

**Teachers' Training and Implementation of Inclusive Education in Calabar Municipality of
Cross River State, Nigeria.**

Orim Okpa Orim¹

Professor (Mrs.) A. E. O. Esu²

Abstract

This study investigated Teachers' training and effective implementation of inclusive education in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. The population for the study was 989 teachers and two hundred and forty-eight teachers (248) were sampled for the study through accidental sampling technique. The survey research design was adopted for this study. Two independent variables (teachers' pre-service training and teachers' in-service training) were used in relation to the implementation of inclusive education. Data was gathered with the use of questionnaire, two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Pearson product moment correlation was adopted for data analysis. The result revealed that there is significant relationship between teachers' pre-service training and teachers' in-service training and the implementation of inclusive education in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Government at all levels should make inclusive education compulsory in all teacher training institutions and colleges to avoid discrimination against persons with special needs in quest of their educational pursuit, the public should be enlightened to enable the Nigerian citizens embrace inclusive education with ease and for parents to encourage their children with physical/emotional challenges to be educated, teachers for both government and private institutions should update their knowledge in the field of inclusive education, this will help them to be more relevant among others. Finally, the government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities to accommodate all categories of special need children.

¹ Department of Curriculum and Teaching, University of Calabar, orimokpaorim@yahoo.com

² Department of Curriculum and Teaching, University of Calabar, akonesu@yahoo.com

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Introduction

All people have a right to education. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in education. This may be in formal schools, or in non-formal places of learning, such as extra-curricular clubs and humanitarian camps (Sambo & Gambo 2015). It often involves working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education, so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework (Sightsavers, 2011).

The concept of inclusive education includes all learners, but it may be interpreted differently according to the context. For example, while it covers children excluded on the basis of language, gender, ethnicity, disability and other factors, it can focus on children with disabilities only. At the same time, children may be affected by more than one issue. A child with disabilities may also speak the language of a minority ethnic group, or be a refugee, or, if she is a girl, her family and society may not value girls' education. According to Leonard (2012), making schools inclusive for boys and girls with disabilities improves them for all learning, including students facing exclusion because of other challenges, or more than one issue.

Inclusive education is, by definition, the full integration of learners with and without special needs into the same classrooms and schools and thereby exposing them to the same learning opportunities. Ahmad (2000) defined inclusive education as the education of all children and

young people with and without disabilities or difficulties in learning together in ordinary pre-primary schools, colleges, and universities with appropriate network support. Okwudire and Okechukwu (2008) saw inclusive education as the progressive increase in the participation of students, in reduction of their exclusion from the cultures, curricula, and communities of local schools. They further explained that with inclusive education, all students in a school regardless of their strength or weakness in any area become part of the school community.

Inclusive education was one of the major issues examined at the 12th Annual National Conference of the National Council for Exceptional Children held at Minna, Niger State, in August, 2002. In the keynote address presented at the conference, Tim Obani (one of the pioneers in special education in the country), argued, "The old special education system with its restrictive practices cannot successfully address these problems [of special needs children] (Garuba, 2003). UNESCO (2005) defined inclusive education as responding to diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion within education. This means that all children have equal right to quality education that caters for their individual needs. Inclusive education means that all students are welcomed by their neighborhood schools in age-appropriate, regular classes and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of life in the school. Inclusive education is internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and equality in education for all children, especially those who have been excluded from education for the reason of disabilities (Christopher and Elizabeth, 2012).

Educational training institutions are charged with the responsibility of providing professional training for teachers in various disciplines. A qualified teacher is expected to have a background of general education as well as professional preparation that includes the psychology, emotional and philosophical condition of children or adolescent, the principles and techniques of teaching

and the historical foundations of education. Teacher education is an inevitable tool for successful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria (Amwe, 2012). Good teachers form the foundation of good schools, and it improves teacher's skill and knowledge (Omede and Sani, 2013). According to Christopher and Elizabeth (2012) Educational programmes of a country can only materialize if the teachers in the given countries are adequately trained and prepared to carry out the programmes as intended by the countries' policies. Inclusive education for persons with special needs not an exception. The importance of teachers' training to meet this aim is very vital.

The objectives of National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) to special need persons, is to enable them perform and benefit from adequate educational planning and welfare programme. Special needs persons are characterized with some traits, such as communication challenges, emotional and behavioural disorder etc. Persons with these kinds of special needs are supposed to benefit from additional education services which is a different approach to teaching and the use of technology such as assistive technology devices. Education be it segregation or inclusion, is a bedrock for development and advancement of individuals. Education is no doubt, a potent instrument for development of an individual and the society at large (Esu, 2012). To have effective and sustainable education for person with special needs, teacher preparation in the system is imperative (Omede & Momoh, 2016).

Considering inclusive education vividly, teachers are the driving force to the success of the programmes, including students with disabilities into regular classes. The prepared teachers are the custodians to advocate inclusive education programmes in order to make it more realistic and profitable to persons with special needs which kick against discrimination and stigmatization that is usually accorded to them by the populace. Inclusion is a step further in mainstreaming. It is the

principle applied to accommodate/include all human beings, thus the full spectrum of diverse abilities, with one system, in such a manner that all involved can be assured of successful, equal and quality participation in real-life experiences from birth to death (Burden, 2008).

Alih (2014) contends that teachers occupy an important position in the teaching and learning enterprise. It is generally believed that educators, more than any other school personnel determines the nature and extent of learning achievement in schools. Shade and Stewart (2001) observed that teachers report frustration, burden, fear, and inadequacies because they don't believe that they have the abilities to meet the individual needs of children with special needs in their classroom. This is because their professional skills were not developed before they entered the workforce of inclusive setting. It is crucial that teachers already teaching be provided with skills and techniques for inclusive education. It is expected that teachers in Nigeria should update their professional skills on a regular basis to enhance their teaching performance especially for inclusive classrooms.

Hence, teachers need training about inclusive principles and the basics of disability to ensure that their attitudes and approaches do not prevent disabled children from gaining equal access to the curriculum. Training should be ongoing provided in short courses (or modules) and should take place within a local school environment preferably their own school. Training should take place at both pre-service and in-service stages. The effective implementation of inclusive education depends on the high quality of professional preparation of teachers at pre and in-service levels to equip them for and update their knowledge and skill in meeting the needs and aspirations of a diverse school population.

The teacher in inclusive education has the following indefatigable roles to play as follows:

1. Knowledgeable about the child's instructional goals and objectives, special strategies and objectives that will accomplish him for the day to day progress of the child.
2. Identification and assessment of children with special needs whether in a wall or special centres, school bound or hospital bound.
3. Observing, analyzing, selecting and sequencing learning rather than falling further behind.
4. To motivate and reinforce children with special needs.
5. Act as resource or itinerant teacher in regular schools.
6. In the hospital setting, special educators work as speech and language therapist for stroke victims.
7. Special need educators for those with visual impairment play the role of Braille transcribers, translators for normal book prints.
8. Actual delivery of educational therapies for children with special needs whether in a home or special centres, school bound or hospital bound.
9. They act as guidance and counselors to the parents of children with special needs.
10. They also train the parents to be able to take the primary responsibility of teaching their children at home.
11. Often participating in developing curriculum for children with special needs.
12. They serve as consultants that provide support or assistance to regular school teacher.
13. They play the role of master educational therapies. In this case, they seek diagnostic causes of failures or problems, whether environmental, organic or both and tailor cause contents to suit individuals understanding.

14. The special needs educators for those with learning impairment work as audiologists in the audiological unit to measure the level of the hearing loss and to know the types of learning that will be appropriate for each child. They can work as sign language interpreters and news casters to the hearing impaired in factories, classroom, children's government ministries and establishments, television studios and conferences.

15. Special needs education teachers should serve as advocate in legislative matters championing the course of special needs children, initiating workshop, seminars and conferences on behalf of children with special needs. Christopher and Elizabeth (2012) cited in Omede and Momoh (2016:37/38).

Inclusive education is important in the development of Nigerian communities, bringing students with and without special needs together show the younger generation that a diverse group of people make up a community and that no one type of student is better than another. Thus, it removes barrier to friendship among students with and without special needs, imbining in them the spirit of cooperation and team work which is the essential ingredient for community development (Strully & Strully).

Additionally, inclusive education welcomes diversity of learners, removes segregation of any kind from educational practices, provides for the unique needs and learning styles of individuals and provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. If inclusive education is put into full practice it will fight schools' discriminatory practices as full inclusion accommodates students with and without special needs and it eliminates special segregation and special classes thus paving way for full community participation by every community member. The essence of education is about giving access to all

and not only the privileged few. Thus, inclusive education becomes important in making efforts to forge ahead in developing Nigerian communities (Adedokun, 1998).

In inclusive environment, students with and without special needs are placed side by side thereby encouraging a sense of belonging. Inclusive classroom facilitates kindness, consideration, empathy and compassion for others thus encouraging students with and without special needs to respect each other's opinion. This helps in contributing to the development of their communities. It is also discovered that when put into proper practice, inclusive education will have a lot of impact on schools' discriminatory practices because in inclusive education, all students attend and are welcome by their neighbourhood schools and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

As the mission of education is to empower people with desirable knowledge, skills, attributes and values that will enable them to think critically and act innovatively to bring about changes in their environment and lives, education must be made available to all and in a non-discriminatory environment, hence proper training of teachers to handle students with and without special needs. This can be achieved if there is appropriate strategies and rich general education curriculum. Teachers must provide individualize supports and services to all students, make them feel welcome and make sure that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to. When children attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world, they learn to appreciate diversity. Respect and understanding grow when children of differing abilities play and learn together. This can be fostered through the efforts of the untiring and loving teacher (Adedokun & Olaleye, 2014).

Statement of the problem

Inclusive education is an important education that aims at eliminating discrimination and segregation among students in the society. Persons with special needs have over the years suffered a lot of setbacks in their education in Nigeria. There are few students with disabilities or special needs in secondary schools may be as a result of certain factors such as lack of adequate facilities in schools, trained personnel are few, and lack of support services for effective inclusion that many people with special needs in Nigeria may never have opportunity to be educated in the inclusive service. These factors seem to have been retarding the effective implementation of inclusive education at the secondary school education level in Calabar Municipality in particular and Cross River State at large. Therefore, this study is on teachers' training and implementation of inclusive education in public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria

Objective of the Study

This study aims at finding out the relationship between teachers' training and the implementation of inclusive education in public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. ascertain the relationship between pre-service training and the implementation of inclusive education.
2. determine the relationship between in-service training and the implementation of inclusive education.

Research questions

1. What is the relationship between pre-service training and the implementation of inclusive education?
2. How does in-service training relate with the implementation of inclusive education?

Research hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between pre-service training and the implementation of inclusive education
2. In-service training does not significantly relate with the implementation of inclusive education

Method

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population consisted of nine hundred and eighty-nine (989) teachers found in public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. Accidental sampling was adopted for the selection of two hundred and forty-eight (248) respondents; questionnaire was the instrument for data collection which was analyzed with the use of Pearson product moment correlation analysis. The two hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result and Discussion

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between pre-service training and the implementation of inclusive education.

To test this hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was employed and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the relationship between pre-service training and implementation of special needs education (N=248)

	ΣX	ΣX^2		
Variables	ΣY	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-cal
Pre-service training	11345	524195		
			744982	0.51*
Implementation	16215	1067923		

* $p = 0.05$, $d.f = 246$, critical $r = 0.165$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 1 reveals that the calculated t-value of 0.51 is greater than the critical r-value of 0.165 at 0.05 level of significance with 246 degree of freedom. The result of the analysis is significant since the calculated value is greater than the critical value. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implies that there is

a significant relationship between pre-service training of teachers and the implementation of inclusive education. Subsequently the training or knowledge acquired during pre-service training has a way of influencing how inclusive education is implemented.

Hypothesis two

In-service training does not significantly relate to implementation of inclusive education.

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis was employed to test this hypothesis.

The result of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis of the relationship between pre-service training and implementation of special needs education (N=248)

	ΣX	ΣX^2		
Variables	ΣY	ΣY^2	ΣXY	r-cal
In-service training	15978	1080282		
			1052573	0.40*
Implementation	16215	1067923		

* $p = 0.05$, d.f = 246, critical $r = 0.165$

The result of the analysis as presented in Table 2 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.40 is higher than the critical r-value of 0.165 at 0.05 level of significance with 246 degrees of freedom. The result of the analysis is significant since the calculated value is greater than the critical value. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This result therefore implies that

there is a significant relationship between in-service training of teachers and the implementation of inclusive education. This finding is in line with Afe (1995) who stated that teachers' professional training/development is an important component of any educational system concerned with the education and training of teachers to acquire the necessary competencies and skills in teaching for improvement in the quality of teachers in the school system. It is often planned and systematically tailored and applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach, particularly but not exclusively in primary and post primary schools (Okafor, 1998). Continuing professional education is therefore conceptualized as a process for development of skills for coping with changing demands of the job through regular exposure to professional update programmes (Miefa, 2004).

According to Little (1990), professional development has relied upon a deficient model in which an expert imparts knowledge and information on teachers who are assumed to be deficient and in need of outside experts to teach them new modes of working with students. The design, implementation, and evaluation of professional development must ensure that attention is given to all phases of the change process. Therefore, professional development must shift its emphasis from working on teachers to working with teachers toward improvement of teaching and learning for all students (Iyunade, 2011). According to Ahmed (2006), teachers need to be continuously updated in knowledge and skills in view of a large volume of knowledge being generated as a result of technological advancement, which in turn calls for new ways (skills) of doing things.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is educational programmes designed by government to integrate in a particular school both able and disabled persons, with the same curriculum and implemented by the general teachers. If persons with special needs are properly given adequate education, rehabilitation and sense of belonging they could contribute greatly to national development.

Recommendations

1. The Government at all levels should make inclusive education compulsory in all teacher training institutions and colleges to avoid discrimination against persons with special needs in quest of their educational pursuit.
2. The public should be enlightened to enable the Nigerian citizens embrace inclusion with ease and for parent to encourage their children with physical challenges to be educated.
3. Teachers for both government and private institutions should update their knowledge in the field of inclusive education; this will help them to be more relevant among others.
4. In doing so, the government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities that are special need children friendly.
5. Enough teachers must be trained in order to realized the dreams of inclusive education.

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