

THE EFFECTS OF SUPPORTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT
ON THE EDUCABLE MENTALLY-RETARDED LEARNERS AT
OKE-ORA, OGBOMOSO

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BY
RUTH M. OYENIYI
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ABSTRACT

This study is titled "The Effects of Supportive Classroom Management on Educable Mentally-Retarded Learners at Oke-Ora, Ogbomoso." It is aimed at improving the skills of teachers of mentally-retarded pupils in their teaching, as well as encouraging the pupils to learn. The purpose is to correct the misconception that mentally-retarded pupils cannot improve beyond a prescribed level for them; by finding out the level of improvement in learning that they can reach in classroom situations that motivate, reinforce and discipline them. The following five null hypotheses were tested in this regard:

1. There is no significant difference in the level of performance in Mathematics between mentally-retarded pupils who are motivated and those who are not. The result of this hypothesis revealed an improvement in the performance of pupils, who received motivation treatment, over the group that did not receive it, though there was no statistically significant difference between in the performance of the two groups.
2. There is no significant difference in the level of performance in English language between mentally-retarded pupils who are positively reinforced and those who are not. The result of this hypothesis revealed an improvement in the performance of pupils who received reinforcement treatment over the group who did not receive the

treatment. However, there was no statistical significant difference in the performance of the two groups.

3. There is no significant difference in the attention span while learning Mathematics between mentally-retarded pupils who are motivated and those who are not. The result showed a significant difference in the attention span between the group that received motivation treatment and the one that did not receive it.
4. There is no significant difference in the level of attention while learning English language between mentally-retarded pupils who are reinforced and those who are not. The result revealed a significant difference.
5. There is no significant difference in the behaviour of mentally-retarded pupils who experience disciplinary action during lessons and those who do not receive disciplinary action. The result revealed a significant difference.

Two instruments were used first, a treatment package consisting of six lesson plans that were carefully taught covering Mathematics and English language. The lesson plans used in teaching the mentally retarded were carefully planned with the help of my research methodology lecturer, committee of supervisors and two teachers from the Community School for the Handicapped, Ogbomoso. Second, a pretest and post-test consisting of counting, matching of numbers and objects as well as numbers and object

identification. The sample used for the study was ten educable mentally-retarded pupils from Community School for the Handicapped Oke-Ora, Ogbomoso. Since small sample assure acceptable reliability in estimating sampling errors, they were randomized into 5 in control and 5 in experimental groups. From the pretests given to both control and experimental groups, there was no significant difference between the performances of the pupils in both groups. The result of the repeated test also revealed an improvement on their first performance.

Based on these findings, the researcher recommends that classroom teachers who are involved in teaching mentally retarded should motivate and reinforce their pupils so as to awaken and sustain the desire to learn in these special pupils who are usually not interested in learning. Classroom teachers should also reinforce the contributions of these pupils so as to sustain their interest in learning as well as stir others up to learn. The pupils should not be left to behave the way they want in the classroom because this interrupts learning. Classroom control should be exercised through discipline.

Conclusion

The findings of this study revealed that educable mentally-retarded pupils appreciated and responded positively to motivation, reinforcement and discipline. These treatments changed the attitude of these pupils to learning. Ordinarily, they are not interested in learning. Their initial reactions to the researcher before the application of the treatments were that of suspicion and maintaining a distance. This changed with the use of motivation, reinforcement and discipline. They were always on the look out for the researcher and have concluded that she has become one of their school teachers.

However, the observation made by the researcher on the classroom teachers and student teachers revealed impatience with the pupils, inability to use attractive teaching aids as well as their conclusion that these pupils could not perform any better. The student teachers were stunned by the "sudden" improvement of pupils in the experimental group's academic performance over the control group. They discovered that it was possible for the educable mentally retarded to perform better if good classroom management was applied.

The research also revealed that the attention span of mentally retarded can be extended if motivation, reinforcement and discipline are applied. There was also a significant difference in the behaviour of pupils who received discipline treatment and those who did not. This suggests that if

classroom teachers who teach mentally-retarded pupils use motivation, positive reinforcements, and discipline treatment in their teaching-learning process regularly, there will be positive attitude of mentally-retarded pupils toward learning. Because educable mentally retarded did remember what they were taught, the researcher discovered that with repetition, educable mentally-retarded pupils can learn something. This justifies the essence of classroom management.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher recommends that:

- Teachers should take seriously the use of teaching aids to motivate learners in their lessons.
- The use of concrete objects should be stressed since educable mentally-retarded pupils appreciate what they can see and touch
- Teachers should correct the behaviour of mentally-retarded pupils through discipline because this contributes to increase in their concentration level.
- Teachers should empathize with their pupils. They should see these pupils as human beings and treat them so. The use of abusive languages, threat, and uncalled for beatings should be avoided.
- Classroom atmosphere should be permeated by love. Pupils tend to gravitate towards teachers who show love to them.

