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Monisola Adebanke OSOBA

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ogun State, Nigeria, osobama@tasued.edu.ng

Kolawole Akinjide ARAMIDE PhD

University of Ibadan, Ibadan Nigeria, kolaakinjide@gmail.com

Adeola Esther OLUTOKI

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State, olutokiae@gmail.com

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Reread strategy for the inclusion of children with mild intellectual disorder in qualitative education in Nigeria

OSOBA, Monisola Adebanye (1)

University Library, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

Email: moniosoba22@gmail.com, osobama@tasued.edu.ng Phone: +2348142386925

ARAMIDE, Kolawole Akinjide (PhD) (2)

Department of School Library and Media Technology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State

Email: kolaakinjide@gmail.com Phone: +2347019115839

OLUTOKI Adeola Esther (3)

Department of Library and Information Studies, Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ogun State

Email: olutokiae@gmail.com Phone: +2348145924703

Introduction

Inclusive and quality education is one of the fundamental rights of every child all over the world, meanwhile, the quest for quality education is still faced with a lot of challenges for certain category of children (Osoba, Aramide and Oyesiku 2023). All over the world, children with intellectual disorder (ID) face constraints to effective learning. Linn, Chuaqui, Wilson and Arrendodo (2019) explained that children with intellectual disorder suffer from pronounced and unpronounced exclusion in the classroom because they are slower than their regular cohorts in terms of yardsticks such as comprehension, abstract thinking and problem solving.

Moreover, empirical facts have revealed that the prevalence of intellectual disorder globally (1%-3% for USA and Europe and 4%-6% for the developing countries) portend a situation in which as much as 90 million children worldwide could go without quality education if non-conventional strategies are neglected (UNESCO, 2018). This situation could have deleterious consequences on the quality of life and long-term life outcomes of these children and make them a burden on the society (UN, 2017; Latteck and Bruland, 2020).

According to Algahtani (2017) intellectual disorder is a condition stemming from abnormalities in psychological functioning and adaptive characteristics. This view is supported by Giust and Valle-Riestra (2017) who further expressed that the intellectual disorder is not peculiar to any group or culture but is derived from the interplay of genetic and environmental factors (internal & external factors). These views based on empirical evidence have over the years played a large role in discrediting the cultural and ethnic connotations associated with intellectual disorders.

However, Linn et al (2019) explained that intellectual disorder is derived from various psychological abnormalities which may be genetic or non- genetic in nature but which generally limits the capacity of affected individuals to learn at the expected pace and function in daily living. Essentially, it hampers the learning process by interfering with the performance of such basic functions like reading, writing, abstract thinking, problem solving and in the extreme, social functioning. Akpan and Beard (2016) maintained that intellectual disability among children ranges from mild to severe. For children with cases of severe disability, there is the tendency to have acute communication problems, withdrawal and limited participation.

Linn et al (2019) also noted that children with intellectual disorder generally have a poor memory which in turn limits their ability to think in abstract terms, have difficulty speaking and learning to talk, comprehend slowly and are deficient in understanding social rules. However, with the aid of some specific and adequately implemented educational supports, children with mild intellectual disorder are educable, if efforts are made to improve their IQ (Botsas 2017; Mehdizadeh and Khosravi 2019). There is therefore a cogent need to ensure the widespread dissemination of the educational supports which in turn relies on a demonstration of their impact on intelligence because children with mild intellectual disorder who are educable have a chance of being integrated into the society, provided they have access to effective educational strategies that could lead to improvement of their IQ.

In past times, several charters, declaration and developmental goals have aimed at ensuring inclusive, equitable and qualitative education for all children irrespective of their condition, status, cognitive abilities and geographical locations. According to United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Right which was first documented in 1945 and the Child Rights Convection (1985), both emphasised education as one of the basic rights of every child among others. This implies

that no matter the condition of every child, and irrespective of their disabilities, there must be a way to educate them. For the regular child, education is relatively easy both formally and informally because on the average, their brain can process the data it acquires, and make meanings out of them. However, the case is different for children with intellectual disorder, in whose case, special therapy needs to be applied to educate them especially in a formal setting.

The children with intellectual disorder possess a very short attention span which cause them to lose concentration while they were assumed to be reading. They also flip through pages and probably blab as they read along without proper assimilation of what is being read. Reading to them without adopting proper and adequate reading strategies would have been a fruitless effort. Helping children learn to read is a dream in reality for parents and teachers who take pride as their children acquire effective reading skills and reading strategies

Statement of the problem

Qualitative and inclusive education remains one of the cardinal pillars upon which individual and communal development is based and remains a key focus of the global development goals (Rozalski et al, 2010; UNESCO, 2018). While the inclusiveness of global education goals applies also to children with intellectual disorder, there are challenges inherent in the process of ensuring that these children actually get educated. Dunlosky et al (2013) noted that at the root of this is the ineffectiveness of conventional methods in imparting requisite knowledge and skills to children with intellectual disorder.

The prevalence of intellectual disorder globally portends a situation in which as much as 90 million children could go without qualitative education if non- conventional strategies are neglected. Investigations also revealed that children with intellectual disorder are still struggling with learning within the school environment which could be traced to the methods of instructional delivery which is at variance with their level of intelligence quotient. Employing methods to improve the IQ of the children with intellectual disorder may be a plus in educating this category of children.

Children with intellectual disorder who are educable have a priceless chance of being integrated into the society provided they have access to effective special education. Giust and Valle- Riestra (2017) have previously explained that children with intellectual disorder have poor coping mechanisms and are generally deficient in the understanding of social rules upon which interactions are based. This transforms them into awkward communicators and thus makes learning difficult.

The children with intellectual disorder possess a very short attention span which cause them to lose concentration while they were assumed to be reading. They also flip through pages and probably blab as they read along without proper assimilation of what is being read. Reading to them without adopting proper and adequate reading strategies would have been a fruitless effort. Helping children learn to read is a dream in reality for parents and teachers who take pride as their children acquire effective reading skills and reading strategies.

This study investigated the effect of reread strategy on the intelligence quotient (IQ) of children with mild intellectual disorder in public special-need schools, Ogun State, Nigeria. The recommended comprehension textbook for English language “Macmillan New Primary English Book 1, UBE Edition” was adapted as reread strategy package. Reread elements that were investigated include vocabulary, understanding and comprehension.

Literature Review

The importance attached to the need to improve the intelligence of children with intellectual disorder using strategies has informed a number of studies over the years. Guthrie (2017) explored the effectiveness of repeated reading and error correction strategies on the reading fluency skills of students with autism spectrum disorder. The study was also based on the use of pretest and posttest and adopted a single subject multiple baseline design to investigate effectiveness. The study concluded that a combination of reread and error correction strategies improved comprehension abilities and reduce errors in word identification thus promoting fluency. This aligns with earlier findings by Therrien and Kubina (2007) and Kostewicz and Kubina (2012). The findings from these studies however suggested that higher levels of improvements in intelligence are recorded when repeated reading is used in combination with other intervention(s).

Reading strategies are designed to reinforce and improve the reading skills and reading comprehension of learners. A fun, high-interest fiction and non-fiction selections will spark the interest of even the most reluctant readers like children with intellectual disorder when the appropriate strategy is adopted. Today, like many teachers and researchers, we use the term reading strategies, both formally and informally, to describe features of children's reading development as well as features of teachers' reading instruction (Paris, Wasik, and Turner, 1991; Pressley and Afflerbach, 1995). The term strategies became popular in the 1970s to signify the cognitive aspects of information processing. Assessment and evaluation of student understanding and ability in the course of adopting reading strategies should be an ongoing process. And the assessment and evaluation should be in a fair and comprehensive manner, keeping in mind that the assessment should take into consideration the opportunities the student need to learn.

In another study, Therrien and Hughes (2007) subjected 32 students with learning disabilities and reading difficulties to reread intervention. The study discovered that students subjected to the intervention fared better than the control group and that higher levels of improvements are obtained when students read a passage seven times than when such passage was read twice or once. Weinstein, McDermott and Roediger (2010) made a comparative evaluation of study strategies for passages used by students with learning difficulties with a focus on reread, answering questions and generating questions. The study made use of three experimental groups and findings revealed that students who made use of reread strategy fared better than those whose interventions related to the generation and answering of questions.

Botsas (2017) investigated the differences in strategy use in the reading comprehension of narrative and science texts among students with or without learning disabilities. The study was conducted using a sample of 122 students (61 of which have learning disabilities). The researchers sought to raise the intelligence (in terms of cognitive and metacognitive capabilities) of those with learning disabilities using reading strategy and think- aloud procedures. From the findings of the study, there was a significant improvement (34%) in the intelligence scores of students with disabilities.

Almutairi (2018) also examined the effectiveness of reading strategies for increasing the reading comprehension level of third grade students with learning disabilities. Utilising a qualitative approach and collecting data using interview schedules and semi- structured questionnaires, the

study showed that students with learning disabilities who have been subjected to reread interventions in the past three months demonstrate improved levels of reading comprehension and fluency. Other interesting findings include the observation that reread leads to significant improvements among students who have issues with background knowledge, issues with vocabulary, fluency and difficulties with making inferences and handling informational texts. This confirms empirical findings by George and Adkins (2014) and Therrien, Gormley and Kubina (2006).

Children with intellectual disorder who are considered educable are usually those with mild disability and possess the tendencies to learn and function normally in the regular classroom and in the society if aided with appropriate strategy/strategies. The reread strategy will be adopted to treat educable children with intellectual disorder in the bid to raise their intelligence levels.

Research Methodology

The population of the study comprised of 27 pupils in the two selected schools for children with special needs in two local government areas in Ogun State which are Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area and Sagamu local government area. Although, some of them were disqualified because their ages do not fit into the age bracket considered for children in this study (6-16years). Furthermore, only the educable pupils (with mild intellectual disorder) participated in the study. The reason for the choice of this category is because compared to the other categories (severe and profound intellectual disorder), the children with mild intellectual disorder can listen, communicate, learn new ideas, obey simple commands, they are teachable when aided with strategies.

The study adopted the pretest, posttest, control group, quasi-experimental design. The experimental group was first subjected to pretest, then to treatment (reread strategy) and later posttest measures, while the control group were subjected to a non-therapeutic (placebo) treatment but participated in pretest and posttest measures.

Reread Strategy treatment

The experimental group were exposed to RRS for 90 minutes twice weekly for three weeks; this was expedient considering the memory level of the children with intellectual disorder. An attempt to lengthen the treatment may defeat its original purpose. The decision to make the treatment a

bi-weekly type is birthed from the fact that the children with intellectual disorder possess a short memory level, and there is tendency for them to forget what is being taught if the space of time is too long.

It is important to note that the pupils with intellectual disorder in public special-need schools in Ogun State are not really engaged with burdensome syllabus. Rather, they are basically kept in school to while away time doing easy tasks or just playing away. This made it more convenient for the researcher to spend time with them, while engaging them meaningfully in the course of the three bi-weekly treatment sessions. The first and the last session was used for introduction/pretest and evaluation/posttest respectively. The reading strategy that was adopted for this research work is the reread strategy.

The reread entails reading over and over in order to establish understanding. The treatment was aimed at improving the attention span, memory and comprehension level of the children with intellectual disorder. Some modules/ lessons in the recommended English textbook for the participants (Macmillan New Primary English Book 1, UBE Edition) was discussed during the course of the RRS treatment.

Population of the study

The population of the present study comprised of 27 pupils in the two selected schools for children with special needs in two local government areas in Ogun State which are Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area, and Sagamu local government area (See Table 1 below).

Table 1: Population of the study

Schools for children with special needs	Total number of pupils	Male	Female
Ijebu-Ode	12	07	05
Sagamu	15	09	06
Total	27	16	11

Sampling technique and Sample size

Purposive sampling technique was adopted to select two public special-need schools that cater for children with intellectual disorder from two Local Government Areas in Ogun State for the study. The school for children with special needs in Ijebu-Ode Local Government Area for the experimental group, and Sagamu Local Government Area for the control group.

Table 2: Sample size for the study

Schools for children with special needs	Total number of pupils	Number of pupils selected for the study	Male	Female
Ijebu-Ode	12	11	07	04
Sagamu	15	11	06	05
Total	27	22	13	09

Criteria for participation

The participants satisfied the following criteria:

1. They must be children, not below 6, and not above 16 years of age
2. They must be children with intellectual disorder
3. The participants must be in the educable category
4. They must be in the schools for children with special needs in Ogun State
5. The children with intellectual disorder must be willing to participate in the study

Treatment package (Reread Strategy)

It involved rereading of their officially recommended textbook on English Comprehension (Macmillan New Primary English Book 1, UBE Edition). The package was administered by repeatedly reading short sentences in the book until each lesson was completed. It was

administered with the aim of improving the comprehension and assimilation ability of the participants.

Control group (Conventional Reading package)

This package involved the regular or usual method of reading that is usually adopted as the participants’ classroom reading style; this type of reading is non-therapeutic, and was adopted for the control group. The recommended English comprehension textbook (Macmillan New Primary English Book 1, UBE Edition), was also utilised for this package. It was necessary to engage the conventional group in order to keep them occupied, and not left behind to cause distraction.

Table 3: Summary of Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) showing the main effect of Reread strategy on the intelligence quotient (IQ) of children with mild intellectual disorder in public special-need schools

Source	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Eta. Sq
Corrected Model	570.268	3	190.089	13.789	.000	.542
Intercept	1699.226	1	1699.226	123.259	.000	.779
Pretest IQ	91.284	1	91.284	6.622	.014	.159
Treatment	563.078	2	281.539	20.422	.000	.539
Error	482.502	35	13.786			
Corrected Total	1052.769	38				

R Squared= .542 (Adjusted R Squared = .502)

Table 3 showed that there is a significant main effect of treatment (Reread strategy) on the intelligence quotient (IQ) of children with mild intellectual disorder in public special-need schools ($F = 20.422, p < .05, \eta^2 = .539$). This implies that the treatment was effective in the management and improvement of intelligence quotient (IQ) of children with mild intellectual disorder in public special-need schools in the study. The table also shows the contributing effect size of 53.9%.

Conclusion

This paper examined the effect of reread strategy on the IQ of children with mild intellectual disorder. It points out another role that the school libraries could play in including the excluded (Children with intellectual disorder) by adopting reread strategy to improve their intelligence quotient (IQ) Starting from the premise that qualitative education is a fundamental right of all children regardless of their disability, this paper have traced the various constraints faced in educating the children with intellectual disorder especially in the developing countries where such children suffer from various forms of exclusion (Akpan and Beard, 2016; Linn et al, 2019). Also, children with intellectual disorder- even the ones who are educable, process information at a much slower rate than their regular cohorts and have difficulty with abstract thinking and problem solving. The implication of this is that such children have trouble coping in the conventional classroom.

Reread strategy has emerged as a method which could be adopted by the school libraries to aid the improvement in the IQ of the children with mild intellectual disorder in the school library setting. However, evidence points out that their utilisation is more optimised if based on a combination with other methods (Foley- Nipcon et al, 2012; Nursalam et al, 2018). Furthermore, gaining maximum benefits from its use is easier within a school library setting which ensures that school librarians are effectively trained and competent and a curriculum which is needs- based and designed from the perspective of ensuring qualitative and inclusive education for the intellectual disorder. Bringing these elements together will go a long way in ensuring that the educable children among the intellectual disorder are nurtured into becoming independent and fully integrated members of the society.

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