

ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF PUBLIC JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN GOMBE STATE.

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Abstract

The study investigated the attitude towards inclusive education of public junior secondary school teachers in Gombe State. The study was guided by three objectives, three research questions and two hypotheses. The study used the survey design method and the population of the study consisted of all teachers of junior secondary schools in Gombe State. The study population consisted of 2,550 teachers distributed across the 346 public junior secondary schools in the state. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting two schools from each senatorial district and one public special school that the state has, making a total of seven schools. An adapted questionnaire by Joseph Agbenyega named Attitude towards inclusion scale (ATIAS) which has twenty items was used in the study with a reliability of Cronbach alpha of 0.794. Frequencies, percentages and t- test were used in analysing the data that was collected. Findings of the study include: teachers of junior secondary schools in Gombe State have positive attitude towards inclusive education; there wasn't significant gender difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State; so also there wasn't any significant difference in the attitude of teachers of regular and special school towards inclusive education in Gombe State. Based on the findings the researcher recommended that teacher training institutions should have special education courses as core courses in their curriculum to allow teachers in training have adequate knowledge and skills of how to handle all students in respective of challenges. Workshops and seminars should be conducted for teachers in our secondary schools on inclusive education. Adequate materials and facilities to cater for the physically challenged are to be provided by the government in our secondary schools. The environment of our schools should be such that caters for the welfare of all students.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Mainstream schools, disability, field trip

Introduction

Education for all means everybody has the right to education without segregation in respect of any disability. Learner diversity is fast gaining attention in the contemporary scholarship of teaching. This development is informed by the

fact that the need to prepare teachers to work with diverse students has become a major challenge to teacher education (Gay, 2000). According to McCabe (2001), universities in the United States and elsewhere now prepare teachers to cope with the challenge of learner diversity to meet the requirements of graduates with cross-cultural competencies and a broad perspective of their discipline. Teicher and Stenbe (2010) confirm that such provision have proved both viable and rewarding, because student teachers who have been exposed to such curricular experiences report increased abilities to navigate unfamiliar cultures, improved foreign language skills, better understanding of students with special needs, as well as a more critical perspective in diversity and other issues in the scholarship of teaching. According to Bryant, Smith, and Bryant (2008) inclusive education can be interpreted as the philosophy and practice of educating students with disabilities in general education settings. The practice anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. In other words, children with disabilities benefit from learning in a regular classroom, while their peers without disabilities gain from being exposed to children with diverse characteristics, talents and temperaments.

Moreover inclusion is used to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom she would attend. It involves bringing the ancillary services to the child, and 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 it 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). For the child with a disability to benefit optimally from inclusion, it is imperative for general education teachers to be able to teach a wider array of children, including those with varying disabilities, and to collaborate and plan effectively with special educators.

In addition, inclusive education means different and diverse pupils learning side by side in the same classroom. Inclusive systems provide a better quality education for all children and are instrumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. The inclusive education approach is based on an essential principle: all children should learn together, in spite of their differences and challenges. Children can enjoy together not only the teaching hours and classroom activities but also after-school activities or field trips. Education for all has always been an integral part of the sustainable development agenda, but it gained even more attention in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, whose 4th goal is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (Booth & Dyseegaard 2008). It emphasizes the elimination of gender disparities in education and ensures equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable. In addition, the agenda calls for building and upgrading

education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and also provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (Britzman, 2003). Additionally, there is a need to recognise that legislation, funding, curriculum, assessment and accountability should be considered holistically if they are to support a move towards more inclusive practice in which teacher education plays a key role (Bustos, Lartec, Guzman, Casiano, Carpio, and Tongyofen, (2012).

According to the United Nation Children Education Fund (2015) inclusive education is responsive to student-needs and relevant to their life. Therefore, inclusive education is not about teaching the students that can cope with un-responsive educational system. Inclusive education is the means by which teaching methods, curriculum, staff and pedagogy support and are adapted to the learning of all students, including those students who traditional systems have not been able to reach. The UNICEF approach to Inclusive Education is informed by seven basic principles of human rights: universality and inalienability; indivisibility; interdependence and interrelatedness; equality and non-discrimination; participation and inclusion; empowerment; and accountability and respect for the rule of law (UNICEF, 2015).

The Dakar World Education Forum stated clearly, that inclusive education is vital if the Education for All (EFA) goal is to be achieved (UNESCO, 2000). Graham, (2007) maintains that some countries are working to help their schools become inclusive. Some of these countries include Australia, India, Lesotho, Burkina Faso etc. It is worthy of note that these countries are at different pilot stages of inclusion (of both the physically challenged and nonphysical challenged). Traditionally, physically challenged (disabled children) and those with other special educational needs have experienced exclusion, discrimination and segregation from mainstream education and their peer. Some are placed in separate classes; others are placed in special schools. Many of them have therefore been denied access to the conventional education of any sort.

Magrab (2003) also defines inclusive education as an approach that recognizes the fact that each child is a unique learner and requires ordinary schools for education in their community regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, cultural, religious, linguistic or other system that removes barriers and increases educational opportunities for all children irrespective of their unique differences. Inclusive education can be said to be synonymous with Integration.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) describes special education as the education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of the different types of handicaps, blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness at hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, etc, due to the circumstances of birth, position, mental and physical

health patterns or accident in later life. Inclusive education is not only concerned with disabled children or with finding an alternative to segregated special schooling. Inclusive education therefore is about helping mainstream schools to overcome the barriers so that they can meet the learning needs of all children in the country.

Inclusive Education Policy in Nigeria

The formulation of educational policy and regulations in Nigeria is the dual mandate of the Federal and State Governments as it is an item in the Concurrent Legislative List. Attempts to entrench an inclusive education policy in Nigeria dates back to 1976 when the Universal Primary Education was introduced although with little success. In 1977, the first national policy on education was formulated. This document contained some provisions for special education including the idea of equalizing education for all children irrespective of their physical, mental, and emotional state (Garuba, 2003). One of the first states in Nigeria to move forward with the dictates for the education of children with special needs in the 1977 National Policy on Education was Plateau State; by enacting the Plateau State Handicapped Law in 1981 which makes the education of children with disabilities compulsory with a provision for the rehabilitation of adults with disabilities. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) also explains that the junior secondary school shall be both pre-vocational and academic. It shall be tuition free, universal and compulsory, shall teach basic subjects which will enable pupils to acquire further knowledge and skills.

However the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy was adopted and enacted into law in 2004 as the UBE Act which makes a provision of 2% of its Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) to finance the UBE programme. Thus, the compulsory free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004, provides a legal framework within which the Federal Government supports states towards achieving uninterrupted nine-year compulsory Universal Basic Education for all children at primary and junior secondary school levels throughout the country (<http://www.fme.gov.ng/pages/cati.asp>). However the actual provision for funding of the education of children with special needs, as a national education policy under the UBE Act, was not put into effect until 2008 (Ajuwon, 2008). This was when the policy of Inclusive Education was officially and formally adopted as an integral part of the UBE policy. Section 7 of the revised 2008 National Policy on Education explicitly recognizes that children and youths with special needs shall be provided with inclusive education services. The commitment is made to equalize educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities. Undoubtedly, these are lofty goals intended to improve the quality of special education services, but much more is needed to translate the goals into concrete action.

Challenges of inclusive education for the physically challenged

According to Charema (2005) lack of relevant research information, inadequate support services, lack of appropriate facilities and materials, inadequate training programmes and ineffective policies and legislation, considering financial constraints and political instability experienced in most developing countries are the major challenges of inclusive education for the physically challenged. Ajuwon (2012) on inclusive education in Nigeria found that one of the major challenges of inclusive education is lack of qualified personnel. In a study the scholar arrived at the following findings, 'While most participants stated they were tolerant of the diverse behaviours of their students within the inclusive setting, they were less confident in their abilities to manage the behaviours of students with special needs. This lack of confidence in their professional competence may indicate limited training and/or exposure to inclusive practices'.

Statement of Problem

Inclusive education does away with the practice of segregating students with learning and physical challenges from the rest of the student body. But can this happen where the societal norms restrict the accommodation of students with disabilities and learning issues into regular schools, when schools do not have the facilities to accommodate students with special need and teachers are not trained or are unwilling to work with different kinds of students with special needs? This is evident in Gombe state as it has a public special school where it caters for the physically challenged and one wonders why this is done. The soaring need for the proper integration of all students inclusively into regular schools especially teacher education programme cannot be overemphasized. It is against this background of continuous neglect to develop the potentials of this large minority of physically challenged students that the study sets out to investigate attitude of public junior secondary school teachers in Gombe State.

Objectives

1. To find out the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State.
2. To determine whether gender difference exists in the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State.
3. To find out whether difference exists in the attitude of regular and special teachers of public junior secondary school on inclusive education in Gombe State.

Research questions

1. What is the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe state?

2. Is there any significant gender difference in the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State?
3. Is there difference in the attitude of regular and special teachers of public junior secondary school towards inclusive in Gombe State?

Hypotheses

2. There is a significant gender difference in the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State.
3. There is significant difference in the attitude of regular and special teachers of public junior secondary school towards inclusive education in Gombe state.

Method

The descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. The population of the study consisted of all 2550 public teachers of junior secondary schools in Gombe State distributed across all the junior secondary schools in the state. Stratified random sampling was used in selecting seven schools, two from each of the three senatorial districts and the only public special school that the state had. Fifteen teachers were selected using simple random sampling technique from each of the six regular schools while 34 were selected using also simple random technique from the special school making a total of 124 teachers. An adapted questionnaire from Agbenyega in Ghana named Attitude Towards Inclusion Scale (ATIAS) was used in the study. A Cronbach alpha of 0.794 was obtained. Frequencies, percentages and t-test were used in analysing the data that was collected.

Results

Research question 1: What is the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State?

Table 1: Attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State.

| | | SA | | A | | SD | | D | | U | | |
|----|---|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|-----|-----|
| sn | statements | fr | p | fr | p | fr | p | fr | p | fr | p | % |
| 1 | Do you want to see all children educated in regular class? | 43 | 34.7 | 45 | 36.3 | 16 | 12.9 | 18 | 14.5 | 2 | 1.6 | 100 |
| 2 | I feel that students can get academic improvement in inclusive education. | 35 | 28.2 | 65 | 52.4 | 7 | 5.6 | 16 | 12.9 | 1 | .8 | 100 |
| 3 | Do you believe that Inclusive education will likely have positive effect on social and emotional development of students with disability? | 35 | 28.2 | 65 | 52.4 | 7 | 5.6 | 16 | 12.9 | 1 | .8 | 100 |
| 4 | I believe that the need of students with disability can be best served in regular and not separate settings | 58 | 46.8 | 46 | 37.1 | 7 | 5.6 | 12 | 9.7 | 1 | .8 | 100 |
| 5 | I will like to see students with severe disability educated in regular setting. | 58 | 46.8 | 39 | 31.5 | 7 | 5.6 | 17 | 13.7 | 3 | 2.4 | 100 |
| 6 | I will like to see students whose speech is difficult to understand are in regular school. | 39 | 31.5 | 28 | 22.6 | 23 | 18.5 | 28 | 22.6 | 6 | 4.8 | 100 |
| 7 | Do you think that Students who require Braille should be in regular school? | 25 | 20.2 | 42 | 33.9 | 31 | 25.0 | 22 | 17.7 | 4 | 3.2 | 100 |
| 8 | I will like to see students who need sign language as a medium of communication | 26 | 21.0 | 44 | 35.5 | 35 | 28.2 | 18 | 14.5 | 1 | .8 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|----|------|----|------|----|------|----|------|---|-----|-----|
| | are in regular school. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | Will you feel good to see Special and regular teachers work together to teach students with special need in regular class? | 49 | 39.5 | 61 | 49.2 | 10 | 8.1 | 4 | 3.2 | - | - | 100 |
| 10 | Do you accept that regular teachers have main responsibility towards students with disability in their classrooms? | 39 | 31.5 | 58 | 46.8 | 13 | 10.5 | 10 | 8.1 | 4 | 3.1 | 100 |
| 11 | I feel that Inclusion is more of theory than practice. | 34 | 27.4 | 50 | 40.3 | 22 | 17.7 | 16 | 12.9 | 2 | 1.6 | 100 |
| 12 | To me Lack of adequate resource and special materials will make inclusive difficult. | 59 | 47.6 | 43 | 34.7 | 15 | 12.1 | 4 | 3.2 | 3 | 2.4 | 100 |
| 13 | Lack of personnel who can handle both special/normal children in an inclusive classroom is a challenge. | 59 | 47.6 | 39 | 31.5 | 14 | 11.3 | 9 | 7.3 | 3 | 2.4 | |
| 14 | Inadequate infrastructure will make inclusive impossible. | 56 | 45.2 | 40 | 32.3 | 15 | 12.1 | 10 | 8.1 | 3 | 2.3 | 100 |
| 15 | It will not be difficult to give equal attention to all students in inclusive education. | 45 | 36.3 | 44 | 35.5 | 17 | 13.7 | 15 | 12.1 | 3 | 2.4 | 100 |
| 16 | I will be able to cope with disable students if found in my class. | 35 | 28.2 | 31 | 25.0 | 24 | 19.4 | 26 | 21.0 | 8 | 6.5 | 100 |
| 17 | I do have the knowledge and | 35 | 28.2 | 39 | 31.5 | 21 | 16.9 | 26 | 21.0 | 3 | 2.4 | 100 |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|----|--|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|-----|------|----|-----|-----|
| | skills to teach students with disability. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | Keeping pace with normal students at listening, speaking, writing and note taking cannot be a challenge to the physically challenged in an inclusive school. | 34 | 27.4 | 51 | 41.1 | 22 | 17.7 | 15 | 12.1 | 2 | 1.6 | 100 |
| 19 | Mobility from home to school possesses some difficulty to the physically challenged | 45 | 36.3 | 59 | 47.6 | 14 | 11.3 | 5 | 4.0 | 1 | .8 | 100 |
| 20 | Negative attitude on the part of government and society is a measure problem inhibiting integration of the physically challenged. | 62 | 50.0 | 45 | 36.3 | 11 | 8.9 | 4 | 3.2 | 2 | 1.6 | 100 |
| | Total | 871 | 43.5 | 934 | 46.7 | 331 | 16.5 | 291 | 14.5 | 50 | 2.5 | 124 |

124 Represent the total number of respondents

Table 1 shows that 43.5% of the respondents strongly agree with the items on inclusive education, 46.7% agree, 16.5 strongly disagree, and 14.5% disagree while 2.5% were undecided. The table also shows that about 90 to hundred respondents agree with inclusive education. This is evident from items one to four. Also the table shows that in item nine the respondents agree that regular and special teachers need to work together to teach special students in regular class. Item eleven shows that teachers have responsibilities over special children in their class. This is evident as 97 of them agree with the item. The respondents scores on items 12 to 20 shows that those who agree with the items are higher than those who disagree. Thus the attitude of junior secondary school teachers is positive towards inclusive education in Gombe State. .

Research question 2: Is there a significant gender difference in the attitude of public junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe State?

Table 2: t-table for Gender difference.

| Group | N | Mean | T cal | T cri | df | Sig at |
|--------|----|------|-------|-------|-----|--------|
| Male | 69 | 77.9 | -987 | 1.984 | 122 | 0.05 |
| Female | 55 | 79.2 | | | | |

Table 2 shows that the mean of the males stands at 77.9 where as that of the female stands at 79.2. Also the table shows that the calculated t is -987 and the critical value of t is 1.984 at the degrees of freedom of 122. This shows that the critical value which is the table value is higher than the calculated value of t at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the hypothesis stated that there is significant gender difference in the attitude towards inclusive education of public secondary school teachers in Gombe State, the hypothesis is rejected. Thus there is no significant gender difference in the attitude of junior secondary school teachers towards inclusive education in Gombe state.

Research question 3: Is there significant difference in the attitude of regular and special teachers of public junior secondary schools towards inclusive education in Gombe State?

Table 3: Independent sample t test for type of school

| Group | N | Mean | T cal | T cri | df | Sig at |
|---------|----|-------|-------|-------|-----|--------|
| regular | 90 | 78.07 | -950 | 1.984 | 122 | 0.05 |
| special | 34 | 79.61 | | | | |

Table 3 shows that the mean of the regular teachers stands at 78.07 where as that of the special teachers stand at 79.61. The table also shows that the calculated t is -950 and the critical is 1.984 at the degrees of freedom of 122. This shows that the critical value of t is higher than the calculated value of t at 0.05 level of significance. Based on the hypothesis stated that there is significant difference in the attitude towards inclusive education of public junior secondary schools regular and special teachers in Gombe state, the hypothesis is rejected. Therefore there is no significant difference in the attitude towards inclusive education of public junior secondary schools regular and special teachers in Gombe state.

Discussions

The finding of the study revealed that teachers of public junior secondary schools have positive attitude towards inclusive education, This is in line with (Federal Republic of Nigeria , 2004) that describes special education as the education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of the different types of handicaps, blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness at hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, etc, due to the circumstances of

birth, position, mental and physical health patterns or accident in later life. The national policy also further asserts that Inclusive education is not only concerned with disabled children or with finding an alternative to segregated special schooling. Inclusive education therefore is about helping mainstream schools to overcome the barriers so that they can meet the learning needs of all children in the country.

The finding of the study also revealed that there wasn't significant gender difference in the attitude towards inclusive education of public junior secondary schools teachers in Gombe State is in line with the compulsory free Universal Basic Education Act, 2004 that provides a legal framework within which the Federal Government supports states towards achieving uninterrupted nine-year compulsory Universal Basic Education for all children in primary and junior secondary school levels throughout the country. Thus it is with this notion that teachers have same opinion towards inclusive education.

The finding of the study which revealed that there wasn't any significant difference in the attitude towards inclusive education of public junior secondary school regular and special teachers in Gombe State is in line with the seven basic principles of human rights: universality and inalienability; indivisibility; interdependence and interrelatedness; equality and non discrimination; participation and inclusion; empowerment; and accountability and respect for the rule of law (UNICEF, 2015).

In addition, the finding also revealed that lack of adequate resources, personnel, infrastructure, lack of equal treatment of children, knowledge and skills of teaching the physically challenged, mobility of the physically challenged to and from school and negative attitude of government and the society at large constitute challenges of inclusive education for the physically challenged. This is in line with Charema (2005) who found out that lack of relevant research information, inadequate support services, lack of appropriate facilities and materials, inadequate training programmes and ineffective policies and legislation, Considering financial constraints and political instability experienced in most developing countries are the major challenges of inclusive education for the physically challenged.

Conclusion

The role of education as the engine of social and economic change and transformation cannot be overemphasized in any society. Education as a lifelong process seeks to re socialize individuals to adopt behaviours and lifestyles that are consistent with and support the developmental goals of the society. It is through education that the individual citizen is fully equipped to contribute meaningfully to the social and economic development of his nation. Therefore all students including the physically challenged should be allowed to contribute to the society and have

that basic education in an inclusive setting where they will feel accepted and not rejected.

Recommendations

1. Teacher training institutions should have special education courses as core courses in their curriculum to allow teachers in training have adequate knowledge and skills of how to handle the physically challenged.
2. Workshops and seminars be conducted for teachers in our secondary schools on inclusive education.
3. Adequate materials and facilities to cater for all students should be provided by the government in our secondary schools. The environment of the school should be such that caters for all students.
4. The well to do in the society should help the school financially in discharging its obligation to all students.
5. Moral lessons are to be given to students in our schools so that all can exist together in an inclusive setting.

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