

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL ON CLASSROOM CHALLENGES AMONG STUDENTS OF GIFTED SCHOOLS IN GWAGWALADA AREA COUNCIL, FCT, ABUJA, NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

This study investigated the perception of school personnel on the classroom challenges among students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Two objectives guided the study and two null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 levels of significance. A descriptive survey design was used. The population of the study was 309 school personnel and a sample size of 169 was selected through simple random and stratified proportionate sampling techniques. A questionnaire titled Questionnaire on Perception of School Personnel on the Classroom Challenges among Gifted Students (QSPCCGS) was used for data collection which consisted of 25 items structured on a four-point modified Likert scale; ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The validity of the instrument was ascertained through content and face validity. The reliability of the instrument was determined through a test re-test method and the coefficient index obtained was 0.79. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used for data analysis. The finding of hypothesis one revealed that there was no significant difference in the perception of school personnel on the challenges facing the gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council. The finding of hypothesis two showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of school personnel on causes of classroom challenges among the gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that principals should collaborate with stakeholders in education such as Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) to address the challenges facing gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT Abuja.

Key Words: Perception, School Personal, Classroom Challenges and Gifted Students

Introduction

Giftedness is a state of being excellent and exceptional in performance. Barnet (2019) described giftedness as those identified by professionally qualified experts, who by virtue of their outstanding abilities, are capable of high performance and require specialised educational programmes and services beyond regular school programmes in order to realize and maximise their potentials for development of the self and the society. Over the years,

education of exceptional persons has suffered a lot of neglect as a result of lack of awareness by the public on the capacity of gifted students to withstand the rigour of formal education. According to Barnet (2019), gifted students demonstrate achievements or potential abilities in areas such as:

1. General intellectual ability: they tend to perform or *show* the potential to perform in several fields of study.
2. Specific ability: a gifted child is naturally endowed with a high degree of general mental ability or extraordinary ability *in a* specific sphere of activity or knowledge,
3. Creative or productive thinking: gifted students reflect in individuals who tend to be or have the potential to become producers (rather than consumers) of original knowledge, materials, or products and who employ thought processes that tend to be inductive, integrated, and problem oriented,
4. Leadership ability: leadership appears to be a blend of characteristics within which above-average intelligence as they normally show potential in leadership responsibilities through their creative ability and skills,
5. Visual and performing arts: gifted children show potential performance *at* exhibition or superior ability in a visual *and* performing arts area, and
6. Psychomotor ability is also exhibited among the gifted students.

Contextually, school personnel refer to persons working in a school setting (Meador, 2021). The process of operating a school and educating the students has been viewed as a top-down approach with a clear power differential (Borman & Dowling, 2008 in Ansley, Houchins & Varjas, 2019). According to Ansley et al. (2019), teachers and other staff members are responsible for students' learning and development. Simon and Johnson (2015) suggested administrative support as a strong predictor of positive working conditions and higher job satisfaction in the school setting. Ansley et al. (2019) detailed how school personnel and administrators collaboratively create ideal working contexts that foster enabling learning environment which promote students' growth and development.

Perception, on the other hand, refers to a set of senses involving the ability to detect changes in body positions and movements. It involves the cognitive processes required to process information, such as recognizing the face of a friend or detecting a familiar scent (Cherry, 2020). In the view of Williams and Levitas (2021), perception is the process where sensory information is processed from our environment which is used in order to interact within our environment. The main types of perception include vision, touch, sound, taste and smell (Michele, 2021).

Classroom challenges are those factors that obstruct quality teaching and learning process in the classroom. The features of classroom challenges may include psychological or emotional, physiological, and physical environment. Reis-Jorge et al. (2021) posited that seating

arrangement, time constraints, high noise levels, personality clashes, different levels, class size and monolingual classes are factors that contribute to classroom challenges. Rhiana et al. (2021) maintained that classroom challenges are those problems faced by teachers which may include lack of teamwork, minimal personal time, working towards long term goals, arguments and students excuses.

Bainbridge (2020) analysed the following classroom challenges among the gifted students: academic problems, social problems (covering social related issues such as boredom, bullying, delinquency, isolation, depression, peer relations), and emotional problems due to poor and uncondusive academic setting. According to Kentucky Department of Education (2020: 27-28), gifted students may experience special challenges in the school as a result of the following: educational mismatch between the student and the rest of the class, lack of accommodating high creativity, energy, intensity and aspirations of gifted students, few, if any, adaptations for asynchronous development, inadequate support to deal with social pressures to conform to popular ideas, beliefs and norms, few accommodations to address unchallenging or repetitive curricula, student's heightened sensitivities to differences, resulting in the student trying to hide his or her talents or simplify his or her achievements, frustration in finding supportive environments, and producing feelings of isolation, and age-appropriate and social maturity that does not align with the student's advanced development in talent areas.

Davidson Academy (2021) further analyzed some of the most common problem areas for the gifted students as follows: heightened sensitivities and advanced emotional processing, poor social skills (inherently awkward and at times poor at socialization), perfectionism (displaying a range of challenging behaviours, such as competitiveness with others, achievement at the expense of socializing, or avoidance of activities for fear of failure), and self-concept (struggling to develop a healthy self-concept during crucial identity formation periods).

The problems associated with giftedness are mostly external in nature and are caused by the lack of acceptance and understanding of giftedness in the society (Salaudeen, 2010 in Karen, 2018). The general intellectual abilities, specific academic aptitude, creative and productive thinking, leadership ability, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor skills of the gifted students are highly undermined by various communities and school settings which required research to address it (Barnet, 2019). Bettini at al. (2016) stressed that with administrative support, school staff are more empowered to perform their jobs effectively to support the gifted students. Thus, school personnel are the available human resources in the school that utilize the material resources for the realization of the goals of a school. This may include the school heads, teaching and supportive staff in the school. Meador (2021) viewed school personnel as the most recognizable employees who work within the school district or setting to support students' learning and administrative system.

Manely (2018) maintained that some common challenges that can hinder effective teaching and learning process among gifted students are large class sizes, mixed-age and mixed-ability classes, undiagnosed students learning disabilities, insufficient funding for classroom supplies and equipment and lack of administrative support. Dussault (2018) asserted that teachers in gifted schools are faced with similar challenges arising from many directions; with students,

parents, administrators, or as a result of the many roles and responsibilities they undertake. School Governance (2018) stated that classroom challenges are constraints that affect effective teaching and learning process among gifted students in the classroom.

However, there are several causes of classroom challenges among gifted students in gifted schools. Like other students, gifted students experienced challenges in the classroom situation and generally in life. In support of the above statement, Barnet (2019) posited the following causes of classroom challenges among gifted students: inadequate existing gifted programmes, challenges of enrichment programmes in the classroom due to mixed abilities of students, and poor strategies for teaching the gifted students in the general classroom. Similarly, The Tenney School (2017) has discussed the following causes of classroom challenges among gifted students: many gifted students try to reach impossible goals or perfection which can lead to psychosomatic problems and even eating disorders in hopes to maintain full control of one's life goal, pressures of rigorous school work or extracurricular activities, social maturity (gifted students are often very socially mature for their age, but this can cause them to have problems interacting with their peers), trouble of focusing on school work unless it becomes necessary, organization of skills as a result of abstract thinking. Oak Crest Academy (2016) asserted that among challenges faced by gifted students in the classroom are low self-esteem, perfectionism, asynchronous development and boredom and burnout. More so, the consequences of placing a gifted student in an average classroom with little support posed a risk that may lead to bullying, depression and social isolation which eventually affect their academic performance (Oak Crest Academy, 2016: 5). According to Dada and Ani (2019), gifted and talented students sit in classrooms bored and frustrated, they are left out and are not really benefiting from equal educational opportunities as their peers, and their full potentials not considered.

In Gwagwalada Area Council of Federal Capital Territory, there are two schools for the gifted. These include the School for the Gifted Gwagwalada which was established in 1993 but commenced its operation in 1994 and Gwagwalada Gifted Secondary School which was established in 2010. The schools were established to cater for the educational needs of the exceptionally gifted and intelligent students in the Federal Capital Territory. In many gifted learning environment, students are encouraged to learn about subjects that interest them most. Looking at the nature of gifted students, there are certain challenges obstructing their abilities especially in the classroom situation. These challenges may include poor means of instructional delivery, poor selection and utilization of instructional materials, poor time management, lack of classroom control and management, inadequate infrastructural facilities and poor mastery of subject contents. It is on the basis of this, this study is necessitated to investigate how the school personnel perceive the classroom challenges surrounding gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja with the view to providing them with the opportunity to achieve the desirable learning outcomes.

Practically, the findings of this study will serve as a reference material for those who wish to conduct a research on gifted students in gifted schools. The findings will also guide the school counsellors and school psychologists to recognise their responsibilities to ensure adequate

provision and utilisation of facilities as well as counselling services in gifted schools aimed at minimizing classroom challenges faced by the gifted students. The findings will further create awareness and positive perception of parents and the public to support gifted schools.

Statement of the Problem

Gifted and talented students required specialized and unique education that is different from other students in specific areas. Lack of adequate knowledge and skills by some school administrator and teachers to teach the gifted students using the appropriate methods and instructional materials could serve as a challenge to their learning outcome and academic achievement. Poor learning facilities have also hindered effective and quality teaching and learning among the gifted students in the gifted schools. Also, poor time management by some teachers to effectively utilize the time assigned to them for lesson delivery in the gifted schools have resulted to waste of time, energy and resources which greatly contribute to classroom challenges among gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja which necessitate this research output to ameliorate the ugly condition. .

Objectives of the Study

The following are objectives of the study:

1. To determine the perception of school personnel on the classroom challenges facing the gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja.
2. To examine the perception of school personnel on the causes of classroom challenges among gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in perception of school personnel on the classroom challenges facing the gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in perception of school personnel on the causes of classroom challenges among gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja.

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study. This design was considered relevant because it permits the researcher to study the perception of small sample of school personnel in order to generalise the findings on the whole population.

The population of this study was three hundred and nine (309) school personnel which comprised of Principals, Teachers and School Counsellors from Gifted Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, Abuja (Federal Capital Territory Secondary Education Board, FCTSEB, 2022). The sample size for this study was 169. This consisted of 2 principals, 162 teachers and 5 school counsellors. The sample size was determined using the Research

Advisor (2006) sampling table for determining a sample from a given population. Stratified and simple random sampling techniques were used for selection of the research respondents. In this case, the respondents were grouped into strata (i.e, principals, teachers and school counsellors), and a simple random sampling technique was used through hat and draw method to select each respondents from the sampled schools.

Research Instrument

The instrument for collection of data in this study was a structured questionnaire titled “Questionnaire on Perception of School Personnel on the Classroom Challenges among Gifted Students (QPSPCCGS)”. The instrument has two sections: section “A” which contained the demographic data of the respondents covering status and gender. Sections “B” centered on items that measure perceptions of school personnel on classroom challenges among gifted students. It has 25 items which measured classroom challenges and causes of the classroom challenges among gifted students. The items were structured on a four-point modified Likert scale namely; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) which were scored as 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The QPSPCCGS instrument was validated by specialists in Counselling and Educational Psychology of the Department of Coyunselling Psychology, Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai. The validation was done through content and face validity. Based on the experts’ advice, some questions were modified, some dropped while some were added in order to make the instrument valid. For example, under classroom challenges facing gifted students, item 4 was moved to causes of classroom challenges among gifted students. Also, under causes of classroom challenges, “method” in item 1 was changed to “methods”, “inadequate..” in item 4 was changed to “unqualified”. It was also advised that item 6 (there is mismatch between gifted students and the rest of other students in classroom setting) should be deleted. In all cases, the observations and recommendations of the validators were corrected and harmonized.

The reliability of the research instrument was ascertained using the test re-test method. The instrument was administered to 30 students in Suleja Academy, Niger State which is outside the scope of school of gifted students in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja. The two scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMC) to determine to internal consistency of the items. The coefficient index obtained was 0.79; signifying a high reliability which was considered appropriate for use in the study.

Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis

The researchers personally administered the instrument to the respondents individually. Each of the respondents was given a copy of the instrument and the instrument was retrieved from them on the spot. The data collection took three (3) days duration. The challenges encountered include lack of will to participate by the school personnel and financial constraints due to cost of materials as a result of inflation. The data collected in this study were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the null hypotheses which measured differences in

perception of school personnel on classroom challenges among students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja.

Results

Table 1: One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on Perception of School Personnel On the Classroom Challenges among Gifted Students of Gifted Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT, Abuja

Background	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.489	2	.245	1.220	.298
Within Groups	33.269	166	.200		
Total	33.758	168			

Table 1 is a one-way analysis of variance that tested the null hypothesis. Since the P-value is greater than 0.05 ($p = 0.298 > 0.05$), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no statistical significant difference in the perception of school personnel on the classroom challenges facing the gifted students in gifted schools of Gwagwalada Area Council FCT Abuja was retained.

Table 2: One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the Perception of School Personnel On Causes of Classroom Challenges among Gifted Students of Gifted Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT Abuja

Background	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.555	2	.278	.805	.449
Within Groups	57.262	166	.345		
Total	57.817	168			

Table 2 is a one-way analysis of variance used to test the null hypothesis. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05 ($p = 0.449 > 0.05$), the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in the perception of school personnel in causes of classroom challenges among gifted students in gifted schools of Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja was retained.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that there is no significant difference in the perception of school personnel on the challenges facing the gifted students of Gifted Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT Abuja. Similar to this finding was a study by Majzoob and Alnoor (2017) carried out in Addamer City-Sudan at the basic school level. The study revealed that there are no significant statistical differences at (0.05) level in the problems facing the gifted and talented students, their parents and teachers. Also, the study finding of Hudson (2019) in Northeast Florida with 234 population found that there was no statistically significant difference on the classroom challenges faced between gifted students and non-gifted students. The study finding of Ayasreh and El-Omari (2016) conducted in Jordan with 470 population was also in agreement that there is no significant difference in the classroom challenges among the gifted students at the basic and secondary. However, Shareefa at al. (2019) correlated teachers' perceptions on differentiated instruction among the gifted students

in Maldives and revealed a significance relationship was found. Graefe (2017) discovered that there was significant impact of climate and encouragement in the classrooms of gifted students. A study by Moreschi (2022) in Kentucky of United States with 882 population revealed that there was no significant difference on teachers' ability to tolerate gifted students which often lead students remaining unidentified and receiving services for conditions detached from giftedness. Uzunboyulu et al. (2022) carried out a study in Sakarya of Turkey and the finding showed that there was a significant difference on the classroom challenges facing the gifted students such as technological disruptions, motivation problems, timing problems and communication problems.

The finding of hypothesis two indicated that there was no significant difference in the perception of school personnel on causes of classroom challenges among gifted students of Gifted Schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja. This finding is in line with the study of Majzoob and Alnoor (2017) who reported that there no significant statistical difference at estimating problems' degree that face gifted and talented students from the point of view of teachers. The study of Hamizah et al. (2021) also found that there was no significance difference among gifted and talented students on the burdened with social and emotional issues that affect psychological well-being and emotional stability. According to a report by Abu-Yazid and Noriah (2016) from Malaysia with 846 population, the finding indicated that gifted and talented student have problems related to career direction due to multi-potentials, lack of information, lack of guidance and other supporting factors. Similarly, Amnah et al. (2017) carried a study in Malaysia and the finding indicated that there was no significance difference among gifted and talented students in experiencing internal pressures and conflicts that limit their social and emotional development.

Conclusions

From the findings of this study, it was found that there was no significant difference in the perception of school personnel on the challenges facing gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja. It is therefore concluded that gifted students in gifted schools of Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja are faced with classroom challenges which require the attention of stakeholder in education for possible remedies.

Recommendations

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

1. Principals should collaborate with School-Based Management Committee (SBMC) to provide learning facilities so as to minimize the challenges facing gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council FCT Abuja.
2. Government, parents and other stakeholders in education should collaborate to provide infrastructure and security to address causes of classroom challenges among gifted students of gifted schools in Gwagwalada Area Council, FCT, Abuja.

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