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Perception of Parents of Children with Communication Difficulties about Inclusive Education in Ibadan Metropolis

By

Osisanya, A., Oyewumi, A.M. and Adigun, O.T.

Abstract

Inclusive education represents an educational reform aiming at redesigning the general education structures to accommodate all learners with or without communication difficulties. However, the education of children with communication difficulties is influenced by several factors such as those factors that are resident in the home environment of a child with communication difficulties. Therefore, this study investigated the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties about inclusive education in Ibadan, Oyo state. Fifty-two (52) parents of children with communication difficulties who were purposively selected from three different centres educating children with special needs participated in the study. Three (3) research questions were raised and answered in the study. The study employed the use of descriptive research design. A self designed structured questionnaire tagged "Parents Perception on Inclusion Scale ($\alpha=.67$)" was used for data collection. Data generated was analysed using descriptive statistics of bar chart and simple percentage as well as inferential statistics of Pearson product moment correlation and multiple regression. The findings revealed that educational qualification of parents of children with communication difficulties does not influence their perception about inclusive education for their children ($r = 0.86$, $p < 0.05$); there is no composite relationship between parent's gender (Male or Female) and perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties ($F_{(1,40)} = 0.599$, $P < 0.05$). The findings also revealed that social environment has an impact on the perception and attitude towards inclusive education for children with communication difficulties. Based on the findings, it was recommended that positive attitudes towards people with communication difficulties should be adequately encouraged because increasing personal contact with people with communication difficulties will positively influence their access to education, employment and social activities.

Introduction

Children with or without communication difficulties are essential in all societies because they are the future of the society. They hold the key to change and development, and in turn a successful future. It is therefore the responsibility of the society to provide them with a complete education so as to promote culture of independence, self reliance and acquisition of required skills needed for realization of life-goals as well as national development. Education starts with effective communication with parents and other members of the society. Communication is a complex cognitive and motor activity. The act of communicating can be verbal or non-verbal or a combination of both. These skills are developmental in nature, with a number of components which includes semantics (understanding the meaning of words) and pragmatics (social use) of language.

Nowadays in our society, a quite number of our young ones do experience difficulty in communicating their needs or expressing their feelings due to faulty utilisation of the components involved in communication. About 7% to 14% of children have difficulty acquiring some or all of the normal language skills in time to enable a smooth transition to school (John, Helen and Natalie 2005).

Several congenital abnormalities as well as acquired malformation have resulted into communication difficulties of some children in Nigeria. Communication difficulties have been adjudged to be part of the characteristics of children with developmental and sensory disabilities. Children with communication difficulties include, but not limited to those with hearing impairment, Stutterers (Ademokoya 2008), children with autism (John, Helen and Natalie 2005), children with intellectual disabilities (Schalick, Westbrook and Young 2012). It has been documented

that there are clear adverse effect of communication difficulties on an individual and this could lead to but not limited to poor socialization, difficulties with literacy (reading, spelling and comprehension problems) (Catts, Fey, Zhang and Tomblin 2001) behavioural disorders, attention deficit disorders, oppositional and conduct disorders, as well as anxiety (Toppelberg, Claudio and Shapiro 2000). In addition, living with a child with communication difficulties or any other kind of special needs can have profound effects on the entire family—parents, siblings, and extended family members. It is a unique experience that can adversely affect other family functioning in terms of time and financial costs, physical and emotional demands, and logistical complexities associated with raising children with communication difficulties (Ademokoya 2008). For parents, having a child with communication challenges may increase stress, take a toll on mental and physical health, make it difficult to find appropriate and affordable child care, and affect decisions about work, education/training and relying on public support.

Over the years, educating children with special needs (including children with communication difficulties) has been a major point of discussion among parents, teachers, government and all other stakeholders who are involved in the education and rehabilitation of persons with special needs. Recent developments in the education of children with communication difficulties indicate that inclusion movement has succeeded in rechanneling the course of school children from special schools to regular schools. Therefore, educating students with and without disabilities in the general classroom otherwise called “inclusive education” is a relatively new trend in Sub Sahara Africa. Inclusion education refers to a system of making students with disabilities becoming part of the general education classroom, receiving a meaningful curriculum with necessary support, and being taught with effective strategies (Smith 2004). The basic

premise upon which the inclusion movement is based on is the principles of anti-discrimination, equity, social justice, and that student with special needs should enjoy basic human rights at all time.

The main purpose of the inclusion programmes is to facilitate the integration of children with disabilities into the societies they live in and forming constructive relationships between their peers and thus helping them develop a number of skills and accelerate their developments (Aral 2011; Metin 2012). Bryant, Smith, and Bryant (2008) noted that inclusive education can be interpreted as the philosophy and practice for educating students with disabilities in general education settings. Inclusive education for children with communication difficulties represents an educational reform aiming at redesigning the general education structures to accommodate both able-bodied learners, learners with communication difficulties and other learners with varying disabilities. This is a departure from an old practice of training special needs learners in special schools. This inclusive practice emphasizes bringing the ancillary services to the child, and thus requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). This is a salient aspect of inclusion, and requires a commitment to move essential resources to the child with a disability rather than placing the child in an isolated setting where services are located (Smith 2007). The Federal Government of Nigeria (2004) through the National Policy on Education, amongst others calls for access of special needs children, with their varying abilities to education in conducive and less restrictive environments, as well as the education of such children to enable them to achieve self-fulfillment.

Though, the government of Nigeria has shown interest in educating all children irrespective of disabilities, but the involvement of parents of these children cannot be underestimated. In any part of the world, it is widely recognized that parental support and involvement remain essential for

the effective implementation of any educational policies and reform. Therefore, the success of inclusive education for children with communication difficulties requires parental support and beliefs in the competence of the inclusive education system in meeting the challenging needs of their children. However, there are parents who prefer and advocate for inclusive education while others favour separate placement (Zindi 2004; Mudekanye and Ndamba 2011). According to Garrick Duhaney and Salend (2000), parents generally support inclusion because it promotes acceptance, which is crucial to their children's social and emotional development. Parental concerns regarding inclusion, were also identified, and those concerns include the availability of qualified personnel and a lack of expertise in implementing inclusion. Salend and Garrick Duhaney (2002) listed other possible concerns of parents; the quality of their involvement, frustration with the school's failure to provide inclusive placements, and the effect of inclusion on their children's academic, social, and behavioural development. Soodak and Erwin (2000) argued that the challenges faced by parents and their experiences with inclusive education could depend on geographical region, specifically referring to segregated states in the United States.

Attitudinal research on inclusion has confirmed multiple, sometimes discrepant, and ultimately unresolved perspectives on people's attitudes and perception (Elkins, Kraayenour and Jobling 2004). Therefore, the process of finding consensus and identifying areas of agreement traverses a range of educational issues based on what is affirmed and what is experienced. Parental views of what happens to their children when they are included in regular classrooms have been surveyed (Palmer, Fuller, Arora, and Nelson 2001). In line with their placement decision, parents have been positive about inclusive settings and cautiously positive about instructional and social benefits. In their study on the perception of parents

towards inclusion, Freeman and Alkin (2000) concluded that when students with severe disabilities are placed in regular classes, they would be rejected socially by both their peers and teachers. However, parents who are not in favour of inclusion feel that teachers would be overburdened with the child's disability and that the classroom would not accept and welcome their child (Kavale, and Mostert 2004).

Further, as noted by Palmer, Fuller, Arora and Nelson (2001) a parent's satisfaction with a school programme is often based on such subjective criteria as perceptions regarding their child's sense of well-being or the presence of a caring teacher in a given placement. In Zimbabwe, the Department of Social Services (1982) underscored that there were parents of the children without disabilities who were not keen to have their children in an inclusive setting. Such parents with negative attitudes towards disability believe that disability is a result of witchcraft and they fear that their children without disabilities may be affected as they interact with their peers with disabilities during physical activities (Chimedza and Peters 2001; Chimedza and Sithole 2000; Mudekanye and Ndamba 2011). Some parents from the Shona and Ndebele cultural groups in Zimbabwe view disability as a contagious disease which came as a result of evil influences like devils and demons residing within the child with disability therefore, such children with disabilities require cleansing through traditional rituals before inclusion (Chimedza and Peters 2001).

Siewe (2012) compared the perceptions of three groups of parents; parents with special needs children in regular schools; parents with special needs children in special schools and parents with special needs children not enrolled in either regular or special schools towards inclusive education in Capricorn District, and found a significant difference in perceptions among the three groups on 59% and 46% of the statements addressing inclusion in regular schools and sociocultural considerations respectively. Despite different concerns, Siewe (2012)

remarked that the perceptions of parents of children with Special needs in regular schools were largely in favour of inclusion as opposed to parents of children with special needs in special schools, and parents of children with special needs who were not enrolled in either regular school or special schools. There was a general consensus by all 3 groups of parents on the negative effects of general education teachers' attitudes on inclusion. In a study conducted by Mudekunye and Ndamba (2011) among forty parents for both the children without disability and children with special needs who were purposively selected from primary schools in Masvingo, Zimbabwe, Mudekunye and Ndamba (2011) reported that 96% of the respondents indicated that they were in favour of inclusion facilitates the social development of children with special needs. However, it may be necessary to mention that when parents indicated that inclusion facilitated the social development of a child, this could have emanated from the idea that inclusive education promotes assimilation, acceptance, adjustment and adaptation in a free environment.

According to Mudekunye and Ndamba (2011), parents felt that their children were not given equal opportunities to participate in physical education activities in an inclusive set up. Such views could be found among parents of children with severe disabilities who would be concerned about the lack of support services like specialist personnel who are trained to handle the special needs of students, school personnel, special equipment and various adaptations that would enhance the teaching of children with special needs in an inclusive setting. Research offers a number of different reasons for the lack of engagement in inclusive education services by parents in general (Katz, La Placa, and Hunter 2007). However, the barriers to inclusion should not be seen exclusively in terms of the characteristics of parents, nor as the characteristics of services, but rather as the quality of interaction and 'fit' between the needs, expectations of parents and the provision of services. In other words, parents of children with communication difficulties

may face three basic types of barriers: ¹physical and practical, ²social and ³stigma. According to Aral (2011), common problems encountered in inclusion are not having adequate number of support services staff, not having appropriate environments for inclusion at schools, teachers' and administrators' not having adequate knowledge about the inclusion, negative teacher attitudes and not providing support services. Alongside physical barriers to access, Olsen and Wates (2003) found that parents of children with disabilities viewed their involvement in inclusive education as isolating and stigmatizing.

Katz, La Placa and Hunter (2007) identified lack of adequate parents' educational qualification, language differences and the perceived safety of the school's neighbourhood as the major barriers to involvement of parents to inclusive education, while Miles (2002) remarked that poverty, gender, ethnicity and disability are some of the major issues of difference, which often lead to discrimination and cause large numbers of children to be excluded from inclusive education. The local culture is a great influence on perception of disability and the resulting attitude towards inclusive education. Parents and other family members may be ashamed of exposing their children with disabilities, as these children might 'tarnish their image'. In addition, there is a poor awareness about special education and about the fact that some children with disability can also have an education (Garuba 2003).

The study of Dimitrios, Georgia, Eleni and Asterios (2008) found no differences on the subscales of the questionnaire related to parents' sex and educational level and children's type of disability. Parents' educational level and children's type of disability did not emerge as factors that influenced parental views about inclusion. Similarly, Henricson (2002) noted that one major reason for limited engagement by parents is their lack of knowledge of local services and how they could help. For example, Bhabra and Ghate (2004) reported on the evaluation of Parent Information Point (PIP), a pilot project

that aimed to provide parents with a one-off session in schools to give them information about parenting and inform them of local services. Based on the above, Bhabra and Ghate (2004) found that 55 per cent of non-participants had never received information about the event, and that knowledge levels of both attenders and non attenders were very low. Studies such as Chimedza and Peters (2001), Olsen and Wates (2003), Bhabra and Ghate, (2004), Mudekunye and Ndamba (2011) and Siewe (2012) were conducted on the perception of parents of children with disabilities about inclusive education for example, but none of such researches have been conducted on the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties. This is necessary when the psychosocial trauma faced by pupils with communication difficulties in their classroom, among peers and even in their society is being put into consideration. Therefore, this study is aimed at investigating the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties about inclusive education in Ibadan.

Research Questions

- 1) Is there any relationship between parental educational qualification and their perception about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties?
- 2) Is there any composite relationship between parent's gender and their perception about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties?
- 3) Does social environment influence the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties?

Methodology

The descriptive research design was employed in this study. It was directed at the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties in Ibadan.

Participants

The participants for the study were parents of children with communication difficulties who were attending some special schools in Ibadan. Three special schools in Ibadan (The Childs Clinic, University of Ibadan, Adeyanju Taiwo Centre for children with special needs and the Christian Mission School for Deaf) were purposively selected for the study. The study involved 23 Mothers and 29 Fathers of children with communication difficulties who received a copy of the questionnaire each through their wards. 60 questionnaires were distributed to parents and only 52 questionnaires which represent 86.7% were returned and used for data analysis.

Instrumentation

The study made use of a structured questionnaire tagged "Parents Perception on Inclusion Scale (PPIS)" for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into sections A and B. Section A was used to extract some demographic characteristics of the respondents while Section B contains sixteen (16) items (questions) which elicited information on the perception of Parents of children with communication difficulties about inclusive education for their children. The research instrument was pre-tested to ensure its reliability and it was found to be reliable at 0.67.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics involving frequency count, simple percentage, mean and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics involving Pearson moment product correlation and multiple regression were used to analyse the data collected.

Result

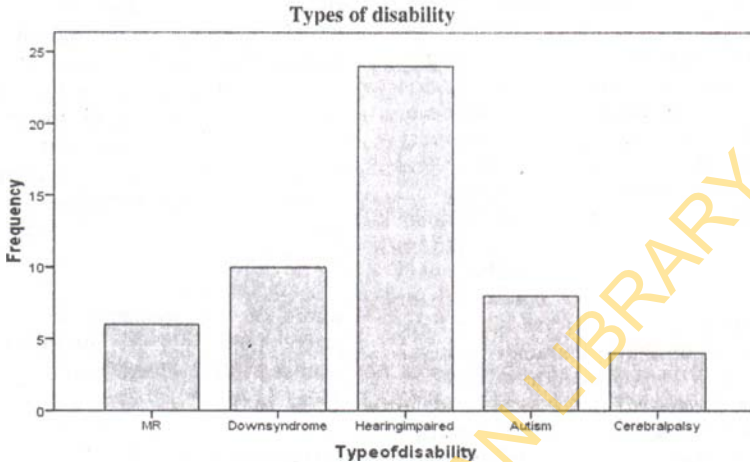


Fig. 1: Bar Chart showing the categories of children with communication.

Difficulties

Figure 1 above reveals the distribution of children with communication difficulties whose parent participated in the study. According to the distribution, 24 parents of children with hearing impairment which represents 46.2%, 6 (11.5%) parents of children with Intellectual disability, 10(19.2%), parents of children with Down Syndrome, 8(15.4%) Parents of children with

Autism and 4 (7.7%) Parents of children with Cerebral palsy participated in the study respectively.

Research question 1: Is there any relationship between parental educational qualification and their perceptions about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties?

Table 1: Correlation between parental educational qualifications and their perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties

Variable	Mean (\bar{X})	SD	Df	p-value	r-value	Remark
Parent's Educational Qualification	2.865	0.7677	51	0.588	0.86	NS
Perception about inclusive Education	43.809	4.2383				

Table 1 above showed a relationship between Parental educational qualification of children with communication difficulties and their perception about inclusive education. The result revealed no significant relationship between Parental educational qualification (see Appendix) and what their perception about inclusive education ($r = 0.86, p < 0.05$). This implies that educational qualification of

parents of children with communication difficulties does not influence their perception about inclusive education for their children.

Research question 2: Is there any composite relationship between parent's gender and their perception about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties?

Table 2: Regression analysis of parent's gender and their perception about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.152	1	.152	.599	.444 ^a
	Residual	10.134	40	.253		
	Total	10.286	41			

R = .121
 R Square = .015
 Adjusted R² = -.010
 Std. Error of the Estimate = .50334

Table 2 showed that there is no composite relationship between parent's gender (Male or Female) and perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties (R= 0.12). 12% of the variance account for their perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties. The composite relationship was

found to be significant ($F_{(1,40)} = 0.599$, $P < 0.05$).

Research question 3: Do social environment influence the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties about inclusive education?

Table 3: Influence of Social Environment on Perception about Inclusive Education

Items	SA%	A%	D%	SD%	\bar{X}	Std. Dev
I feel contended with my child with communication difficulties	36.5	26.9	19.6	16.9	2.94	0.97
I have adequate information about my child's communication difficulties	28.8	25.0	30.8	15.4	2.67	1.06
I have attended programs, seminars and meetings on how to cope with children with communication difficulties	13.5	61.2	17.3	3.8	2.90	0.69
I don't like it when people laugh at my child when he/she speaks in public	28.8	36.5	28.8	3.8	2.92	0.86
I hardly talk to my child at home because of his/her communication difficulties	26.9	13.5	36.5	23.1	2.44	1.12
I feel uncomfortable when my child cannot communicate effectively	36.5	23.1	30.8	9.6	2.86	1.02
I prefer to enroll my child/ward in a special school where his/her communication difficulties will be effectively managed	36.5	28.8	26.9	7.7	2.94	0.97
A regular education classroom provides more meaningful opportunities for my child to learn than does a special education classroom	28.8	25.0	30.8	15.4	2.67	1.06
My child cannot benefit maximally from the teaching and learning processes offered in the regular classroom	19.2	32.7	28.8	19.2	2.51	1.01
The inclusion of students with communication difficulties in to the regular classroom can be beneficial to other students without communication problems	25.0	38.5	21.2	15.4	2.73	1.01
Maximal class size should be lowered when including children with communication difficulties in a regular school	34.6	40.0	14.5	13.5	2.94	1.02
If my child spend more time in the regular classroom, it is likely that he/she will be treated kindly by other students without communication difficulties	48.4	17.9	26.9	6.8	3.09	1.00

Table 3 above revealed the impact of social environment on the parental perception about inclusive education. The table shows clearly that social environment has an impact on the parental perception, and their attitude was influenced towards inclusive education for children with communication difficulties. The mean value of $\bar{x} = 2.92$ shows that parents of children with communication difficulties do feel bad when other members of their society laugh at their child (ren) when he/she speaks in public. The parents of children with difficulties who participated in the study agreed ($\bar{x} = 2.51$) that the regular education classroom will provide more meaningful opportunities for their child(ren) to learn and probably associate with others and develop better interpersonal relationship skills than does a special education classroom. In other words, social environment of parents of children with communication difficulties could have impact on their perception about enrolling their child in the inclusive classroom.

Discussion of Results

Research Question 1 states that "is there any relationship between parental educational qualification and their perceptions about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties"? The result revealed no relationship between parental educational qualification and what their perception about inclusive education. This implies that educational qualification of parents of children with communication difficulties does not influence their perception about inclusive education for their children. This finding corroborates that of Henricson (2002) and Dimitrios, Georgia, Eleni and Asterios (2008) who noted that parental view about inclusive education is influenced by lack of knowledge about inclusive education and limited involvement. According to Henricson (2002) and Dimitrios, Georgia, Eleni and Asterios (2008) inclusive education is not necessary affected by parental educational background or nature of child's disability. The finding of this study

however negates the submission of Katz, La Placa and Hunter (2007) identified lack of parents' education to help their children, language differences and the perceived safety of the school's neighbourhood as the biggest barriers to involvement of parents to inclusive education. Similarly, the finding of this study is not in conformity with Soodak and Erwin (2000) who argued that the challenges faced by parents and their experiences with inclusive education could depend on geographical region, specifically referring to segregated states in the United States.

Research Question 2 states that "Is there any composite relationship between parent's gender and their perception about inclusive education for children with communication difficulties"? The result of this study showed that there is no composite relationship between parent's gender (Male or Female) and perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties. This finding was in line with that of Soodak and Erwin (2000); Garrick Duhane and Salend (2000); Kavale, and Mostert (2004); of Dimitrios, Georgia, Eleni and Asterios (2008) and Siewe (2012) who all stated that irrespective of parents' gender, child's disability, challenges and their experiences, parent always want the best for their children with special needs, generally support inclusion because it promotes acceptance, which is crucial to their children's social and emotional development.

The findings in table 3 revealed the impact of social environment on perception about inclusive education. The study revealed that social environment has an impact in the perception and attitude towards inclusive education for children with communication difficulties. The study gave credence to Chimedza and Sithole (2000) and Mudekunye and Ndamba (2011) who stated that negative societal attitudes towards children with disabilities may affect interaction with their peers during physical activities. Similarly, this study confirms the result of Chimedza and Peters (2001) among Shona and Ndebele cultural groups in Zimbabwe where some parents view

disability as a contagious disease which came as a result of evil influences like devils and demons residing within the child with disability.

Conclusion

This study investigated the perception of parents of children with communication difficulties in Ibadan. It was concluded that gender and educational qualification of parents with/of children with communication difficulties has no relationship with inclusive education for their children. However, the study found a correlation between social environment and perception about inclusive education. In other words, the immediate society affects the participation of parents of children with difficulties in inclusive education programmes for their wards. The study indicates a need for intervention to bring about more positive attitudes among parents, teachers and community member for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

Recommendations

This study expects that everyone in the society should develop positive attitudes towards people with communication difficulties by supporting them to have access education, employment and social activities. Therefore, the study recommends that parents of children with communication difficulties should reflect on their attitude towards the education of children with communication difficulties, and observe how it affects the development and growth of the students. Teachers should acquire the right training to teach students with communication difficulties alongside with other children in the inclusive classroom so as to make improvements so that a diverse classroom is a success. Also, educational administrators and other stakeholders should enact laws and policies so that children with communication difficulties can have more opportunities while the government should as well allocate more funds to support in-service training teachers to gain the necessary expertise needed to educate diverse populations of students in the inclusive classroom.

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Appendix

Parents Perception on Inclusion Scale (PPIS)

Dear Respondents,

This is a research work on the parents' perception on inclusive education for children with communicative difficulties. Therefore, this instrument is aimed at obtaining some information from you mainly for research purpose. All information given will be treated with absolute confidentiality. Kindly, supply the required information as it applies to you.

Thank you.

Section A Demographic Information

Instruction: Please, tick () the appropriate box

Gender of Parent/Guardian: Male () Female ()

Highest Educational Qualification of Parent/Guardian: Ph.D () M.Sc () B.Sc/HND ()
OND/NCE () SSCE/GCE ()

Age the Child: 1-5 () 6-10 () 11-15 ()

Gender of the Child: Male () Female ()

Section B

Perception about inclusive education of children with communication difficulties

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1	I feel contended with my child with communication difficulties.				
2	I have adequate information about my child's communication difficulties				
3	I have attended programs, seminars and meetings on how to cope with children with communicative difficulties				
4	I don't like it when people laugh at my child when he/she speaks in public				
5	I hardly talk to my child at home because of his/her communication difficulties				
6	I feel uncomfortable when my child cannot communicate effectively				
7	I prefer to enroll my child/ward in a special school where his/her communication difficulties will be effectively managed				
8	A regular education classroom provides more meaningful opportunities for my child to learn than does a special education classroom				
9	My child cannot benefit maximally from the teaching and learning processes offered in the regular classroom				
10	My child's school is a strong supporter of inclusive education				
11	I believe all children irrespective of any challenges should be included in regular classroom to the greatest extent possible				
12	I have support from my child's school management (i.e Principal) to try new idea				
13	Maximal class size should be lowered when including children with communication difficulties in a regular school				
14	The inclusion of students with communication difficulties in to the regular classroom can be beneficial to other students without communication problems				
15	If my child spend more time in the regular classroom, it is more likely that his/her education will prove				
16	If my child spend more time in the regular classroom, it is likely that he/she will be treated kindly by other students without communication difficulties				