

An Exploratory Study on the Integration of Neurodiverse University Students into Mainstream Learning and Their Performance: The Case of the Jones Learning Center

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Abstract : Based on data collected from The Jones Learning Center (JLC), University of the Ozarks, Arkansas, U.S., this study explores the impact of inclusive classroom practices on neuro-diverse college students' and their consequent academic performance having participated in integrative therapies designed to support students who are intellectually capable of obtaining a college degree, but who require support for learning challenges owing to disabilities, AD/HD, or ASD. The purpose of this study is two-fold. The first objective is to explore the general process, special techniques, and practices of the (JLC) inclusive program. The second objective is to identify and analyze the effectiveness of the processes, techniques, and practices in supporting the academic performance of enrolled college students with learning disabilities following integration into mainstream university learning. Integrity, transparency, and confidentiality are vital in the research. All questions were shared in advance and confirmed by the concerned management at the JLC. While administering the questionnaire as well as conducted the interviews, the purpose of the study, its scope, aims, and objectives were clearly explained to all participants prior starting the questionnaire / interview. Confidentiality of all participants assured and guaranteed by using encrypted identification of individuals, thus limiting access to data to only the researcher, and storing data in a secure location. Respondents were also informed that their participation in this research is voluntary, and they may withdraw from it at any time prior to submission if they wish. Ethical consent was obtained from the participants before proceeding with videorecording of the interviews. This research uses a mixed methods approach. The research design involves collecting, analyzing, and "mixing" quantitative and qualitative methods and data to enable a research inquiry. The research process is organized based on a five-pillar approach. The first three pillars are focused on testing the first hypothesis (H1) directed toward determining the extent to the academic performance of JLC students did improve after involvement with comprehensive JLC special program. The other two pillars relate to the second hypothesis (H2), which is directed toward determining the extent to which collective and applied knowledge at JLC is distinctive from typical practices in the field. The data collected for research were obtained from three sources: 1) a set of secondary data in the form of Grade Point Average (GPA) received from the registrar, 2) a set of primary data collected throughout structured questionnaire administered to students and alumni at JLC, and 3) another set of primary data collected throughout interviews conducted with staff and educators at JLC. The significance of this study is two folds. First, it validates the effectiveness of the special program at JLC for college-level students who learn differently. Second, it identifies the distinctiveness of the mix of techniques, methods, and practices, including the special individualized and personalized one-on-one approach at JLC.

Keywords : education, neuro-diverse students, program effectiveness, Jones learning center

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