

**PROBLEMS MILITATING AGAINST EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN OHAFIA LOCAL
GOVERNMENT AREA OF ABIA STATE**

Dr. Tonia Uchechi Chigbo-Obasi

tu.chigbo-obasi@unizik.edu.ng

**Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State**

Dr. Juliet Amaka Okonkwo

Julietteejay@gmail.com

**Department of Early Childhood Care and Education
Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri, Imo State**

&

Mbachi Roseline Anurika

**Department of Early Childhood and Primary Education
Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State**

ra.mabchi@unizik.edu.ng

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to determine the problems militating against effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The area of the study was Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State. One research question guided the study. The population consisted of all 866 teachers and 40 head teachers in the 40 public primary schools spread across the autonomous communities giving a total population of 906. Simple random sampling technique was used to sample 120 teachers and 20 head teachers giving a total of 140 respondents from 20 public primary schools. Data were collected using a 30-item questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled: "Problems Militating Against Inclusive Education (PMAIE) Questionnaire" The instrument was face validated by two experts in Childhood Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation in Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. The reliability of 0.76 was obtained for the instrument. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze research question. Findings revealed that factors militating against effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools among others include; inadequate funding, inadequate training for personnel, inadequate number of personnel. It was recommended among others that government should fund and support in-service training on inclusive education, make available enabling environment, monitor strictly the implementation of policies on inclusive education in primary schools.

Keywords: Effective Implementation, Inclusive Education, Primary Schools.

Introduction

Inclusive education is no longer a new concept in the Nigerian educational system rather its effective implementation especially in this period of socio political and economic uncertainty. According to Olufunke and Oluremi (2014), inclusive education is the integration of all pupils, even those that require substantial educational behavioural support and services to be successful in regular classes and the elimination of segregated special classes. Onyema and Eesuola (2022) asserted

that inclusive education entails admitting pupils of all abilities to age-appropriate general education classes at the school of their choice as part of the core curriculum. Nigeria as a nation recognizes the operation of inclusion education in its National Policy of Education (2014) and asserts that, access to education shall be provided and inclusion education or integration of special classes and unit into ordinary/public schools under UBE scheme. Persons with special needs and learning disabled shall be provided with inclusive education services in schools which normal persons attend, in age appropriate general education class directly supervised by general teacher.

It is important to note that children with special needs are those children who may have disability or a combination of disabilities that make learning or other activities difficult. Special-needs children include those who have; mental retardation, which causes them to develop slowly, compared to other children; speech and language impairment, such as problem of expressing themselves or understanding others; physical disability, such as vision problem, cerebral palsy, or other conditions; learning disabilities, which distort messages from their senses; emotional disabilities, such as antisocial or other behavioural problems (JAD, 2015). Inclusive education calls for mainstreaming all these categories of children into regular classes notwithstanding their disabilities.

NPE (2014) maintained that, every Nigerian child shall have right to educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imaginary disability. Again, Isuwa and Lengnen (2014) asserted that, inclusive education provides a range of academic and social benefits for pupils with disabilities, such as high achievement in language and mathematics, improved rate of high school graduation, and more positive relationship with non-disabled individuals. According to UNESCO (2011) inclusive education involves the recognition of the right to education and its provision in nondiscriminatory ways; a common vision which cover all people, and a belief that schools and other places of learning have a responsibility to educate all children, addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners. Operationally, inclusive education in the present study is an education that avails pupils in regular primary schools the opportunity to comfortably participate in academic activities and other social activities not withstanding their individual special needs. Inclusive education in Nigeria has faced various challenges, among these challenges are its effective implementation.

Implementation of inclusive education in Nigerian as opined by Lawal Suleiman and Isah (2022) has faced many hindrances and obstacles which led to a dysfunction in the system of education in the country. Implementation of inclusive education according to Lawal, Suleiman and Isah, involves making learning environment conducive for both disabled and individual with special needs; equipping learning resource centers with learning materials; training and retraining teachers on how to identify and handle disabled individuals in regular classroom. Also, specialists that screen individuals with special needs and learning disabilities should be positioned in designated centers in each Local Government of the country and finally providing enough fund by government to support inclusive education.

In the present study, implementation of inclusive education is the effective putting into action the policies guiding inclusive education and most importantly supervising the execution of such policies and how it can benefit children or pupils with special needs. It is expedient at this juncture to add that implementation of inclusive education should be all encompassing including teacher's interest, attitude,

perception and preparedness about including pupils with special needs into the regular classes. According to Maria and Bwori (2015), many implementation strategies has been proffered by the government and scholars in Nigerian for its success and they include identifying children's needs and rights, engaging parents and families, engaging the community, state and local government, making schools welcoming and accessible to all learners among others.

Nigeria as a nation is known to have good laws and policies on inclusive education, but implementation of these laws and policies in respect to inclusive education is the problem. According to Hull in Odebiyi (2016), the main challenges facing inclusive education are lack of qualified teachers, absence of support service, relevant materials, inadequate personnel and training programmes, lack of funding structure and the absence of enabling legislature in Nigeria. In the same vein, UNESCO (2011) reported that the challenges to the educational system in Nigeria are; lack of available data on pupils and teachers, inappropriate socio-cultural and religion practice, erratic and inadequate funding, enforcement of instruction in the mother tongue and providing child-friendly environment. Mantey (2014) maintained that, challenges associated with inclusive education are; poor parental involvement and community participation, inaccessible buildings, large class size and high pupil-teacher ratio. Pantric (2015) also pointed out that, challenges of teaching children with hearing impairment for instance, in an inclusive education are; inadequate infrastructure facilities, inadequate specialist, irregular staff training and inadequate materials.

Inclusive education aims at educating individuals with special needs and learning with a view of providing them with the same educational, social, vocational and political opportunities. Afolayan (2012) pinpointed some government policy interventions targeted at inclusive education in Nigeria to include; the enactment of three crucial activities which were (1) signing of the UNESCO National Education Strategy for Nigeria (2006-2015), (2) launching of community accountability and transparent initiatives and (3) the publication of national plan based on the education sector situation analysis. The National Policy on Education (2014) stated the three key objectives of special education to include: To give concrete meaning to the idea of equality educational opportunity to all children disabilities notwithstanding, provision of adequate education for all peoples with special needs in order to fully contribute their quota to the development, diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries. All that had been documented, the effective implementation remains the bottleneck especially in primary schools.

Primary schools in Nigerian house children between the ages of 6 to 12 years. Primary education is six years in duration, and runs from grade one through six. Pupils are awarded the Primary School Leaving Certificate on the completion of Grade 6, based on continuous assessment. According to Amin and Ntembe (2021), education of such occupies a central place in the current global policy discourse on service delivery. It becomes necessary to pay attention to the effective implementation of inclusive education at this formative stage and give children the required assistance and enabling environment to strive especially those with special needs.

One of the objectives of the present study hinges on the effective implementation of inclusive education. According to Omeda (2016), inclusive education is poised to succeed where the following variables are available; parents' participation, teachers' belief that pupils can succeed, school authority to accept

responsibility for learning outcome and acceptance among normal pupils to receive pupils with special needs. There are ten steps for implementing effective inclusion practice in Nigeria according to Kilgore (2011), such are, defining current practice, establishing leadership team, development and action plan for change, defining implementation parameters, meeting with families, identifying implementation measures, providing professional learning opportunity and support. In the same vein, Ezkay and Angie (2013) identified the following as the challenges facing inclusive education in Nigeria: inadequate plan for the identification of children with special learning disabilities, special educators prefers schools in the urban areas thereby neglecting the ones in the rural areas, parents' lack of information and guidance on available education centers, low standard of living by parents, government has no definite strategy to search for learning disabled children, and inadequate funding and ignorance of the community members of the effects of learning disability on children.

From the fore going it becomes vital to critically investigate factors militating against effective implementation of inclusive education and the possible remedies to these factors for effective implementation of inclusive education in Primary Schools in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State.

Statement of the Problem

With efforts made by government, parents and communities in Nigeria there still persist problems of implementation of inclusive education. This is a concern for parents of children living with disabilities, the government and the society at large. These problems may be as a result of teachers' lack of interest in the welfare of children living with disabilities, lack of proper motivation and remuneration on the part of government, inadequate funding and supervision for effective implementation. The resultant effect may be shabby implementation of inclusive education, the negligence of children with disabilities alongside discriminations of all sorts that may hinder them from contributing their quota to the over-all development of the nation. It becomes pertinent to investigate actually the problems militating against inclusive education and determine the likely remedies of these factors in primary schools in Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine the problems militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools.

One research question guided the study, thus:

What are the factors militating against effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in Ohafia Local Government Area?

Method

This study adopted a descriptive survey design to determine the problems militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. The area of the study was Ohafia Local Government Area of Abia State. One research question guided the study. The population consisted of all 866 teachers and 40 head teachers in the 40 public primary schools spread across the autonomous communities giving a total population of 906. Simple random sampling technique was used to

sample 120 teachers and 20 head teachers giving a total of 140 respondents from 20 public primary schools. Data were collected using a 15-item questionnaire developed by the researchers and titled: “Problems Militating Against Inclusive Education (PMAIE) Questionnaire” The instrument was face validated by two experts in Childhood Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation Department of Faculty of Educational Foundations all from Faculty of Education, Abia State University, Uturu. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha formula. A reliability of 0.76 was obtained for instrument.

A four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4 points), Agree (A-3 points), Disagree (D-2 points) and Strongly Disagree (SD- 1 point) was used for the study. The data collected were analyzed using weighted mean (\bar{x}) to answer the research question and standard deviation to determine the homogeneity or not of respondents mean scores. In analyzing mean value of 2.50 and above were regarded as agreed while those values below 2.50 were regarded as disagreed.

Results

Research question : What are the factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in Ohafia Local Government Area?

Table 1. Respondents’ mean ratings and standard deviation on the factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools in Ohafia Local Government Area.

S/N	Factors against implementation of inclusive education.	X	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate funding	3.23	0.73	Agreed
2	Inadequate training of personnel	3.23	0.72	Agreed
3	Inadequate number of personnel	3.50	0.63	Agreed
4	Poor infrastructural facility	3.15	0.38	Agreed
5	Lack of seminars on inclusion education	3.82	0.71	Agreed
6	Poor remuneration for specialist teachers	3.38	0.62	Agreed
7	Misappropriation of funds	3.68	0.36	Agreed
8	Lack of learner-centered pedagogy	3.41	0.83	Agreed
9	Marginalization	3.43	0.74	Agreed
10	Biased religious inclination	3.47	0.71	Agreed
11	Language and ethnicity challenges	3.00	0.74	Agreed
12	Insurgency	3.44	0.66	Agreed
13	Lack of political will power	3.55	0.69	Agreed
14	Unconducive working environment	3.36	0.54	Agreed
15	Lack of monitoring and supervision	3.47	0.68	Agreed
	Cluster mean	3.63	0.64	Agreed

Data in Table1 show the mean and standard deviation scores on the factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. The respondents agreed that all items listed in the table 1 are factors militating against the

effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools. This is confirmed with the cluster mean of 3.63 with the standard deviation of 0.64.

Discussion

The findings showed that the factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in primary schools among others include; inadequate funding, inadequate training of personnel, poor infrastructural facility, lack of political will power. The finding is in line with the study carried out by Odebiyi (2016), who posits that lack of qualified teachers, absence of support service lack of relevant materials, inadequate personnel and training programmes, lack of funding and the absence of enabling legislature in Nigeria are factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education in schools. This finding also aligned with the study conducted by Ezkay and Angie (2013) who posited that inadequate planning for the identifying special needs children, parents lack of information and guidance, low standard of living, government not having a definite strategy, inadequate funding, ignorance of the community members of the effects of learning disability on children are the contributing factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education. This may be as a result of the study conducted in a semi-rural area. This is because Ezkay and Angie (2013) were of the opinion that specialist teachers prefer schools and locations in the Urban than in rural areas.

Conclusion

Factors militating against the effective implementation of inclusive education can range from ignorant parents who may lack the essential information, school authority, government and to the community at large. It therefore becomes essential that all hands must be on deck to war against non or shabby implementation of inclusive education in order to give educational, social, vocational, emotional and extra-curricular assistance to all children their disabilities notwithstanding.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- xvi. Government should as a matter of urgency prioritize the policies on inclusive education by providing the necessary facilities that will promote inclusive education in federal, state and local sectors.
- xvii. Government should strictly monitor and supervise the implementation of policies in primary schools.
- xviii. Teachers should increase their knowledge on inclusive education through in-service training.
- xix. Government should provide the necessary infrastructures and facilities that will motivate teachers to implement inclusive education adequately.
- xx. Government should periodically organize workshops, seminars and conferences for the teacher to improve their knowledge on the effective implementation of inclusive education.

References

Afolayan, F.O. (2014). A Holistic Review of Public Funding Education in Nigeria. *Journal of Research and Methods in Education*, 4(6), 68-78.

- Amin A. A., & Ntembe, .A. (2021). Public spending on education and learning outcomes in Senegal. *The Journal of Developing Areas*,55(4), 297-314.
- JAD (2015). Jamaica Association for the Deaf. *Who are the children with special Needs?* Online article, retrieved from <https://www.jamdeaf.org.jm>articles>.
- Ezkay, M. & Angie, O. (2013). Leaners with Disabilities in an Inclusive Education Setting in Nigeria. Implication for Administration. *International Journal of Administration* 3(5), 313-318.
- NPE (2014). National Policy of Education. Federal Ministry of Education. *Abuja*, Government Press.
- Isuwa, J. J & Lengenen, J.J. (2014). Inclusive Education: Equal Access and Appropriate Education for Special Needs Children. *National Journal of Inclusion Education* 2(1), 94-100.
- Kilgore, K. (2011). Ten (10) Steps for implementing Effective Inclusive Practice: A Guide for School Site Leader. Louisiana: State Personnel Development Grade, Department of Education.
- Lawal, A. Suleiman E. R. & Isah A. M. (2022). Implementation of Inclusive Education in Nigeria Schools: Challenges and Way Forward. *International Journal of Formal Education* 1(3). ISSN: 2720-6874.
- Mantey, E.G. (2014). *Accessibility to Inclusive Education for Children with Disability: Two Selected areas in Ghana*. Dissertation for Doctorate Degree in Education Psychology submitted to the University of Siegen, Germany.
- Maria, S. A. & Bwoi, G. M. (2015). Administration of Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Issues and Implementation Strategies. *National Journal of Inclusive Education*, 3(1), 107-115
- Odebiyi, O. M. (2016). Introduction of Inclusive Early Childhood Education and Curriculum in Nigerian School System: Do teachers' perception, willingness and demography matter? *International Journal of Education and Research*, 4(5), 309-320.
- Olufunke, A. M. & Oluremi, O. F. (2014). Inclusive Education and the Development of Nigerian Communities. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(1), 28-40
- Omeda, A. A. (2016). Policy Framework for Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges. *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 6(5), 33-38.
- Onyema, T. N. & Eesuola, B. A. (2022). Challenges and benefits of inclusive education for children with special needs. *International Journal of Childhood and Development Disorders* 3(1), 107 -115.
- Pantric, R. (2012). Implementing Inclusive Education: A Common Wealth Guide to Implementing Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities, Marlborough House; London: Common Wealth Secretariat.