

## The Impact of Special Education Curriculum on Affective Dispositions of Student-Teachers in the University of Jos, Northern Nigeria

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**Abstract:** The paper examines the impact of special education curriculum on affective dispositions of student-teachers in the University of Jos, Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact of special education curriculum on affective disposition of student-teachers in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity including gender factor, research question was posed and two hypotheses were postulated. The design was evaluative using cross-sectional design. The populations of the study were the special education students. 200 subjects were selected through stratified techniques. The University of Jos Campus Climate Rating Scale (UJCCES) was used as instrument for data collection. The data were administered and analyzed using simple percentage and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results revealed significant impact of special education curriculum on empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity among student-teachers towards students with special needs. Females students exhibited high empathy and compassion dispositions than their males counterparts while the males demonstrated more appreciation of cultural diversity than their female peers. The study concluded that the special education curriculum promotes effective dispositions of student-teachers to persons with special needs.

**Key words:** impact, special education curriculum, University of Jos

### 1. Conceptual Framework and Background

The fundamental principle of inclusive schooling is that students with special needs should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any differences they may have. Inclusive schools must recognize and respond to the diverse needs of their students, accommodating uniqueness of each student's rate of learning and ensuring quality education to all through appropriate curricular, organizational arrangement, teaching strategies and affective dispositions to students with special needs. The special education curriculum adopts the regular school curriculum with some modifications called the "curriculum plus and minus" (Obani, 2006) based on the nature and degree of disability present in an individual or group of individuals. While the curriculum plus deals with the unique problem areas of a student with disability through addition of other contents, the curriculum minus emphasizes areas that should be removed in the child's curriculum because of identified disabilities.

Therefore, special education curriculum apart from preparing students to become professional teachers also

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ensures that they understand different disability areas and appreciate the plight of students suffering from one form of disability or the other. It is believed that the special education curriculum contents enable the students to show some levels of refined affective dispositions towards students with special needs. Students with special needs are exceptional persons who deviate significantly from the norms in terms of their abilities (Giftedness) and disabilities (handicapping conditions). On the other hand, affective dispositions has to do with the manner in which teachers and students deal with issues emotionally, such as empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity which may be acquired through special curriculum (Banks, 1977).

Empathy is the ability to connect one's emotions to that of another. Goleman (1995) stated that empathy is the ability to imagine oneself in another's place and understand the other's feelings, desires and action. The issue of gender difference in affective dispositions is quite controversial. It is often believed that females are more empathetic than males. Though, this cannot be the case all the time because males are also empathetic (Dalyop, 2012).

Compassion involves the concern for those who suffer or are vulnerable and the motivation to enhance the welfare of others. Mikulincer and Shaver (2005) observed that compassion emerged evolutionarily as part of care-taking system oriented towards those who are in need. The most important elicitors of compassion are visual and auditory cues. It is a virtue that means grief, suffering together with another. It comprises of both benevolence and universalism involving understanding, appreciation, tolerance and protection for the welfare of others (Schwartz, Melech, Lehmann, Burgess, Harris, & Owens, 2001).

Cultural diversities on the other hand, recognizes the home background of each student within the school system. Kommers, Janassan and Mayas (1992) opined that one of the most enduring successes of the school system is the variety of cultures that meet and co-exist freely. In classroom and after classroom, students of different cultural background study together, mingle and relate with one another. This means that appreciation of these affective dispositions through instructions from the special education curriculum contents among students may vary. Thus, this study intends to evaluate the impact of special education curriculum on affective dispositions of student-teachers in the University of Jos, Nigeria.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

The University of Jos, Nigeria offers special education and rehabilitation sciences programmes. The contents of the programmes address the issue of affective dispositions to students with special needs. However, exhibiting the variables of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity to students with special needs is bedeviled by attitudinal problems. Students with special needs experience little or no care from their counterparts who are non-disabled. Similarly, the issues of tolerance, provision of support and respect for their human rights are flagrantly violated and the facts that the students come from different cultural backgrounds make their attitudes towards students with special needs to vary either positively or negatively.

### **2.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of special education curriculum on affective dispositions of students in the University of Jos, Nigeria in terms of empathy, compassion, appreciation of cultural diversity and gender differences among first and final year special education students.

### **2.2 Research Question**

What is the level of special education curriculum of 100 and 400 levels students' affective dispositions in the

areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity?

### **2.3 Research Hypotheses**

(1) There is no significant difference in empathy; compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity mean scores of 100 and 400 levels special education students in their affective dispositions.

(2) There is no significant difference in the mean scores of males and females special education students in their affective dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity.

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Design**

This study is evaluative in nature using cross-sectional design to examine the impact of special education curriculum on affective dispositions of student-teachers in the University of Jos, Nigeria. The study is also aimed at finding out the impact of special education curriculum on gender affective dispositions of students, in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity. This was carried out through ex-post factor design.

### **3.2 Sample**

The population for this study was special education students in the Faculty of Education, University of Jos, Nigeria. The levels studied are 100 level special education students on admission before they were exposed to the special education curriculum and 400 level special education students at the end of their programme when they had fully been exposed and completed the curriculum. A sample of two hundred (200) subjects participated in the study. Similarly, stratified sampling technique was used to select subjects from the population.

### **3.3 Instruments**

The University of Jos Campus Climate Rating Scale (UJCCRS) was used as instrument for data collection. The questionnaire contains 10 items in each area of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity, totaling 30 items, probing different affective dispositions. Content validation of the instrument was obtained using the judgments of three lecturers, two in special education and one in test and measurement. The scaling was as follows: Not at All (1), Little (2), Some What (3), Much (4), and Very Much (5). The rating scale was as follows: 10–29, low; 30–39 Average and 40–50 high. This rating scale was used as the criteria for judging the affective dispositions of the students.

### **3.4 Method of Data Collection and Analysis**

The special education in the Faculty of Education, University of Jos students were sensitized on the modality for filling the questionnaire after which the UJCCRS instrument was administered on the students to ascertain their affective dispositions towards students with special needs. The students' responses were collated organized and analyzed using mean scores, standard deviation and t-test for independent sample. The group mean was adopted to summarize responses in the affective dispositions of the students.

## **4. Results**

The results of the analysis of data are presented in Table 1:

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**Table 1 Percentage Distributions on Levels of Empathy, Compassion, and Appreciation of Cultural Diversity Dispositions of 100 and 400 Levels Special Education Students**

Levels	Range	Empathy 100 Level	Compassion 100 Level	Appreciation for Cultural Diversity 100 Level	Empathy 400 Level	Compassion 400 Level	Appreciation for Cultural Diversity 400 Level
Low	10-29	41(82%)	39 (78%)	38 (76%)	'01 (02%)	'02 (04%)	'01 (02%)
Average	30-39	09(18%)	11 (22%)	11 (22%)	16(32%)	12 (24%)	07 (14%)
High	40-50	-	-	01 (02%)	33 (66%)	36 (72%)	42 (84%)
Total	50	(100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)	50 (100%)

**N = 200**

Table 1 shows percentage responses of special education students according to their levels of affective dispositions in empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity. 41 (82%) of the 100 level students have low empathy disposition of special education curriculum, while 9 (18% have average dispositions and none of the students exhibited high affective disposition. 39 (78%) of the 100 level students have low compassion disposition of special education curriculum, while 11 (22%) have average dispositions and none of the students exhibited high affective disposition. 38 (76%) of the 100 level students have low appreciation of cultural diversity disposition of special education curriculum, while 11 (22%) have average dispositions and 01 (02%) of the students exhibited high affective disposition.

Similarly, 1 (02%) of the 400 level students have low empathy disposition of special education curriculum, while 16 (32%) have average dispositions and 33 (66%) of the students demonstrated high affective disposition. 02 (04%) of the 400 level students have low compassion disposition of special education curriculum, while 12 (24%) have average dispositions and 36 (72%) of the students demonstrated high affective disposition. 01(02%) of the 400 level students have low appreciation of cultural diversity disposition of special education curriculum, while 07 (14%) have average dispositions and 42 (84%) of the students exhibited high affective disposition. It can be deduced from the results that 400 level students are more disposed to affective dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity than 100 level students.

**Table 2 Results of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of Significance in Empathy, Compassion and Appreciation of Cultural Diversity Mean Scores of University 100 and 400 Level Special Education Students**

Affective Disposition	Level	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	F	P
Empathy	100 Level	100	42.59	12.82	198	177.27	0.000
	400 Level	100	67.55	13.66			
Compassion	100 Level	100	27.41	3.14	198	495.00	0.000
	400 Level	100	42.20	6.35			
Appreciation of Cultural Diversity	100 Level	100	27.63	6.48	198	258.23	0.000
	400 Level	100	44.39	6.16			

Table 2 above shows the levels of affective dispositions in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity using the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). At the degree of freedom 198 and level of significance at 0.05, the F values, 177.27 (empathy disposition), 495.00 (compassion disposition), and 258.23 (appreciation to cultural diversity disposition) were greater than the P- Values. This means that  $H_0$  is rejected. It is therefore concluded that there is a significant difference in the affective dispositions of the students in the affective dispositions of the students in favour of the 400 level students.

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**Table 3 Results of One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) Gender Difference in Empathy, Compassion and Appreciation of Cultural Diversity Mean Scores of University Special Education Students**

Affective Disposition	Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	df	F	P
Empathy	Female	100	57.12	23.02	198	5.84	0.017
	Male	100	49.13	23.49			
Compassion	Female	100	37.29	10.68	198	7.67	0.006
	Male	100	33.33	9.44			
Appreciation of Cultural Diversity	Female	100	35.01	12.52	198	1.57	0.210
	Male	100	37.03	10.00			

Table 3 indicated the gender affective dispositions of students' teachers in the areas of empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity using the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). At the degree of freedom 198 and level of significance at 0.05, the calculated F values, 5.84 (empathy disposition), 7.69 (compassion disposition), and 1.57 (appreciation to cultural diversity disposition) were greater than the P-Values. This means that the general findings is that female student teachers exhibited higher empathy and compassion dispositions than the male counterparts, while the males demonstrated higher appreciation of cultural diversity than their female peers.

#### **4. Discussion**

The data for this study revealed significant impact of special education curriculum contents on affective dispositions of student-teachers in the areas of empathy, compassion, appreciation of cultural diversity and gender factor. Results shows that the final year student-teachers (400 level) who were exposed to the special education curriculum contents through classroom instruction exhibited higher empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity to students with special needs in the University than their counterparts (100 level) who just came into the system and are yet to acquire the contents of the curriculum. Hence, the percentage scores attested to this fact (see Table 1) for more details. This finding corroborate Banks (1977) who stated that affective dispositions has to do with the manner in which teachers and students deal with issues emotionally, such as attitude, empathy, compassion and appreciation of cultural diversity which may be acquired through special curriculum. This finding is possible due to the exposure of the final year students to the special education curriculum contents over the years and could have influenced their attitude.

The second finding shows a significant difference in gender empathy and compassion dispositions of females student-teachers based on the special education curriculum. Similarly, a significant difference was recorded in the gender appreciation of cultural diversity in favour of the male students. The responses were elicited through the one way analysis of variance computed (see Table 3).

The finding gain support of Dalyop (2012) who stated that the issue of gender difference in affective disposition is quite controversial. That, females are more empathetic than males. Though this cannot be the case all the time because males are also empathetic. It can be concluded that the level of gender affective disposition of final year students to students with special needs is high but higher among the females than their male counterparts.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Special education curriculum contents promote affective dispositions of student-teachers to persons with

special needs. Though, comparison between male and female student-teachers who do not receive instructions in special education curriculum showed no difference in attitude dispositions, those who received instructions revealed that female students tend to demonstrate higher affective dispositions to students with special needs than their counterparts.

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