



Effective Inclusive Education at Upper Basic Education Level in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State: A Reality or an Illusion?

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Abstract

Inclusive education requires that students with disabilities or special needs are integrated into the mainstream regular education system with resources and support services for teachers to ease the integration. In light of this, the study investigated whether inclusive education is a reality or an illusion. It sought to find out the resources available for inclusive education and teachers' dispositions towards inclusive education. Three research questions guided the study. This study adopted a descriptive survey design. This study was carried out in Nsukka LGA, Enugu State. The sample was 30 primary school teachers from ten primary schools in Nsukka LGA. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw teachers who have children with special needs in their class. The instruments for data collection were a rating scale and a questionnaire. A reliability index of 0.79 was obtained using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate. Research questions one and two were answered using frequencies and simple percentages. Question three was answered using mean scores. The findings showed that human and material resources are not available for inclusive education and that teachers have negative dispositions towards inclusive education in upper basic education level in Nsukka LGA. It was recommended among others that government, school administrators and other well-meaning organizations and individuals should provide adequate material resources for inclusive education and that government through the ministry of education should endeavour to train and recruit teachers in sign language and special education in upper basic education level.

Keywords: Inclusive, Education, Special Needs, Upper Basic Level, Resources

Introduction

Education is a process of making an individual a sound and better person for effective participation and functioning in the society. It is a process of making the citizens of a nation to be well behaved individuals carrying out their duties and responsibilities and peacefully demanding for their rights and privileges. Every society or nation desires that its citizens are well conformed to the rules and regulations governing such nation. Therefore, every citizen irrespective of gender, tribe, age, socio-economic status or background and state of mental and physical health has right to education. It is true that some individuals are more privileged or advantaged than others in terms of having access to education and other life amenities.

However, care must be taken to see that the disadvantaged or disabled persons are not left totally on their own uneducated as neglecting them may lead to them becoming nuisance in the society. They have little hope of going to school, getting a job, having their own home, creating a family and raising their children, enjoying a social life or voting. Also access to shops, public facilities and transport is difficult or mostly impossible (Sharma, 2012). These disadvantaged persons are persons with special needs who include children or people who are physically challenged (blind, crippled, deaf, dumb), mentally retarded or intellectually disabled. These persons with special

needs are also human beings and require affection and sense of belongingness. Thus, the need for inclusive education to integrate them into the mainstream education where they can be around other 'normal' people and feel they can also achieve their goals like every other person. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities requires the development of an inclusive education system for all (Rieser, 2012).

Inclusive education is the integration of children with special needs into the mainstream educational activities in schools with children without special needs. It is about shifting the focus from altering disabled people to fit into society to transforming society, and the world, by changing attitudes, removing barriers and providing the right support (Reiser, 2012). Inclusive education as put forward by Snow (2016) is children with disabilities being educated in the schools they would attend if they did not have disabilities, in age appropriate regular education classrooms where supports and services are provided for both students and teachers and where students with disabilities are fully participating members of their school communities in academic and extracurricular activities. In the same vein, Taylor (2006) defined inclusion as serving students with a full range of abilities and disabilities in mainstream classroom with appropriate in-class support. Inclusion in education is a process of enabling all children to learn and participate effectively within mainstream school systems, without segregation. This includes children with special needs – children who are physically handicapped, have difficulty in learning, and other challenges.

There are some justifications for advocating for inclusive education. According to UNESCO (2009, p.9) there is an educational justification: the requirement for inclusive schools to educate all children together means that teachers have to develop ways of teaching that respond to individual differences and that therefore benefit not just the students with disabilities but all children. Second, there is a social justification: inclusive schools are able to change attitudes toward diversity by educating all children together where children start seeing how they are similar to rather than how they are different from each other, and this helps form the basis for a just and non-discriminatory society. Thirdly, there is an economic justification: it is less costly to establish and maintain schools that educate all children together than to set up a complex system of different types of schools specializing in education for different groups of children. The conclusion that can be drawn from UNESCO's educational justification for inclusive education is that teachers will need additional support and training to function effectively in an inclusive setting.

For effective inclusive education, there is need for conscious and deliberate efforts towards making sure that children with special needs are well carried along side with their normal counterparts. There should be both material and human resources to ensure smooth running of inclusive education. According Margaritoiu (2010), the availability and utilization of resources in an inclusive school sets the pace for the improvement of practical conditions for inclusion. The resources also enhance the learning and teaching experienced by all students, regardless of circumstances. Gronlund (2010) articulated that Inclusive Education requires support of both equipment and skills, though resources required to cater for disabilities can be expensive and scarce. The authors further acknowledge that these equipments are not used at all in mainstream schools because children with disabilities are contested and hence their effort is mainly identifying these children and making them go to special schools.

The school environment must be conducive enough to assure children with special needs that their needs are actually borne in mind and are fully accommodated. Buhere and Ochieng (2013) noted that inclusive settings in classroom organization, path access-ways and other school facilities must be accessible by children with disabilities to foster learning. According to Rombo (2007), provision should be made for children with disabilities to have an open access to facilities and premises.



Teachers' dispositions towards children with special needs also need to be checked if effective inclusive education is to be achieved. Garwood and Loan (2018) observed that negative views of students with emotional behavioural difficulties are a barrier to their inclusion. Teachers need to be prepared and trained in inclusive education in order not to cheat children with special needs. Successful implementation of including people with special educational needs in mainstream schools and classes depends largely on teachers having the requisite knowledge, skills and experience (Defor, 2016). Valeo (2008) observed that inclusive education programme could be successfully implemented if the level of the teaching competence was increased. The opportunities to attend courses that are related to inclusive education programme have to be created. Furthermore, Manisa, Ramlee and Zalizani (2006) noted that exposure to inclusive education is important in order for teachers to understand the form of education programme as well as understanding their role in implementing inclusive education.

However, an observation by the researchers of happenings in some primary schools in Nsukka town revealed that there was no special arrangement in these schools to accommodate children with special needs. Upper basic education level is of interest in this study because children at this level are fully self-aware of their needs and differences with other children. They are at this very conscious of rejection or acceptance based on their appearance or needs. If left emotional and psychologically damaged and rejected at this level, they may not be able to pick up later in life. Therefore, it is important to integrate them into mainstream schools and provide resources for the inclusion. Still, in a study by Sharma, Simi and Forlin (2015), it was observed that participants reported being mainly concerned about the lack of resources for inclusive education.

The normal school settings and activities are being run without any special intervention or attention to children with special needs. Glassgow and Hicks (2009) observed that the biggest barrier that one could find in inclusive schools is one that does not accommodate children with disabilities but rather rejects them. Margaritoiu (2010) observed that teachers of inclusive school reported that they were ill prepared when they entered the professional arena, although they had sufficient subject knowledge, it was felt that they needed more generic teaching skills necessary for teaching diverse population, i.e., teaching strategies, differentiating curriculum, managing challenging behaviours. In the same vein, Kaur (2016) noted that inclusive education often does not respond to the need of children and young people. The author further noted that teachers often finish their professional training without acquiring the skills they need to attain to work with children with diverse needs.

The question now is with what resources is inclusive education going to be run with? In a study by Sharma, Simi and Forlin (2015), it was observed that participants being mainly concerned about the lack of resources for inclusive education. Are there personnel specially trained and employed for inclusive education? How well prepared and trained are primary school teachers in carrying out inclusive education at upper basic level. Are the teachers physically, psychological and mentally/academically ready for children with special needs? Until positive answers are provided to these questions, inclusive education at upper basic level is going to be an illusion.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the material resources available for inclusion education at upper basic level in Nsukka LGA?
- 2) What are the human resources available for inclusion education at upper basic level in Nsukka LGA?
- 3) What are teachers' dispositions towards inclusive education at upper basic level in Nsukka LGA?

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey design. This design is appropriate since it collected data from a sample representing an entire population to describe the status-quo of inclusive education. This study was carried out in

Nsukka Local Government Area of Enugu State. The population of this study comprised of all the 1.053 primary school teachers in Nsukka Local Government Area, Enugu State. The sample for the study was 30 primary school teachers from ten primary schools in Nsukka LGA. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw three teachers from each of the ten schools who have children with special needs in their class. The instruments for data collection were rating scale and questionnaire titled “Inclusive education human and material resources rating scale” and Teachers’ dispositions towards inclusive education questionnaire” respectively. The rating scale has two clusters with response options of available and not available. Cluster one is on availability of material resources with nine items while cluster two is on availability of human resources for inclusive education with four items. The questionnaire on teachers’ disposition towards inclusive education has eight items with response options of strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed and strongly disagreed. Four items are positively phrased while four are negatively phrased. The instruments were validated by three experts, one from Special Education unit, one from Educational Psychology unit, both in Educational Foundations Department, and one from Measurement and evaluation unit, Department of Science Education, all from University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Their corrections and suggestions were duly effected in the final draft of the instruments. The questionnaire was subjected to reliability test using Cronbach Alpha reliability estimate using data obtained from ten primary school teachers outside the sampled schools. A reliability index of 0.79 was obtained making the instrument reliable for the study. Frequencies and simple percentages and mean scores were used for data analysis. Research questions one and two were answered using frequencies and simple percentages. The benchmark for availability is 50%. Items with 0-49% means not available while items with 50% and above means available. Question three was answered using mean scores. The bench mark for acceptance is 2.50. Items with mean scores of 0-0.49 shows not accepted while items with mean scores of 0.50 and above shows accepted.

Results

Research question 1: What are the material resources available for inclusive education at upper basic level in Nsukka LGA?

Table 1: Available material resources for inclusive education at upper basic level

S/N	Item	Frequency/Percentage	
		Available (%)	Not Available (%)
1	Braille	1(3.3)	29(96.7)
2	Hearing aids for hearing impaired	2(6.7)	28(93.3)
3	Television sets	3(10.0)	27(90.0)
4	Recording devices	5(16.7)	25(83.3)
5	Computers	13(43.3)	17(56.7)
6	Wheelchairs	0(0.0)	30(100)
7	Crutches	1(3.3)	29(96.7)
8	Magnifying glasses	2(6.7)	28(93.3)
9	Incentives for teachers caring for pupils with special needs	0(0.0)	30(100)

Table 1 above shows that the material resources for inclusive education are not available. Braille got 3.3%, hearing aids for hearing impaired got 6.7%, television sets got 10.0%, recording devices had 16.7%, computers got 43.3%, wheelchairs and incentives for teachers caring for pupils with special needs are not available at all while crutches and magnifying glasses got 3.3% and 6.7%. These indicate that the resources are not available for inclusive



education at upper basic level.

Research question 2: What are the human resources available for inclusive education at upper basic level in Nsukka LGA?

Table 2: Available human resources for inclusive education at upper basic level

S/N	Item	Frequency/Percentage	
		Available (%)	Not Available (%)
1	Trained teachers in sign language	1(3.3)	29(96.7)
2	Trained teachers in special education	6(20.0)	24(80.0)
3	Nurses specifically for pupils with disabilities	4(13.3)	26(86.7)
4	Technicians for disabilities' devices/aids	1(3.3)	29(96.7)

From table 2, it can be observed that the availability of trained teachers in sign language is 3.3%, trained teachers in special education got 20.0%, nurses specifically for pupils with disabilities got 13.3% while technicians for disabilities devices got 3.3%. These low percentages indicate non availability of human resources for inclusive education.

Research question 3: What are teachers' dispositions towards inclusive education?

Table 3: Teachers' disposition towards inclusive education at upper basic level

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	I whole heartedly accept children with special needs in my classroom	2.48	Reject
2	I give children with special needs the attention they deserve	2.45	Reject
3	I allow children with special needs in my class to work at their own pace	2.69	Accept
4	I give equal time for class activities to all pupils in my class whether disabled or not	2.48	Reject
5	I use differentiated instruction in my class to help children with special needs	2.34	Reject
6	I think that children with special needs are being cheated in inclusive classroom	2.54	Accept
7	I feel that children with special needs in inclusive classroom are just passing time	2.88	Accept
8	I do not think that inclusive education is ideal in the interest of children with special needs	2.78	Accept

Table 3 shows that, items 1, 2 and 5 depicting positive dispositions towards inclusive education with mean scores of 2.48, 2.45 and 2.34 are rejected. Items 6, 7 and 8 depicting negative dispositions towards inclusive education with mean scores of 2.54, 2.88 and 2.78 are accepted. Positive item 3 with a mean score of 2.69 is accepted while negative item 4 with a mean score of 2.48 is rejected. Almost all the positive items except one were rejected. Respondents rejected whole heartedly accepting children with special needs in their classroom, giving children with special needs the attention they deserve, and using differentiated instruction to help children with special needs. While all the negative items except one were accepted. This implies that respondents accepted that children with special needs are being cheated in inclusive classroom, passing time and that inclusive education is

not ideal in the interest of children with special needs. This indicates that teachers have negative dispositions towards inclusive education.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal non availability of material resources for inclusive education. Braille, hearing aids for hearing impaired, television sets, recording devices, computers, wheelchairs, crutches, magnifying glasses and incentives for teachers caring for pupils with special needs are not available for inclusive education. This finding is not surprising. This is because many researchers identified lack of or inadequate resources as an obstacle to inclusive education (Forlin, Kawai, & Higushi, 2014; Forlin, 2013; Sharma, Forlin, Deppeler, & Guang-xue, 2012). From the finding of this study, it is obvious that Nigerian government is paying lip service to inclusive education. This finding is in line with that of Buhere and Ochieng (2013) who found out the available learning resources are inadequate and inappropriate. The researchers found out that only 6 (20%) of the schools had books for Special Needs learners compared to 24 (80%) of the schools that had none among other materials.

The findings further revealed that human resources are not available for inclusive education. Inclusive education requires that qualified and trained personnel should be available to support regular classroom teachers. Where these personnel are lacking or inadequate, inclusive education will remain a mirage. This finding supports that of Okongo, Ngao, Rop, and Nyongesa (2015) whose study revealed there were inadequate teaching and learning resources both (material and human) at pre-school centres in Nyamira North Sub- County which affects the implementation of inclusive education in pre-school centers.

The findings also revealed that teachers have negative dispositions towards inclusive education. This finding supports the observation of Kafia (2014) who noted that there are negative perceptions of children with disabilities. Furthermore, Sabrina and Sansrisna (2017) found out that most of the teachers used in their study were hesitant in accepting the task as inclusive teachers. Conversely, Kurniawatia, Minnaert, Mangunsong, and Ahmed (2012) found out that teachers are in favor of inclusion and their attitudes seem to be related to their teaching experiences and training in special education in Jakarta, Indonesia. The finding in this study is expected and can be explained by the fact that regular teachers are also expected to function in inclusive classrooms without proper education or training in special needs education. One cannot offer what one does not have. If teachers are not equipped with the right skills and attitudes for inclusive education, they are bound to loathe children with special needs, hence their negative dispositions towards inclusive education.

Conclusion

Based on the finding of this study, the researcher concludes that material and human resources for inclusive education are not available. Teachers have negative dispositions towards inclusive education. The researcher therefore, concludes that inclusive education is an illusion in Nigeria at upper basic education level until there is adequate material and human resources and positive dispositions of teachers towards inclusive education. Inclusive education is not just putting together children with special needs into mainstream education system with their peers. It encompasses providing all the necessary resources and supports for both teachers and the learners to make integration smooth and easier. It also involves teachers being very accommodating and accepting children with special needs.



Recommendations

The following recommendations are made in line with the findings of the study:

- 1) Government, school administrators and other well-meaning organizations and individuals should provide adequate material resources for inclusive education
- 2) Government through the ministry of education should endeavour to train and recruit teachers in sign language and special education in upper basic education level.
- 3) Government and school administrators through workshops and seminars should sensitize teachers on the importance of inclusive education and dangers of segregation in inclusive classroom. Teachers should be appealed to and trained to have positive dispositions towards inclusive education.
- 4) Government should provide adequate incentives for teachers in inclusive classrooms.

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