

Inclusive Practices in Nigeria: Issues and Barriers

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Abstract

Inclusive practices in Nigeria is still a continuous process. Inclusive practices in Nigeria stipulate that all individuals, regardless of their background, culture, language, or abilities, have equal access to opportunities and resources which will inculcate requisite knowledge and survival skills in the society. Inclusive education policy allows children with disabilities to be educated alongside all other children in their community but there are lots of impediments. Hence, this paper examines inclusive education in public schools, issues and barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria.

A mixed-methods approach which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to collect data. 4-6 Focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, school administrators, and parents of learners with special needs in the Ogbomoso area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The FGDs will be used to gather in-depth, qualitative data on the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of inclusive education in Nigeria. The population comprised one hundred teachers both in regular schools and in special schools in the Ogbomoso South and North areas of Oyo State. Two research questions guided this study while the instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Inclusive Practices in Nigeria: Issue and Barriers". The sampling population was made through a purposive sampling technique. Thematic analysis, frequency count and simple percentage were used to generate and analyse data. The results revealed that many regular education teachers feel unprepared and fearful to work with learners with disabilities because they believe it could lead to lower academic standards. The unavailability of adequate resources and special support availability is also a barrier to the integration of persons with special needs in their school. Recommendations were made that the government should put inclusion policy in action not in paper and for inclusive education to be realistic in Nigeria all stakeholders should cooperate for integrated services to be delivered.

Keywords: *Inclusive practices, barrier, learners with disabilities.*

Introduction

Inclusion involves the reorganization of ordinary schools, in such a way that every mainstream school can accommodate every student regardless of their disabilities making it certain that each learner belongs to a single community. The concentration of inclusion is more focused on the discussion of values. Thus, the principle behind inclusion is founded on the broad human rights agenda, clearly emphasizing that segregation of any form is morally incorrect (National Policy on Education 2013). According to Spring (2014), inclusion is an educational practice in which children with disabilities are educated in classrooms with

children without disabilities. The aims of special needs are integrated into the general education setting for as much of the day as possible, with the full special support they need to be successful. Inclusion is concerned with meeting the diverse needs of all students (including students with disabilities) in an equitable and accepting education system (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). Inclusive education is a process where schools work to raise the learning outcomes and participation rates of all students while also addressing the barriers that limit the involvement of certain children and young people (Booth and Ainscow, 2002).

Inclusion as viewed by International Labour Organization (ILO, 2013) means people with or without disabilities can participate in an activity together and interact on an equal basis. ILO (2013) further explained that it is not limited to seeing hearing or doing the same thing. Inclusion has to do with people with or without disabilities experiencing the same thing at the same time and sharing that experience in society. The prevailing trend in education all over the globe is inclusive education. Inclusive education is a system of education which allows children with disabilities to learn together with those without disabilities in the same classroom. This trend has opened up the field of special education and the need for special education units and programmes to accommodate students with special needs in regular classroom/school settings. Students with disabilities and other special needs are now expected to be taught alongside regular students in regular school settings. The National Policy on Inclusive Education aims to help students with special needs to experience inclusive education when they can access and fully participate in learning, alongside their peers, supported by reasonable adjustments and teaching strategies tailored, to meet their individual needs. This is to discourage segregation of students with disabilities from the other students of their age. It is important to note that special education is systematically moving away from the era of placing students in a special classroom all day long as was the norm in the past (Zeiger, 2017).

The challenges of accommodating students with special needs in regular public schools include the inability to establish special education units, get special education teachers and provide facilities to cater for the special needs of the students (Obi, Okwueze, and Onuoha, 2017). By implications, the regular public schools are expected to employ and engage the services of special education teachers create a systemic collaboration between the special education teachers and the regular classroom/subject teachers, and develop programmes that will facilitate the learning of students with special needs without stigmatization. Furthermore, regular public schools are to provide facilities that will enhance the learning environment of the students (Bamidele, 2019).

Sanni (2018) and Rieser (2012) listed challenges militating against children with special educational needs as follows; Inadequate special educators in the field of learners with hearing impairment, poor funding of integrated schools, inadequate special teaching-learning materials that can appropriately address the educational needs of these learners, poor teaching methodology which fails to include these special learners in the schools classroom activities, regular teachers negative attitude towards learners with hearing impairment, ignorance on the part of teachers and other staff members on social - psychological implications of special needs, low self-esteem and deaf cultures exhibit by the children, negative attitude from hearing peers towards learners with hearing impairment, insufficient information on importance of inclusion by school administrators, partial involvement and negative attitude of the parents of learners with special needs. The education of children with disabilities has and continually goes unacknowledged by families due to absence of the potentials of children with disabilities (UNESCO, 2005). Children with special needs are often marginalized, highlighting the need for adaptive changes to existing educational structures to ensure their inclusion (Oyinloye and Okolo, 2018). Specifically, learners who are at risk of marginalization, exclusion, or underachievement should be

actively engaged in the learning process. This study aimed to explore the challenges and obstacles facing inclusive practices in Nigeria, examining the issues and barriers that hinder the effective implementation of inclusive education.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to investigate inclusive practices in Nigeria; issues and barriers and specifically to:

1. determine barriers to Inclusive Practices in Ogbomoso South and North of Oyo State.
2. examine facilities, personnel and equipment available in selected schools in Ogbomoso South and North of Oyo State.

Research questions

1. What are possible barriers to inclusion practices in Nigeria?
2. What are personnel/facilities/equipment available in an inclusive setting?

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach which is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods was used to collect data. 4-6 Focus group discussions were conducted with teachers, school administrators, and parents of learners with special needs in the Ogbomoso area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The FGDs will be used to gather in-depth, qualitative data on the experiences, challenges, and perceptions of inclusive education in Nigeria. The Inclusive Education Scale (IES) was adapted for the study while the instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled "Inclusive Practices in Nigeria: Issues and Barriers". The questionnaire was administered to a larger sample of teachers, school administrators, and parents of children with special needs in the Ogbomoso area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The questionnaire was used to gather quantitative data on the prevalence of inclusive education practices, attitudes towards inclusive education, and perceived barriers to inclusive education. Twenty (20) participants were purposively selected to participate in the FGDs, based on their experience with inclusive education and their willingness to share their experiences and a random sample of one hundred (100) teachers, school administrators, and parents of children with special needs was selected to participate in the questionnaire survey. The FGD data was analyzed using thematic analysis, to identify patterns and themes related to inclusive education in Nigeria while the questionnaire data will be analyzed using frequency counts and percentages to identify trends and relationships between variables.

Results of the focus group discussions

Theme 1: Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education

The participants identified several challenges that they face in implementing inclusive education. These challenges include:

- Lack of trained teachers (Teacher 1, School Administrator 2)
- Limited resources and infrastructure (Teacher 3, Parent 4)
- Lack of government support and funding (School Administrator 1)
- Stigma and negative attitudes towards children with special needs (Parent 3)

Quote: "I think the biggest challenge is the lack of trained teachers who can cater to the needs of children with special needs." (Teacher 1)

Theme 2: Benefits of Inclusive Education

The participants identified several benefits of inclusive education. These benefits include:

- Increased confidence and independence for children with special needs (Parent 1)
- Improved social skills and friendships for children with special needs (Teacher 2)

- Increased acceptance and inclusion of children with special needs (School Administrator 1)
- Preparation of all children for a diverse and inclusive society (Parent 4)

Quote: "Inclusive education has helped my child to become more confident and independent, and has also helped him to make friends with other children." (Parent 1)

Theme 3: Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Education

The participants identified several strategies that they use to implement inclusive education. These strategies include:

- Providing professional development opportunities for teachers (School Administrator 3)
- Involving parents and the community in the implementation of inclusive education (Teacher 3)
- Developing a clear policy and guidelines on how to implement inclusive education (School Administrator 2)
- Providing equal access to resources and opportunities for all children (Parent 2)

Quote: "We need to provide professional development opportunities for teachers to learn how to teach children with special needs." (School Administrator 3)

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Results and data analysis for this study are presented below:

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Educational Qualifications		
	Frequency	Percentage
Degree & above	30	30%
NCE	70	70%
Total	100	100%
Teachers experience		
	Frequency	Percentage
10 years & above	70	70%
1-9 years	30	30%
Total	100	100%
Gender		
	Frequency	Percentage
Male	40	40%
Female	60	60%
Total	100	100%
Discipline		
	Frequency	Percentage
Education	70	70%
Special education	30	30%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows that the majority of regular teachers are NCE scholars with a lot of experience, many of the teachers are females with bias in the education discipline. 70% of them were NCE holders while 30% were having degree and above

Table 2: Barriers to Inclusive practices

Research question 1: What are possible barriers to Inclusion Practices?

S/N			Frequency	Percentage	Total
1	I can work with children with disabilities if given opportunities	Agree	27	27%	100
		Disagree	73	73%	100%
2	I have enough training/certification to handle children with disabilities in my class	Agree	22	22%	100
		Disagree	78	78%	100%
3	There is enough special equipment that can cater for children with disabilities in my class	Agree	20	20%	100
		Disagree	80	80%	100%
4	I am not interested in teaching children with disabilities in my class even though a special educator will be available to co-teach with me	Agree	72	72%	100
		Disagree	28	28%	100%
5	Children with disabilities when having contact with them can transfer disabilities to me	Agree	80	80%	100
		Disagree	20	20%	100%
6	There is enough equipment for me to go to co-teach with the regular teacher	Agree	20	20%	100
		Disagree	70	70%	100%
7	I have enough knowledge to handle all the categories of children with disabilities in my class	Agree	83	83%	100
		Disagree	17	17%	100%

S/N			Frequency	Percentage	Total
8	I have enjoyed the collaboration of parent in assisting their ward towards their academic pursuit	Agree	81	81%	100
		Disagree	19	19%	100%
9	The government provides enough funds to cater for both children with disabilities and without disabilities in the school	Agree	70	70%	100
		Disagree	30	30%	100%
10	As a special educator, I feel that inclusive education may not work in Nigeria due to the Government's lackadaisical attitude towards education generally	Agree	30	30%	100
		Disagree	70	70%	100%
11	I do not know the social and psychological implications of disabilities	Agree	77	77%	100
		Disagree	23	23%	100%
12	No sufficient information on the importance of inclusion to school administrators	Agree	80	80%	100
		Disagree	20	20%	100%

Table 2 results showed that there are inadequate special educators and regular teachers, poor funding of integrated schools, inadequate special teaching learning materials, regular teachers' negative attitude towards learners with disabilities, lack of parental involvement in the education of children with disabilities and there is no sufficient information on the importance of inclusion practices to school administrators.

Table 3: Availability of personnel/facilities/equipment schools

Research question 2: What are the personnel/facilities/equipment available in an Inclusive setting?

S/N	Personnel/facilities/equipment	Frequency			Percentage			Total
		Available	Available but not in use	Not available	Available %	Available but not in use %	Not available %	
1	ICT equipment and assistive technology	-	70	30	0	70	30	100
2	School psychologist	-	-	100	0	0	100	100
3	Guidance counsellor	60	-	40	60	0	40	100
4	Brailist	02	-	98	02	0	98	100
5	Sign language interpreters	03	-	97	03	0	97	100
6	Braille machine	03	-	97	03	0	97	100
7	Resource room	01	-	99	01	0	99	100
8	Social worker	-	-	100	0	0	100	100
9	Audiologist	-	-	100	0	0	100	100
10	Occupational therapist	-	-	100	0	0	100	100
11	Crutches	-	-	100	0	0	100	100
12	Good roads and ramps for the Physical impaired	-	-	100	0	0	100	100

Discussion of findings

Results from Table 2 show that there are lots of barriers to Inclusion practices in Nigeria. This result is in line with the work of Sanni (2018) and Rieser (2012) who listed challenges militating against children with special educational needs as; Inadequate special educators in the field of learners with hearing impairment, poor funding of integrated schools, inadequate special teaching-learning materials that can appropriately address the educational needs of these learners, poor teaching methodology which fails to include these special learners in the schools classroom activities, regular teachers negative attitude towards learners with hearing impairment, ignorance on the part of teachers and other staff members on social-psychological implications of special needs, low self-esteem and deaf cultures exhibit by the children, negative attitude from hearing peers towards learners with hearing impairment, insufficient information on importance of inclusion by school administrators, partial involvement and negative attitude of the parents of learners with special needs. The education of children with disabilities has and continually goes unacknowledged by families due to absence of the potentials of children with disabilities. UNESCO (2005) also reported that children with special needs are marginalized hence suggesting that there is a need to make changes to accommodate disabled to fit into already existing structures and groups of learners who are at risk of marginalization, exclusion or under-achievement should be involved to participate in any learning process. In Addition, the Government of Ghana (2015) explains that the availability of limited resources has resulted in strategies uttered in national plans meeting the needs of children with disabilities.

The result of Table 3 showed that ICT equipment and guidance counsellors are the only equipment and personnel available which means that inclusive education still needs to be addressed in Ogbomosho south and north of Oyo state. These findings are in line with Adeleke and Ogundoyin (2016) who reported that educational services for pupils with special needs have not received adequate attention and the Government does not see any need to build or upgrade the available schools to the standard that can accommodate persons with disabilities. They also added that individuals with disabilities are legal citizens of a country with the right to necessary facilities like the non-disabled but due to insufficient funds facilities needed are inadequate. Adeleke (2019) in his work reiterate that accessibility problems and learning materials are constraints to the education of persons with special needs. Consequently, Ajobiewe (2000) suggested that lack of access to quality education has been a major problem facing individuals with special needs all over the world lack of policy and legislation for the welfare of persons with disabilities including functional educational programmes also causes barriers to educate persons with special needs in a regular classroom.

Conclusion

Many regular education teachers feel unprepared, and fearful to work with learners with disabilities because it may lead to a lower academic standard.

Recommendation

The following recommendation is necessary for inclusive practices to be achieved;

1. Teachers must develop self-efficacy towards inclusion.
2. Inclusion policy should be in action not in paper.
3. All stakeholders should collaborate for inclusion to work.
4. Resources and specially supported equipment should be provided for the schools.
5. Inclusive education policy covers children with disabilities to be educated with children without disabilities hence regular teachers/special educators should be trained and retrained

6. All equipment needed should be supplied to the school by the government.
7. More teachers should be recruited and governments should provide enough funds for day to day activities of the school.

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