the Visual Arts academic plan, particularly, because this branch of study is basically practice-oriented in nature, whereby instructional delivery requires visual demonstrations and physical manipulations. In University of Uyo, Nigeria, for instance, the Department of Fine and Industrial Arts has five specialties, namely, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textiles and Graphics. In the first and second years of the four-year training programme, students are exposed to the available art

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skills in all the five areas of specialty, and are required to specialize in one of them from the third year.

The ability to acquire any skill is the result of a considerable period of apprenticeship which integrates tutelage and praxis. Developing and acquiring skill in Visual Arts, among other things, create opportunities for the deaf-and-dumb to, inter alia, make wealth for sustainable self-sufficiency. This is in line with Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Education (2004) provision in the National Policy on Education which objectives centre on: the training of the mind in the understanding of the world around; the acquisition of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies by students through art, that would help them in the development of their societies; ensuring that the Nigerian culture is kept alive through art, music and other cultural studies in the schools as well as through local, state and national festivals of art; the inculcation of the right type of attitudes and values for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society.

Training in Painting as a course of study exposes the learner to diverse themes which can demonstrated with various materials and techniques. In an inclusive learning environment, the learners are encouraged to explore the various ideas in a number of materials and techniques, some of which are oil-on-canvas, water colour, pastel, acrylic, mixed media and digital media. In these media and techniques, learners enjoy outdoor painting, especially, when working individually (fig. 1).

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Fig. 1. Outdoor painting
Source: Dr. A. John Sampson's photo library

However, they tend to exhibit spirited efforts when they work in groups, particularly, in areas such as mural painting (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. A mural painting by a group of students in University of Uyo, Nigeria, 2017 (Source: Dr. A. John Sampson's photo library)

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Other options available include the production of stained glass decorations, mural paintings and decorations on commercial vehicles such as vans and trucks (preferably, in alliance with a graphic artist). Educators can integrate art activities and experiences that involve pairing or grouping in the production of works such as a mural. The learners would benefit from these opportunities by learning from one another and will experience the pleasure of working together.

Sculpture is a three-dimensional specialty of the Visual Arts which involves carving, modelling and construction, among others. It presents an array of artistic engagements in sculptural practice with a variety of production materials, techniques and processes. These artistic engagements include, but are not limited to, wood carving, modelling in cement (fig. 3), fibre glass or allied material; metal casting, metal fabrication including metal furniture-making, concrete technology, gas welding, smithery and jewellery. Others are metal design, metal welding and construction, garden sculptures and water fountains design and production.

Fig. 3. Mother and Child: Modelling in cement (a student's project), 2013. (Source: Dr. A. John Sampson's photo library)

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Graphics are pictorial arts in two-dimensional form, and generally take in such forms as drawing, painting, prints, typography and photography. Specifically, the term graphics is restricted to prints and, by extension, to artworks created for reproduction by a printing process, analogue or digital. However, in the digital process, or computer graphics, the production of images on computers can be used in any medium. Graphics is both a Fine Art and an Applied Art. As a fine art, students are engaged in printmaking (fig. 4), sign writing and hand-crafted invitation/greetings card production, among others. From the perspective of Applied Arts, the learners are engaged in the production of digital illustrations, book cover designs, banners, posters and billboards, among others.

Fig. 4. A student pulling a print
Source: Dr. A. John Sampson's photo library

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Textiles: At the mention of the word textile or textiles, what readily comes to mind is cloth or clothing. However, textiles mean more than that, it is the art and process of creating designs and structures for knitted, woven and non-woven fabrics (Sampson, 2018). Textiles also involve the ornamentation of these knitted, woven and non-woven materials. The learner is trained to know what a finished textile will look like – to have a profound discernment of the procedural features of production and the properties of fibre, yarn and dyes.

Fig. 5. A deaf-and-dumb girl weaving with a loom
(Source: https://www.medbox.org/education/ toolboxes/preview?q=)

Textiles also engage the production of tufted designs and art forms, dyeing, designing and printing and, sometimes, sewing of fabrics, production of patterns for cloth, household textiles and decorative textiles and related craft such as carpets and curtains. Appliqué is a technique of cutting fabric into desired shapes and then sewing them onto a larger piece of fabric to form a design or pattern and beaded artworks, such as the beaded chandelier (fig. 6), are other interesting areas of textile production.

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Fig. 6. Beaded chandelier (a student's project), 2018
Source: Dr. A. John Sampson's photo library

Ceramics is a three-dimensional art and technology; and originally the art of making pottery, ceramics is now a generic term for the science of manufacturing articles prepared from pliable, earthy materials such as clay, and hardened through firing. In the ceramics studio, students are given the opportunity to produce items ranging from tea pots, saucers and dishes to majolica. They are also engaged in making ceramic tiles, sanitary wares and vases of different sizes and designs, as well as fabricating such ceramics tools and equipment as the potter's wheels, kilns, and blungers. Students are, as well, trained in preparing refractories to be added to clay bodies to enhance vitrification, that is, loss of clay porosity during a firing process.

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Challenges of the Deaf-and-dumb in the Inclusive Education System

Both the teachers and the deaf-and-dumb students have their measures of challenges in the course of the inclusive learning programme. While the teachers feel that their inclusion in a regular class slows down the progress of the normal students and creates a negative impact on the academic progress of learners without disabilities, the deaf-and-dumb students, on their part, are faced with the challenge of competition. However, it is worthy to note that learners without disabilities sometimes support and encourage their classmates with disabilities. Some deaf-and-dumb students often engage their counterparts without disability in the acquisition of competency in the deaf sign language. This way, the students without disabilities who acquire this skill, would be able to translate whatever communication there was in the class to the deaf-and-dumb student. Salend (2008) corroborates this view by asserting that in an inclusive classroom, learners without disabilities grow in their commitment to their own moral principles and learn to become advocates for their peers with disabilities.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is hinged on John Bandura's Social Learning theory (1963). According to Bandura (1963), learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context; and can occur purely through observation or direct instruction, even in the absence of motor reproduction or direct reinforcement. In other word, people learn through modelling others. From observing others, one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. This theory is releant to the present study in that the positive social and psychological effects of inclusive learning on the deaf-and-dumb in a classroom situation allows for healthy interactions among the deaf and dumb students and the normal students. During such interactions the deaf and dumb learn both cognitive and real-life social skills through observing and imitating their non-deaf and dumb colleagues who serve as their models.

Statement of the Problem

In all cultures children with disabilities are endangered species. For them, marginalization within the education system often marks the

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beginning of a lifetime of marginalization in mainstream society. The exclusion of children with disabilities from education has been rooted in false assumptions about their ability to benefit from, and effectively participate in, education. In recent times in Nigeria, provision has been made by the Nigerian government for the formal education of the deaf-and-dumb in the society. Apart from the segregation model where the deaf-and-dumb spend their time in a separate school, there is the improved development where these students spend all, or most, of the school day with non-deaf students in an inclusive classroom environment. The inclusive education plan for the deaf-and-dumb is intended to address the differences and individual needs of this class of people; and there are relatively great potentials in enlisting the deaf-and-dumb in the Visual Arts academic plan, particularly, because this branch of study is basically practice-oriented in nature, requiring visual demonstrations and physical manipulations. Engaging the deaf-and-dumb in the Visual Arts through the inclusive education plan, therefore, becomes quite obvious. The problem then is: How would inclusive classroom differentiate the mean performance of deaf-and-dumb students in Visual Arts from that of their normal colleagues? This study sought for plausible answer to this question.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives guided this study:

1. To compare the mean performance score of deaf-and-dumb students in Visual Arts with that of their normal colleagues in inclusive classroom.
2. To compare e the mean performance score male and female students in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for answering:

1. What difference exist between the mean performance scores of deaf-and-dumb students and that of their normal colleagues in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom?
2. How does gender differentiate the mean performance score of students in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom?

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Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha:

1. There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of deaf-and-dumb students and that of their normal colleagues in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom.
2. There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of male and female students in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom.

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be of benefit to the deaf-and-dumb children, their parents, educators and the government. To the deaf-and-dumb they will help their parents see the need of taking advantage of available inclusive education facilities in their locality rather than sending them to the streets to beg for alms. The outcome of this study, if positive will help educators overcome their negative perceptions that inclusion of deaf-and-dumb children in a regular class will slow down the progress of the normal students and create a negative impact on the academic progress of learners without disabilities, hence, give every learner the opportunity to learn irrespective of their physical status. The findings will also impress on the government of Nigeria to enforce the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and, hence, include children with disabilities in all education programs.

Scope of the Study

This study was delimited to the deaf-and-dumb students studying Fine and Industrial Arts at University of Uyo, Nigeria. In addition, only Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textiles and Graphics components of visual arts were considered.

Research Methodology

This study was a quasi-experimental research conducted in the department of Fine and Industrial Arts at University of Uyo, Nigeria during the 2018/2019 academic session; and the design adopted was a post-test only design. The population of this study consisted of all the15 Year 2 students studying Fine and Industrial Arts at University of Uyo, comprising 6 deaf-and-dumb students (4 males; 2 females) and 9 students without disabilities (6 males; 3 females). The entire population

was used as sample in view of the small and manageable size. Researcher-developed instrument was used for data collection. This was: Achievement Test on Visual Arts (ATVA), a 10-item practical test designed to measure the students' achievement in the five areas of Visual Arts, Painting, Sculpture, Ceramics, Textiles and Graphics, offered in the University. The ATVA had a reliability coefficient of .82 determined using test retest method after face and content validation. This was followed by the teaching of selected topics in the five units of visual arts taught in the university by the research assistants, who also are lecturers in the department after having been briefed on how to conduct the study. Thereafter, the ATVA was administered on the respondents as post-test. Data generated were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and independent t-test statistics.

Results

Research Question 1: What difference exist between the mean performance scores of deaf-and-dumb students and that of their normal colleagues in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation scores of the students' post-test performances classified by treatment groups.

Treatment Groups	n	$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Deaf and Dumb	6	60.00	9.49	3.87
Without Disability	9	57.78	11.49	3.83

In Table 1, the post-test mean scores of the deaf and dumb students in the inclusive classroom and those of their colleagues without disability are 60.00 and 57.78, respectively. These results show that the deaf and dumb students had a better mean score compared with that of those without disability. The independent t-test results in Table 2 was used to determine whether the observed difference in the mean scores was statistically significant or not.

Hypothesis1: There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of deaf-and-dumb students and that of their normal colleagues in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom.

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Table 2: Independent t-test summary of the students' post-test performances classified by treatment groups.

Treatment Groups	$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision at p <.05
Deaf and Dumb	60.00	9.49	3.87	.39	13	.70	ns
Without Disability	57.78	11.49	3.83	-	-	-	-

In Table 2, the calculated t-ratio for the effect of inclusive classroom on the deaf and dumb students academic performance on Visual Art at df 13 is .39, while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .70 alpha. This level of significance is greater than .05 in which the decision is based; indicating that there was no significant difference in the deaf and dumb and the normal students' performances in Visual Arts. With this observation, null hypothesis 2 was upheld. This means that the deaf and dumb and the normal students' performances in the inclusive classroom were comparable.

Research Question 2: How does gender differentiate the mean performance score of students in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation scores of the students' post-test performances classified by gender.

Treatment Groups	n	$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Male	9	59.44	12.61	4.20
Female	6	57.50	6.89	2.81

In Table 3, the post-test mean scores of the Male and female students in the inclusive classroom are 59.44 and 57.50, respectively. These results show that the male students had a better mean score compared with that of those of their female colleagues. The independent t-test results in Table 4 was used to determine whether the observed difference in the mean scores was statistically significant or not.

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Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the mean performance scores of male and female students in Visual Arts in inclusive classroom.

Table 4: Independent t-test summary of the students' post-test performances classified by treatment groups.

Treatment Groups		$\bar{x}$	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Decision at p <.05
Male	9	59.44	12.61	4.20	.34	13	.74	ns
Female	6	57.50	6.89	2.81	-	-	-	-

In Table 4, the calculated t-ratio for the effect of inclusive classroom on the performances of the male and female students on Visual Art at df 13 is .34, while its corresponding calculated level of significance is .74 alpha. This level of significance is greater than .05 in which the decision is based; indicating that there was no significant difference in the performances of the male and female students. With this observation, null hypothesis 2 was upheld. This means that the performances of the male and female students in the inclusive classroom were comparable, their disability status notwithstanding.

Discussion

This study investigated the relative effect of inclusive classroom environment on the performances of deaf and dumb students in Visual Arts compared with that of their colleagues without disability. The results in Tables 1 and 2, showed that there was no significant difference between the performances of the two groups of students. The results in Tables 3 and 4, showed that gender had no significant influence on the students' performances. These observations underscores the need to integrate students with disabilities with their colleagues without disabilities in an inclusive classroom setting in order to benefit from their support and attain a higher level of self-sufficiency in the school and society than they would in a segregated classroom model.

Conclusion

Consequent upon the findings of this study it is hereby concluded that deaf and dumb students do not differ significantly in their academic

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performance from their colleagues without disability when integrated into inclusive education plan. Also, gender is not a significant determinant of students' academic performance. The implementation of this is that including the deaf-and-dumb in a regular class neither slows down the progress of the normal students, nor create a negative impact on the academic progress of learners without disabilities.

Recommendations

In view of the positive effect of inclusive classroom setting on the academic performance of both the deaf and dumb and the those without disability parents should take full advantage of the inclusive classroom environment so as to make their children benefit from the support of those without disability. Teachers, school administrators and education planners should embrace inclusion, and desist from discriminating and stigmatizing deaf-and-dumb learners. School administrators should, from time to time, organize seminars and workshops to educate parents, the teachers and the learners without disabilities, on the need and benefits of inclusion.

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