

## **Teachers' Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss in Secondary Schools in Rivers State**

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### ***Abstract***

*The study investigated teachers' awareness of strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in secondary schools in Rivers State. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population consisted of 6,956 teachers of public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Through stratified random sampling technique, the researcher selected 460 teachers who were teaching students with hearing loss in public senior secondary schools. The researcher developed an instrument for the study titled: "Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss Inventory" (STSHLI). STSHLI was given two kinds of validity which were the face and content validity by the researcher's supervisor and other two experts in Special Needs Education in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Port Harcourt. The reliability of STSHLI was established using Cronbach Alpha and it yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.62. Mean and standard deviation was used to answer the research questions. The findings of the study indicated that most public senior secondary school teachers have knowledge of awareness of the teaching strategies for teaching students with hearing loss; teachers teaching in urban schools have slightly better level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss than their counterparts in rural schools and that teachers with Ph.D/Master had a better level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss than teachers with first degree/NCE/Diploma. From the findings, it was recommended, among others, that teachers with First Degree/NCE/Diploma qualifications should obtain higher qualifications in all fields to help them improve on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss, public senior secondary school teachers should undergo in-service and refresher's courses across all fields to update their awareness of modern teaching strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.*

**Keyword:** Teacher's awareness, Teaching strategies, Students with hearing loss, Secondary school

## **Introduction**

Hearing loss is one aspect of special need education in which general teachers need adequate strategies to be able to teach students with hearing loss effectively. Agomoh and Kanu (2015) stated that hearing is as a result of the sound waves making the tympanic membranes to vibrate, which also makes the ossicles and the fenestra to vibrate which in turn causes the vibration of the perilymph and the basilar hairs in the cochlea. Hearing is one of the most important senses. It plays a vital part in the learning process. It is held that more than 80% of education is received through hearing (Pagliano, 2005). Hearing and learning are connected. Hearing ability is critical to speech and language development, communication and learning. Hearing ability is very significant, thus hearing loss causes delays in the development of speech and language, and those delays then lead to learning problems, often resulting in poor school performance. Students with hearing loss are faced with many important problems in school achievement and social life. Obi (2006) pointed out that this handicapping effect of hearing loss could lead to increasing difficulties in attaining developmental milestones. Hearing loss is the inability of the individual to functionally use verbal language in daily life due to an interference with the transmission of sound along the conductive passage of the outer or middle ear or malfunctioning or abnormal development of the inner ear or an interference with the passage through which the auditory nerves transmits sound to the central lobes of the brain/central nervous system (Agomoh and Kanu, 2015). As a result, verbal communication is blocked. Due to this inhibition, the students with hearing loss are not able to fully acquire the speaking and literacy dimension of their mother tongue. Thus, it becomes imperative for teachers to encourage students with hearing loss to seat themselves toward the front of the classroom where they will have an unobstructed line of vision.

The educational hindrances related to students with hearing loss stems around communication. The major challenge facing students with hearing loss is communication. Students with hearing loss vary widely in their communication skills. Among the conditions that affect the development of communication skills of students with hearing loss are personality, intelligence, nature and degree of deafness, degree and type of residual hearing, degree of benefit derived from amplification by hearing aid, family, environment, and age of onset. These students may experience difficulty in the subjects of grammar, spelling and vocabulary; taking notes while listening to lectures; participating in classroom discussions; watching educational videos and presenting oral reports. Since much learning is acquired aurally, many students with hearing problems have both experiential and language deficiencies. Student with hearing loss miss a great deal of crucial information usually learnt incidentally by student without hearing loss. This is because students with hearing loss do

not hear environmental noises and day to day conversation. According to Obi (2006), the handicapping effect of hearing impairment could lead to increasing difficulties in attaining developmental milestones. Hearing loss is hearing or sound perception difficulties. Hearing implies the ability to perceive sounds by detecting vibrations, changes in the pressure of the surrounding medium through time, through an organ such as ear.

Hearing loss can be a major obstacle to academic success, largely because it can be mistaken for other conditions. Students who have hard of hearing are sometimes misdiagnosed as having a learning disability of some kind, or are labelled as aloof or reticent. An accurate diagnosis is very important for appropriate intervention. Okuoyibo (2006) observed that the knowledge of deafness according to place of loss is useful for the sake of amplification and intervention. Although students can overcome some of these problems to varying degrees through great investments of time, energy and effort by parents and educators, such deficiencies continue to be fairly common within the population of students with hearing loss. It is needful to point out that ignorance or inappropriate strategies in teaching students with hearing loss is one of the most serious impediment to successful school achievement in general and social life in particular. Lack of awareness on teaching strategies and accommodation of instructional techniques/strategies, visual and technological support, seating arrangement and noise management and use of assistive listening and communication devices on the part of secondary school teachers in Rivers State hitherto has negative impacts on the academic achievement of students in this category. Hearing ability does affect students' learning progress, particularly in the understanding and production of spoken language. Students with hearing loss learn differently from their peers without this loss. This is sequel to the fact that hearing loss affects the way these children learn and this requires strategies and accommodations which are specifically geared to their needs and learning styles.

Therefore, for students with hearing loss to build self-esteem and develop crucial friendships which will lead to developing quality in academic performance and achievement, they typically require intensive instruction provided by skilled teachers who have experiences in working with students who have learning difficulties resulting from hearing loss. Strategies for teaching students with hearing loss make learning of reading, writing and mathematical instructions easy and simple. This assertion recognises the interaction and interdependency of overcoming learning delays and difficulties of hearing loss and teaching strategies. With the implementation of Education For All (EFA) and the new Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria (and particularly in Rivers State) the population of students with disabilities in line with the Salamanca Declaration of 1994, that all schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual,

emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions have increased (Agomoh, 2012). The increase in the number of students with hearing loss in public secondary schools in Rivers State without a commensurate increase in the training and re-training programs for teachers on strategies for teaching them is a problem for educators. This has surely had an adverse effect on the students' academic performance and achievement.

More so, teachers are vital at all levels of school and training them with appropriate strategies for teaching students with various disabilities is a good part to success. Strategies are the skills, adjustments and accommodation employed by teachers to specially meet the learning needs and styles of students with hearing loss. Adopted strategies in teaching students with hearing loss can make a significant difference to the learning and achievement of vital skill development of this category of students. This means that skilled and experienced teachers can impact and enhance the general learning performances of students with hearing loss. The time spent in education is a significant part of a students' development.

As a teacher, aiding the growth of students with hearing loss is a wonderful opportunity. Nonetheless, it can be a challenging task, and it is important to note that what makes a student with hearing loss struggles is neither a lack of intelligence nor willfulness. Students with hearing loss have delays in the development of speech and language thus are not able to fully acquire the speaking and literacy dimension as efficiently as peers with hearing, often making their learning a slow, difficult, and at times impossible process. However, with the guidance of a caring tutor-well-equipped with tried and tested strategies, students with hearing loss are capable of learning and becoming high-achievers. Particularly at the secondary level, outcomes indicate that those attending more inclusive settings in public schools may have more exposure to and success with advanced academic subjects (Marschark, Lang and Albertini, 2002). The recruitment of some unqualified and unskilled teachers in the area of special needs education to teach children with hearing loss in our public secondary schools in Rivers State is a cause for concern.

To investigate these facts the researcher will discuss the various strategies that teachers should adopt in teaching students with hearing loss which are: instructional strategies, visual and technological support, seating arrangement and noise management and use of assistive listening and communication devices. And will then seek to find out how these strategies will impact on the performance of the teachers. This is because teachers at secondary school level have recognised the impact of adopting these strategies in teaching students with hearing loss. The increasing number of secondary school teachers in Rivers State without having commensurate training and re-training programme on special education skills and strategies in teaching students with hearing loss may surely have an adverse effect on the students' academic performances. While most teachers agree that every

student deserves to receive the same quality of instruction, they need the skills and techniques to be able to maintain high performance standards without slowing or lowering the curriculum. In other words, without adopting appropriate strategies for teaching students with hearing loss, overcoming learning difficulties and hindrances cannot be assured.

### **Statement of Problem**

Teaching students with hearing loss is a great and wonderful task. Webb (2020) buttressed that the task of any teacher is to ensure that students are accessing the curriculum, are successful, and are inspired to learn. For teachers of students with hearing loss, the right adjustments to the classroom environment coupled with advanced teaching methods can mean the difference between a student's success and failure. Hearing empowers and helps people lead their everyday lives without limitations. It enables people to socialise, work and communicate. It also helps people to stay connected to the outside world and keeps them safe by warning of potential danger. It is very important to provide proper and appropriate education for students with hearing loss that will contribute to the development of academic and linguistic skills of these students. Students with hearing loss who have a separate prescription among people with disability due to hearing loss experience a lot of problems during their education and training process. Tremendous number of students with hearing loss who have difficulties in subjects of grammar, communication, spelling and vocabulary; taking notes while listening to lectures; participating in classroom discussions; watching educational videos and presenting oral reports is the order in schools in the localities, towns and suburbs of Rivers State per term. This situation has greatly reduced students with hearing loss participation in public discussions, public speaking, spelling and debate competitions. Hence this study is conceived to ascertain the awareness of the teaching strategies among teachers in teaching students with hearing loss in Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to find out teachers' awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in inclusive secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, this study sought to:

1. determine the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.
2. find out the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss based on teachers' qualification; and
3. examine the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss based on school location.

## **Research Questions**

These research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What is the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss?
2. To what extent do qualifications influence the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss?
3. To what extent does school location influence the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss?

## **Significance of the Study**

This study would be useful to the government, students with hearing loss and good people of Rivers State. Also, the following categories of persons stand to benefit significantly from this study:

- Ministry of Education, Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, Principals, Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Parents, Students and Future Researchers.
- Ministry of Education and Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board: This study will help them in the employment and allocation of teachers with wide experience and high qualification on teaching students with hearing loss.

*Principals:* It will help them in the assignment of teachers based on their gender to various classes among students with hearing loss.

*Teachers:* It will make them to be aware of the various teaching strategies to employ in the teaching of students with hearing loss.

*Parents:* The outcome of the study will guide them in their choice of school for their children.

*Students with hearing loss:* The study will help them to know that they can become successful amidst their challenges of hearing loss.

*Future Researchers:* Researchers who are working on related topic will find the concepts and theories reviewed useful. They will also gain from the findings of this study.

## **Scope of the Study**

The study was limited in content to the awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. It covered the concepts of hearing loss, various strategies for teaching students with hearing loss and teachers awareness of these strategies in public senior secondary schools. The study was carried out

among teachers in the two Hundred and seventy eight (278) public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

### **Research Design**

The research design for this study was the descriptive survey research design. It aimed at assessing the awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in public senior secondary schools in Rivers state. This design was considered the most appropriate for this study because according to Ajoku (2006), it is oriented towards the eventual derivation of valid generalisations. It also collects data to explain current opinion, attitude and answers with regard to solving an existing research problem.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of the study consisted of all teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State totaling 6,956. The numbers of male teachers are 3,536 while that of female teachers are 3,420. (Source: Planning, Research and Statistics Department Rivers State Senior Secondary Schools Board, 2020).

### **Sampling Techniques**

Stratified random sampling technique was used in selecting the sample of the study. This was to allow every teacher the opportunity of being selected for the study. The sample was divided into the following strata: teachers' qualification (Ph.D/Masters:153 and First Degree/NCE/Diploma: 307) and teacher's school location (rural: 167 and urban: 293). The sample was selected based on each stratum. The researcher used balloting to select the sample from the 23 Local Government Areas in Rivers State.

### **Sample of the Study**

The sample for this study consisted of 460 teachers selected from public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. The researcher sampled 20 teachers from each of the 23 Local Government Areas. 5 teachers were selected from 4 Senior Secondary Schools in each LGA. This made it a total of 460 teachers.

### **Instrument for Data Collection**

The major instrument for data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled “Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss Inventory (STSHLI). It was divided into two sections: Section A comprised personal data while Section B was made up of 20

items measuring teaching strategies for students with hearing loss. Section B was responded to on a four point modified Likert format of: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point.

### **Validation of the Instrument**

The Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss Inventory (STSHLI) used for this study were given two kinds of validation. These are the face and content validity. Face validity refers to the way the questionnaire items appear to take care of relevant content in the subject area of interest, while content validity refers to the extent to which the instrument represents the content of interest, or how well the items on the instrument represent or sample the content to be measured. The face and content validity were established by the researcher's supervisor and two experts in Special Needs Education in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counseling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The supervisor and experts certified that, the instrument was face and content valid and then used for the study.

### **Reliability of the Instrument**

To establish the reliability of STSHLI, a pilot trial was carried out on 40 respondents outside the sample area of the study (Delta State). The reliability of the instrument was established using Cronbach Alpha and yielded reliability co-efficient of 0.62. This method was adopted because it ascertained the internal consistency of the instrument.

### **Administration of the Instrument**

The researcher and four research assistants administered the instrument to the selected sample from public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. In each of the sampled school, the principal's permission was sought to access the teachers. Completed questionnaires were retrieved on the spot.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. Independent t –test was used to test the hypotheses. The results of the analyses of the hypotheses were tested for statistical significance at the .05 alpha level.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

**Research Question one:** What is the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in Rivers State.

**Table 1:** Demographic Structure of Respondents

Teacher's Variables	Stratum	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Qualification	Ph.D/Master	153	33.3
	First Degree/NCE/Diploma	307	66.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100.0</b>
School Location	Rural	167	36.3
	Urban	293	63.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Table 2:** Mean Analysis of the Level of Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Secondary Schools Students with Hearing Loss in Rivers State

S/N	ITEM	$\bar{X}$	Crit $\bar{X}$	Sd	DECISION
1	Use of sign language	3.56	2.5	0.531	Agree
2	Graded homework	2.12	2.5	0.881	Disagree
3	Seating arrangement	3.36	2.5	0.664	Agree
4	Social communication	3.08	2.5	0.739	Agree
5	General education classroom with accommodation	3.27	2.5	0.713	Agree
6	Writing on white or blackboards in support of verbal instruction	1.76	2.5	0.741	Disagree
7	Use of alternative means of assessment	3.15	2.5	0.772	Agree
8	Presenting small amount of work	2.92	2.5	0.871	Agree
9	Placing deliberate emphasis on important instructions or keywords	2.14	2.5	0.938	Disagree
10	Use of assistive listening devices	3.51	2.5	0.652	Agree
11	Proper classroom considerations	2.23	2.5	0.953	Disagree
12	Considerable reinforcement and repetition	3.17	2.5	0.860	Agree
13	Captioned videos, diagrams and other visual aids as useful instructional aids	1.94	2.5	1.048	Disagree

14	One-to-one or small group setting	2.52	2.5	0.768	Agree
15	Step-by-step instruction	3.45	2.5	0.738	Agree
16	Use of appropriate and realistic examples or demonstrations	3.41	2.5	0.697	Agree
17	Collaboration and coordinated efforts with other professionals	1.91	2.5	0.694	Disagree
18	Use of total communication techniques	2.12	2.5	0.842	Disagree
19	Provision of additional practice time/activities	3.36	2.5	0.563	Agree
20	Provision of written material	2.03	2.5	0.902	Disagree

Table 2 above represents the mean analysis of teachers in Rivers state on the strategies of teaching students with hearing loss. The table shows that the accepted items are use of sign language, seating arrangement, social communication, general education classroom with accommodation, use of alternative means of assessment, presenting small amount of work, use of assistive listening devices, considerable reinforcement and repetition, one-to-one or small group setting, step-by-step instruction, use of appropriate and realistic examples or demonstrations and provision of additional practice time/activities. The rejected items are non-use of Graded homework, writing on white or blackboards in support of verbal instruction, placing deliberate emphasis on important instructions or keywords, writing on white or blackboards in support of verbal instruction, placing deliberate emphasis on important instructions or keywords, proper classroom considerations, captioned videos, diagrams and other visual aids as useful instructional aids, collaboration and coordinated efforts with other professionals, use of total communication techniques and provision of written material. Therefore the teachers accepted that they use more of the listed strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.

### Research Question Two

To what extent do qualifications influence the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss?

**Table 3:** Mean analysis of teachers' qualification influence on the level of awareness of their strategies for teaching students with hearing loss

<b>Variable Qualifications</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>Sd</b>
Ph.D/Master's	153	3.58	0.496
First Degree /NCE/Diploma	307	3.38	0.826

Table 3 above shows that teachers with Ph.D/Master had  $\bar{x}$  of 3.58 and SD of 0.496, teachers with First Degree /NCE/Diploma had  $\bar{x}$  of 3.38 and SD of 0.826. This meant that teachers with Ph.D/Master had better knowledge of the awareness of strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.

### **Research Question Three**

To what extent does school location influence the mean rating of teachers on the level of awareness on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss?

**Table 4:** Mean Analysis of the Influence of Teachers' School Location on the Level of Awareness of their Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss

<b>Variable</b> <b>School Location</b>	<b>N</b>	<b><math>\bar{X}</math></b>	<b>Sd</b>
Rural	167	2.11	0.878
Urban	93	2.16	0.971

Table 4 above shows that teachers teaching in rural schools had  $\bar{x}$  of 2.11 and SD of 0.878, while teachers teaching in urban schools had  $\bar{x}$  of 2.16 and SD of 0.971. This means that teachers teaching in urban schools had slightly better knowledge of the awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.

### **Discussion of Findings**

#### **Level of Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss**

Research question one sought to find out the level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in senior secondary schools in Rivers state. With reference to the result of the findings from the research question one in Table 2, one could see that the agreed items were use of sign language, seating arrangement, social communication, general education classroom with accommodation, use of alternative means of assessment, presenting small amount of work, use of assistive listening devices, considerable reinforcement and repetition, one-to-one or small group setting, step-by-step instruction, use of appropriate and realistic examples or demonstrations and provision of additional practice time/activities. The disagreed items are non-use of graded homework, writing on white or blackboards in support of verbal instruction, placing deliberate emphasis on important instructions or keywords, writing on white or blackboards in support of verbal

instruction, placing deliberate emphasis on important instructions or keywords, proper classroom considerations, captioned videos, diagrams and other visual aids as useful instructional aids, collaboration and coordinated efforts with other professionals, use of total communication techniques and provision of written material. It is therefore the opinion of teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State that these are the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. In other words, teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State agreed that these are effective strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. Supporting this finding, Ubani (2018) as cited in Ubani and Sanikpege (2020) noted that it takes lots of initiatives, intuitiveness and creativity to sensitise a student with hearing loss to learn.

### **Influence of Teachers' Qualifications on the Level of Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss**

Research question two sought to find out the influence of teachers' qualifications on the level of awareness of their strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. The result showed that teachers with Ph.D./master's qualification displayed better knowledge of the awareness of the use of strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. Agreeing with this analysis, Owolabi and Adedayo (2012) revealed that students taught by teachers with higher (Ph.D./Master) qualifications performed better than those taught by teachers with lower (First Degree /NCE/Diploma) qualifications. Also, Bamidele and Adekola's (2017) finding showed that there was significant difference in the achievement of students taught by high (Ph.D./Master) qualification level teachers than those students taught by low (First Degree /NCE/Diploma) qualification level teachers, which is consistent with the present finding. The reason for the present finding could be that teachers with Ph.D./Master's qualification are more exposed to the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss in the course of their academic work load.

### **Influence of Teachers' Location on the Level of Awareness of Strategies for Teaching Students with Hearing Loss**

Research question three sought to find the influence of teachers' location on the level of awareness of strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. The computed mean ( $X_1 = 2.11 > X_2 = 2.16$ ) suggests that both teachers teaching in rural and urban schools had slightly equal positive influence on the use of strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. The present finding is in line with the finding of Ntibi and Edoho (2017) that there was no significant difference in the mean performance scores between urban and rural school students (including students with hearing loss) with positive attitude towards Mathematics and Basic Science. The present finding however is in disagreement with the opinion of Owoeye and Yara (2010) that students (including students with hearing loss) in urban areas

had better academic achievement than their rural counterpart, irrespective of the strategies adopted. Furthermore, students in urban locations had a very great advantage by learning in an urban environment, which apparently enriched their academic knowledge. The present finding could be that both teachers teaching in rural and urban schools used for this study had good knowledge of the awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss. They might have attended seminars, workshops and conferences on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss and other physical challenges.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, teachers teaching in urban schools have slightly better level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss than their counterparts in rural schools. Also, teachers with Ph.D./Master had a better level of awareness of the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss than teachers with first degree/NCE/Diploma.

### **Recommendations**

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. Teachers with First Degree/NCE/Diploma qualifications should obtain higher qualifications in all fields, and update their knowledge on the strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.
2. Public senior secondary school teachers should ensure they undergo in-service and refresher's courses across all fields to update their awareness of modern strategies for teaching students with hearing loss.
3. More courses on special needs should be included in the curriculum of students studying Education in Colleges of Education and Universities.

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