

## Teachers Attitudes and Perception Towards the Implementation of Gifted Education Programme in North Central Nigeria.

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**Abstract.** Given that most teachers have one of the most significant influences on the educational development of gifted students, reports of negative attitudes and beliefs in popular misconception about giftedness are cause for concern. It is important to understand teachers' perception and beliefs to implement effective training and educational practices to improve education for gifted students. The study focuses on teachers' perception and attitude towards the implementation of gifted education programme in North Central Nigeria. A cross – sectional survey design was used. 159 teachers from Federal Government Academy Suleja and School for the Gifted Gwagwalada were used for the population. Questionnaire and Rating Scale were used for the instruments. the result shows that teachers perception and attitudes towards the implementation of gifted education tends to be high and at such enhances gifted education programme. Based on the findings, some recommendations were made such as, government should improve the condition of service of teachers in terms of regular payment of salary, promotion. These will enhance gifted education practices in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Perception, Attitude, Gifted Students, Teachers of the Gifted Students.

### 1. Introduction

Gifted students are another group with special needs, and so the educational needs of those who possess gifts and talent are often ignored. Giftedness is asynchronous development in

which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm. This asynchrony increases with higher intellectual capacity. (Ozaji, Unachukwu & Kolo, 2016). Lassig (2009) stated that giftedness is a natural ability that requires the appropriate environment and supporting conditions to develop fully into a talent. However, gifted students are individuals that possess tremendous and outstanding performance in their academic skills, leadership skills and creative skills. Teachers are often called upon to recommend students for a variety of services and programmes in schools. Many factors influence the quality and outcome of this process. Students who require services beyond the general education classroom, whether they are English Language Classes, Special Education Resources, Accommodations for behavioral disorders, or gifted programming, often depend on the classroom teachers' ability to recognize the students' learning needs (Berman, Schultz, & Weber in Szymanski & Thomas, 2013). Teachers' perceptions of students' needs are influenced by the individual experiences of both the students and teachers. However, exploring the multiple perspectives teachers bring to this task helps to understand their expectations regarding who should be included in special programming. Teachers' perception and attitude towards the gifted is to some extent seen to be negative. They are usually impatient with the gifted, especially in a situation where you have teacher that is not so bright so as to match their superior intelligence.

Ozaji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016) stated that most teachers out of laziness do not vary their teaching methods so as to accommodate them. Some of the teachers find it difficult to design special programmes that will help the gifted to be integrated into the system. The child may be bored and discouraged by the teacher as a result of such attitudes.

Gifted perspective on teacher behavior in terms of their knowledge (teacher) especially on content of subject matter may significantly affect the gifted creative skills. Azeez (2016) opined that positive teachers' attitudes are fundamental to effective classroom environment, these attitudes/perceptions include: enthusiasm, caring, firm, democratic practice to promote students' responsibility. Eggan and Kauchak (2001) stated that teachers need to be competent in their own area of specialization and they are able to apply different methods of teaching as well as understanding the concept of giftedness. The word attitude determines what individual will see, think and do. Azeez (2016) stated that attitude is concerned with an individual way of thinking and behaving which have serious implication for learners and teachers the immediate social group with which individual learning relates and the school system as a whole. Ukpong in Azeez (2016) defines attitudes as a state of personal like of action which may be exhibited orderly by actual choice. Attitudes affect perceptions, which often influence behavior. Therefore, the negative attitudes and perception about intellectual precocity affects how gifted students their education is perceived, and how teachers may behave towards them.

## **2. Teachers of the Gifted Students**

Deciding on a career in gifted education allows one to reach and teach a demography student who enjoys creative and academic challenges. To understand the field as an evolving and changing discipline based on philosophies, evidence based principles and theories, relevant laws and policies. Regarding the issue of language and communication, gifted education teachers understand the role of language and communication in talent development and the ways in which exceptional conditions can hinder such development. The teachers are guided by

the professor's ethical and professional practice standards. Teaching gifted students can be challenging to teachers accustomed to teaching in regular classrooms. However, since teachers are responsible for operating the educational system and they need strong and efficient professional competencies. They should therefore develop the skills for teaching the gifted. Competency of a gifted teacher can be classified into two, namely, Management function and instruction function: This is supported by Onwuadiebere (2010) who stated that gifted teachers are not limited to the traditional classroom and they are able to work within a number of learning environment. The National Association for gifted children (NAGC) stated that to become a certified gifted educator one must pass through programmes that require students to have prior teaching certification. It is the responsibility of classroom teachers, especially the gifted teachers, to both identify and serve gifted and talented students. It is also crucial for all gifted teachers to familiarize themselves with the research, curriculum strategies, pedagogy, theories and educational practice in place to enhance learning in high ability students. In furtherance to this, the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) and the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2011) developed some research based standards for gifted education teacher preparation. They stressed that foundation is a crucial thing for teachers of the gifted because of the need management function deals with setting up learning activities in the classroom by the teacher. The teacher plays a managerial role which includes motivating, organizing the learning group, classroom management and evaluation. Ozaji (2005) outlined some competencies needed by a teacher as: ability to figure out informally what skills a student's needs to succeed and the ability to take advantage of students' interest and use their internal motivation for developing needs.

## **3. Statement of the problem**

Since the launching of Gifted Education Programme in Nigeria in the year 1989, there have been expressed concerns about the problems faced by gifted students in schools for

the gifted in North Central Nigeria. Such problems include insufficient training of the teacher, inadequate facilities, lack of qualified teachers and lack of motivation from the teachers. Among the noted teachers attitudes and perceptions that are common are: domination of the class by the teachers, discouraging gifted students from asking questions. These factors led to the evaluation of teachers' attitude and perception towards the implementation of gifted programme in schools for the gifted in North Central Nigeria.

**4. Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to ascertain the teachers' level of perception and attitude of the state of implementation of the gifted education programme.

**5. Research Question**

The study intends to answer the following question:

What is the teachers' perception and attitude of the level of implementation of gifted education?

**6. Methodology**

The design adopted for this study is a cross-sectional descriptive survey research. This design helps the research to draw inferences about a population. However, survey design provide more intense and varied probe into the problem area for better valid findings. It also aims at collecting data on a particular problem in order to gain an estimable dimension of the problem in a larger population. (Awotunde & Ugoduluwa, 2014). The population involves all the teachers in school for the gifted in Federal Government College Suleja and school for the Gifted Gwagwalada Academy which is one hundred and fifty-nine (159). The researcher makes use of questionnaire and rating scale as instrument for data collection. The content of the research instruments were validated by subjecting it to a review by experts in the field (Special Education, test and measurement), the data collected were analysed and treated by using frequency and simple percentage.

**7. Data Presentation and Results**

Data collected were analysed through the use of simple percentage and is presented according to the research question raised.

**Research Questions:**

**What is the teachers' perception and attitude of the state of implementation of the gifted education?**

**Table I: Response of teachers' regarding level of teachers' perception and attitude on the state of implementation of gifted education.**

	VLE	LE	ME	HE	VHE	Total	Mean	Mean	SP
Teachers Manpower Training	2	5	50	102	20	159	4.39	3.00	1.04
Employment of qualified teachers	1	4	31	95	28	159	4.19	3.00	1.04
Prompt payment of teachers salary	1	4	32	72	50	159	4.39	3.00	1.04
Engagement of Psychologist	20	7	120	10	2	159	4.31	3.00	1.14
Engagement of Counsellor	18	5	125	7	4	159	4.26	3.00	1.18
Engagement of medical personnel	130	7	8	8	6	159	4.31	3.00	1.14
Regular training and training of teachers	43	6	8	2	0	159	4.19	3.00	1.22

The above table revealed the level of teachers perception and attitude on the state of implementation of gifted education in North Central Nigeria. 130 (81.76%) of teachers believed that to a Very High Extent (VHE) the teachers also believed that to a Very High Extent (VHE) supportive staff like Psychologists,

medical personnel and so on enhance the implementation of gifted education in North Central Nigeria.

**8. Discussion and Findings**

This study investigates the teachers' perception and attitude that can lead to effective gifted education programme implementation in secondary schools for the gifted in North Central Nigeria. There were 159 teachers drawn from Federal Government Academy, Suleja and school for the gifted Gwagwalada. 130 (81.76%) of teachers believed that to a Very High Extent (VHE) incentives enhances the implementation of gifted education and 128 (80.50%) of teachers also believed that to a Very High Extent (VHE) supportive staff like Psychology, medical personnel and so on enhance the implementation of gifted education programme in North Central Nigeria. From the researcher's observations, if these factors are in place, the implementation of gifted education programme will be highly enhanced.

## 9. Conclusion

The attitude and perception of teachers towards the implementation of gifted education programme can affect the gifted students' performance, there by influencing their initiative and creative thinking. Teachers' attitude and perception has significant implication on students' educational development because if their perception is high, it will enhance gifted education programme. Their best will be displayed on how to teach these students. Their commitment will be established as one of the main factors that improve gifted students' creative thinking and skills improvement for the nations' development.

## 10. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following suggestions are raised as part of way forward:

- Government should improve the condition of service of teachers in terms of regular payment of salary, promotion and incentives as at when done.
- There should public enlightenment about the gifted individuals so that both teachers and parents will take precautions on how to handle these set of individuals so that their talents and creativity skills will not be buried.

- There should be employment of professionally trained, competent and qualified teachers to teach gifted students so as to improve students' creativity.

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