The purpose of the study was to determine the effects of cooperative teaching on children with learning and behavioral problems. Determining the most effective intervention for children with learning and behavioral problems has continued to challenge educators. For this study, the research sought to find out how cooperative teaching will improve the achievements of pupils with learning and behavior problems in Aboh, Delta State, Nigeria. A research question and a hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance was used to guide the study. The research design was true experimental. Two groups of children were used for the study. The sample consisted of 64 primaries four and five pupils. From the study, it was found out that Experimental Group had a higher mean of 76.06 against Control Group with mean of 53.84 and standard deviation of 19.2. The hypothesis was tested using t-test and showed that the performance of the experimental group was significantly higher than that of the control group. It is therefore recommended that this strategy should be included in the school curriculum for children with learning and behavior problems.
Improving Achievements of Pupils with Learning and Behavior Problems with co-operative Teaching Strategy in Aboh, Delta State

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian education like that of most developing countries is being questioned about the educational standards it is currently operating (Junard, 2008) and policies especially with regard to children with special needs (Okeke-Oti, 2010). One of the components of democracy is “fundamental human rights” and its attendant right of every child to basic education under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme. In line with these, the Nigerians with Disabilities Decree of 1993, Section 5, stated that, government should ensure adequate training and development of the disabled in educational institutions, as well as “protection and security for Nigerians with disability…enforcement of the rights and privileges guaranteed…under law.” For this, children with special needs should be catered for in an inclusive educational setting as stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) as citizens of Nigeria.

Children with behavior problems that affect their learning are the focus of this study. Teachers who are interested in improving the achievements of pupils in their classroom cannot afford to ignore learning and classroom behavior of their pupils. Observant teachers know when a learner’s behavior becomes disruptive and interferes with classroom activities (Sharp and Smith, 1991). Their behavior is so different from appropriate age, cultural or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational achievements (Forness and Knitzer, 1992; Ayres and Hedeen, 1996). Such behavior problems include bullying, hitting others or things, name calling, sleeping in the class, prolonged chattering, excessive and unexcused lateness from class, verbal or physical threat to a teacher or student, and eating in class (Amadi, 1991).

The behaviors may affect their achievements. Their behaviors are usually disturbing to others and affect learning in the classroom. Classmates may be tolerant of these people at first, but over time, they and their teachers become frustrated and unsure of how to respond. Their behaviors affect their interactional patterns in the classroom, entire school and the whole environment where the children come from. At worst, they will not learn. If they do not learn, they may drop out of school and may grow into adults who may have high incidence of psychiatric illnesses. They may show antisocial and criminal behaviors which will adversely affect the whole environment. They may have difficulty making stable marriages and thus put the next generation at risk (Hedeen, 1996). Teachers may use a lot of valuable time to control these behaviors and such would negatively affect the children’s achievement. Presently, teachers have neglected these children and have been teaching them as other children. They have used corporal punishment to no avail. Determining the most effective educational setting and intervention for pupils with learning and behavioral problems has continued to challenge educators. Curriculum adaptation for effective interventions has become an integral part of daily teaching if pupils’ learning or behavioral needs are to be addressed at the classroom level. Due to these reasons, children with learning and behavior problems require intervention strategies to improve their achievements and reduce environmental problems.

Teachers have used several strategies to manage these children’s behavior so that they do not affect their learning and achievement levels in life. Among the strategies used to help these
pupils is co-operative learning. The study was geared towards improving the achievements of pupils with learning and behavior problems in Aboh, Delta State of Nigeria with co-operative teaching strategy. The strategy was adopted because it improves higher achievement in pupils and increases retention. It gives greater ability to view situations from others' perspectives. It enhances greater collaborative skills and attitudes necessary for working effectively with others. It also increases more positive, accepting and supportive relationships with peers regardless of ethnic, sex, ability, social class difference or handicapping conditions among others (Rief, 2002).

Several researchers have written extensively on the topic of cooperative learning (Johnson & Johnson, 1990, 2001; Kagan, 1990, 2001; Slavin, 1991). According to Johnson and Johnson (1990), cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that pupils work together to maximize their own and one another’s learning. Co-operative learning teams may be composed of a small group of pupils or a pair of pupils working together. Also, Kagan (2010) and Rotterdam (1995), noted that it is a successful teaching strategy in which small teams, each with students of various levels of abilities, use a variety of learning activities to improve their understanding of a subject. Each member of a team is responsible not only for learning what is taught but also for helping teammates learn, thus creating an atmosphere of achievement. Students work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and complete it. In some situations (e.g., general education) where many pupils with learning problems are educated, the use of pairs may represent the best initial structure (Hoover & Patton, 1997; Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2010). Even if in pairs or small groups, the principles of co-operative learning may easily be incorporated into the classroom.

To implement co-operative learning, (Roy 1990; Kagan, 2010) identified the following: positive interdependence, individual accountability, and opportunities for interactions, interpersonal training and group processing (Rotterdam, 1995). These will improve greater use of higher-level reasoning strategies and critical reasoning competencies. There will be greater opportunities to view situations from other’s perspectives. More positive psychological adjustment and health will be increased. Pupils perceive that their goals were achieved through shared work with their peers.

A co-operative learning environment in the classroom requires emphasis on each of the five elements identified above. Once teachers have ensured that pupils possess a minimum level of skills necessary for group (that is, interpersonal training), co-operative learning may begin (Hoover & Patton, 1999; Howard Community College’s Teaching Resources, 2001). The structure of activities, lessons, room arrangement, and evaluation of performance will vary across co-operative learning groups. The groups will be heterogeneously and randomly assigned (Rotterdam, 1995). In implementing cooperative learning, the teacher should follow these guidelines—the group or pair produces one product; team members assist one another and seek assistance when necessary from other team members. Team members discuss ideas prior to changing any previously agreed upon ideas or issues. Each member accepts responsibility for the completed project or task and participates in the group’s activities. Each member provides input into the group’s processing aspect of the team’s activities and individual accountability for learning the task or concept prevails, along with expectations of group interactions.

Research in the area of co-operative learning provides evidence of its effectiveness with pupils. According to Slavin (1991), it is effective in enhancing pupil achievement in all major subject areas in elementary and secondary grades, and for low, average and high achieving students. He further stated that the strategy usually supplements the teachers interaction by giving pupils an opportunity to discuss information or practice skills originally presented by the
Co-operative learning strategies have been found to be effective for pupils with disabilities (Johnson & Johnson, 1986; Salend, 1994; Rotterdam, 1996). It has been found to be effective in various subject areas with a variety of pupils who possess varying skill levels. It facilitates effective implementation and adaptation of curricula in special and inclusive class setting (Hoover & Patton, 1999). The study was geared to see its effect in improving achievements of pupils with learning and behavior problems in Aboh, Delta State.

Co-operative teaching strategy had been noted above to be effective in teaching learning and behavior problems as seen above in foreign countries. There is the need to see the effect of such strategy in Nigeria. On such premise, the researcher went ahead to see how the achievements of pupils with learning and behavior problems could be enhanced with co-operative learning in a town in Nigeria. Hence, the problem of the study posed as a question therefore was: what is the effect of co-operative learning on achievements of pupils with learning and behavior problems in schools? Also, a hypothesis was formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. It stated that there was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught with co-operative learning and the mean scores of pupils taught with conventional teaching methods.

METHODS

The research design was true experimental. One group of pupils (experimental) was taught using co-operative learning strategy, while the other (control) group was taught with conventional teaching methods in schools. This study was carried out in Aboh, Delta State. This is in South-west geo-political zone of Nigeria.

The study sample consisted of 64 primaries five and four pupils in the selected school. Pupils identified by the teachers as having learning and behavior problems were used. Most of the pupils were identified by records of their yearly academic performance in their school and the ones that had behavior problems in the school.

Experimental Procedure

Thirty-two pupils were in primary five and thirty-two were in primary four. The same teacher taught the experimental and control groups for two terms. The experimental group was taught with cooperative learning while the control group was taught with the conventional teaching method. Each group had at least two pupils. There were higher and lower achievers for pair’s. For trio, there were high, middle and low achievers. Children that were talkative, boisterous and withdrawn were mixed. Random groupings were done. They were paired or tripled with persons next to them. The children moved quickly and quietly into their groups. They were randomly assigned to experimental group and control group.

The researcher had many sessions of how to implement cooperative learning with the teacher. The teacher was taught first while he in turn taught the pupils. Questions and answers followed the explanations. More clarifications were made as the questions were answered. The procedures were written down and handed over to the teacher. Primary five pupils were taught in the first term and primary four pupils were taught in the second term. They were examined in these subjects—English, Mathematics, Science, Social studies, Igbo Language, Health Education, Christian Religious Knowledge, Arts, Agriculture, French language, Home Economics, Computer, Comprehension, Composition, Spelling, Reading, and Writing. The overall scores of
the pupils in their various subjects were used and computed. The means and standard deviations of the two groups of pupils were used. The collected scores were used to test the formulated hypothesis using t-test.

**Findings and Discussions**
Research Question: What is the effect of co-operative learning on achievement of pupils with learning and behavior problems in schools?

**Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing achievement of Pupils with Co-operative learning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RESULT:CONTROL</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53.8438</td>
<td>19.2602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GROUP EXPERIMENTAL</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>76.0656</td>
<td>13.40786</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 shows the means and standard deviations of the two groups used for the study. The results showed that experimental group had higher mean of 76.06 and standard deviation of 13.4 while Control group had lower mean of 53.84 and standard deviation of 19.2. This showed that pupils in experimental group with higher mean performed better than pupils in control group. This showed that the strategy adopted was successful.

**Hypothesis:**
There was no significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught with co-operative learning and the mean scores of pupils taught with conventional methods of teaching.

**Table 2: T-test Analysis of Pupils’ Achievements on the use of Cooperative Teaching Strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>t</th>
<th>d f</th>
<th>Sig.(2-tailed)</th>
<th>Mean differences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result :Control group</td>
<td>-5.357</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-22.22187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>-5.357</td>
<td>55.332</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>-22.22187</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion

The results showed that pupils who were taught with co-operative teaching strategy had a significant higher achievement than the control group. This implies that the instructional approach used is effective. The experimental group achieved more than the control group. It is important to note that the strategy made it possible for pupils to interact with themselves and even learn among themselves. They know that they win or sink together. It would help them to develop good working relationship among their peers.

The control group had lower mean of 53.84 and standard deviation of 19.2. Experimental group had a higher mean of 76.6 and standard deviation of 13.4 (see Table 1). There is a significant difference in the mean scores in favor of the experimental group. This is in line with the findings of Johnson and Johnson (1986), Slavin, (1991), Rief (2002), Rotterdam, (1995), which found co-operative learning strategies to be effective for students with disabilities.

From the findings, it could be deduced that the performance of the control group was significantly lower than the experimental group. The level of significance was at 0.05. For this, the null hypothesis was rejected. Moreover, the behaviors of the pupils were greatly improved which allowed them to learn and achieve.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made based on the results of the study. Achievement of pupils was greatly improved with co-operative teaching strategy for pupils with learning and behavior problems in Aboh, Delta State. There was a significant difference in the mean scores of pupils taught with the strategy. This study has further shown that co-operative teaching strategy can be used for pupils with learning and behavior problems.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
1. Teachers in primary schools should use co-operative teaching on pupils but most especially on pupils with learning and behavior problems.
2. Co-operative teaching strategy should be inculcated in primary school curriculum. This can be through the recommendations of the head teacher to curriculum planners,
3. In-service training shall be given to primary school teachers concerning the use of co-operative teaching strategy.
REFERENCES


Okeke-Oti, B. A. (2010). They have dignity and worth and therefore need restoration. An Inaugural Lecture of the University of Nigeria Nsukka. Delivered on April 29th 2010.


