Inclusive Education for Special Needs Children in Public Schools in Delta State

NWADIOKWU, CHRISTIANA N., Ph. D

Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,
College of Education,
Agbor

Abstract

Inclusive education is strategic approach designed to facilitate learning and success for all children from diverse background. This study sought to examine the provision of inclusive education with the objective of devising strategies to cope with the challenges. The sample consisted of forty (40) subjects comprising of students with special education needs, teachers, school principals and ministry of education officers (MOEOs) in the study. The descriptive survey design was employed for the study. The questionnaire structured "Intervention strategies for inclusive education (ISFIE)" was used as the instrument for data collection. The findings of the study revealed among others, that: human capital is one of the most critical resources needed for socio-economic development of an organization such as school; increase of funding to education especially in the area of special education; need to increase instructional facilities in the inclusive schools; need to sensitize parents with children with disability to develop positive attitude towards them and need to involve non-governmental organizations in the development of physical facilities through Information Communication Technology (ICT).

Keywords: Inclusive education, special needs, public schools

Introduction

Inclusive education can be regarded as part of a wider struggle against the violation of human rights and unfair discrimination (UNESCO,2005). According to UNESCO (2005:12), inclusive education is a dynamic approach of responding to pupil diversity and of seeing individual differences not as problems but as opportunities for enriching learning. From this definition, it is arguable that the major tenet of inclusive education is to remove all barriers to learning in order to promote accelerated access and participation of all learners without any shade of discrimination. Thus, it is a strategic approach designed to facilitate learning and success for all children from diverse backgrounds and socioeconomic as well as physical and psycho-social circumstances. The aim is to empower all stakeholders to take part in the process of democratic transformation of the country through the creation of opportunities, effective use resources and development of skills through appropriate education of all the citizens (Orodho, Waweru & Getange. 2014).

From this point of view, the issue of having an education system that includes all categories of learners irrespective of their   disability or social exclusion relates to the concept of holistic development of citizenship and goes beyond mere education empowerment and poverty alleviation of individuals and communities (Orodho, Waweru & Getange, 2014). It adopts the view of a process whereby all members of society can engage in educational and social transformation of the country with a degree of fairness and social justice.

The genesis of inclusive education can be traced from the concept of special education. Special education is generally conceptualized as the type of educational practice in which learners are admitted and provided with education that is commensurate to the state of the learner. The special education has undergone tremendous transformation over the past two or so decades. It has changed from categorical institutionalized special provision of education for children with special needs in education (SNE) given on the basis of nature of disability to deinstitutionalization and normalization in the past to reverse integration and finally inclusive socialization (popularly known as inclusion education) in recent years (Corbett, 2001).

Inclusive education is practice of teaching children in regular classrooms with non handicapped children to the fullest extent possible; such children may have orthopaedic, intellectual, emotional, visual difficulties or handicaps associated with hearing. Inclusive education has been of increasing interest in the past decades. Research showing that many handicapped students learns better in regular than in special classes; racial imbalance existed in special education classes.

Literature Review

Literature generated by scholars and researchers globally tend to agree that inclusive education is the new orthodoxy in the development of special education and its conceptualization has not been clearly defined (Baker & Zigmong,2004)

Contributing to the debate, Bleck and Nigel, (2004) argue that inclusive education as a journey or movement away from the kind of segregation which separates the learners with special needs in education (SNE) from the rest of the school. Their contention is that traditionally, children in schools have been grouped mostly according to their abilities, but with regard to learners with special needs in education (SNE), their grouping criteria has been their disabilities, ostensibly so that special facilities and specially trained staff can be made available to those who need them.

In order to effectively implement inclusive education, educational facilities and materials are critical to the success of the educational undertaking. These include the very basic ones such as books, seats; classrooms play grounds among others. In the case of reversely integrated special schools specially adapted devices and prosthetics that enhance the functioning of individuals with SNE become imperative and where they are unavailable, improvisation may become necessary. Smith, (2004) talks of accommodations or instructional adaptations being either typical/routine, that is, strategies directed towards the whole class, or relatively minor adaptations that a teacher makes for any student, or substantial/specialized instructional adaptations, which are individually tailored adjustments to suit the needs of an individual with special needs in education (SNE).

With regards to the human resources, Tilstone, Florian and Rose (2005) contend that skilled support is very important especially in ensuring that there is balancing of the structured intervention to facilitate broader interaction within the integrated class/group. Reiterating the fact that training and professional supervision are increasingly important for both the teaching as well as the non-teaching staff, Tilstone et al., (2005) argue that pupils in integrated settings must be provided with skilled support so that interactions can be promoted and facilitated throughout the range of activities. For example, support staff should not sit next to a pupil with learning difficulties all the time as this approach has been shown to be a barrier to interactions and integration eventually. Rather, children should be equipped with relevant materials and an enabling environment coupled with necessary prompting for them to chart their way to independent functioning, (Bigge, 2005).

Bauer, et. al. (2004) suggest principles usually involved in the implementation of inclusive education as that of normalization which means that a person with a disability should have the opportunity to live as similarly to others as possible hence teachers must try to help students with disabilities have the same opportunities and experiences as their peers through other adjustments with the right instructional materials in their classrooms. Secondly is the principle of Natural proportion which states that classrooms should reflect the characteristics of the community at large, and the principles of problem solving other than fixing a student problem.

Goals of Inclusive Education

Ozoji, (2010) listed the following goals:
- ✓ To provide education for children with diverse learning needs.
- ✓ To make special needs children active member of school community and then make them achieve social competence.

✓   To build a supportive school community that is able to identify and minimize barriers to learning and participation.

✓   To educate more children better.

✓   To ensure successful learning and social experience.

✓   To empower children who are hitherto excluded and isolated.

✓   To enable students to participate in mainstream education to the best of their abilities.

✓   To build inclusive schools that can respond to diverse needs.

✓   To study pressures that lead some people in school feel excluded and separated.

✓   To attend imaginatively to diverse learning needs in the classroom.

✓   To ensure improvement of student learning outcomes.

✓   To develop exampler unit planning for diversity and understanding this diversity.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose the study are as follows:

1. To examine if professional development of teachers is desired for effective inclusion education of special needs

2. To find out if government/Ministry of education should be involved in inclusive education

3. To determine if infrastructural facilities is a necessity in inclusive education

4. To determine if stakeholders/NGOs should be involved in provision of physical facilities?

5. To examine if sensitization is a necessity for parents with disabled children?

Research Questions

The research questions formulated for the study are as follows:

1. Is professional development of teachers desired for effective inclusion education of special needs?

2. Should government/Ministry of education be involved in inclusive education?

3. Is infrastructural facilities a necessity in inclusive education?

4. Should stakeholders/NGOs be involved in provision of physical facilities?

5. Is sensitization a necessity for parents with disabled children?

Research Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted

Data analysis/Results

S/N	Items	Strongly agreed		Agreed		Strongly disagreed		Disagreed	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Is professional development of teachers desired for effective inclusion education of special needs?	20	50	10	25	05	22.5	05	22.5
2.	Should government/Ministry of education be involved in inclusive education?	40	100	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.	Is infrastructural facilities a necessity in inclusive education?	20	50	20	50	-	-	-	-
4.	Should stakeholders/NGOs be involved in provision of physical facilities?	38	95	-	-	-	-	02	5
5.	Is sensitization a necessity for parents with disabled children?	40	100	-	-	-	-	-	-

Discussions and Results

Research question I indicate that half (50%) of the respondents agreed that professional development of teachers should be employed in inclusive education. This is in line with Smith (2004) stating that teachers should develop strategies to suit the needs of an individual with special needs in education (SNE). Therefore a critical mass of educated teachers who *are equipped with appropriate knowledge, skills and attitude is required in order to achieve political, economic and social goals of inclusive education.*

The second research question cited one hundred percent (100%) of the respondents that government through the ministry of education should release fund through the ministry of education to fund inclusive education of special needs (SNE). The learning facilities in special needs are extremely expensive and the government ought to devise a differentiated mode of funding education (Tilstone et. al, 2005).

Research question three suggested 50% of all the respondents agreed on the need to increase instructional facilities in the inclusive schools. The right infrastructure and instructional materials for special needs should be provided through the provision of funds allocated specially for special needs education (SNE) (Bigge, 2005).

In the fourth research question, ninety five percent (95%) of the respondents were of the view

that non-governmental organizations and stakeholders should be involved in inclusive education of the special needs. This is in line with earlier study that indicated that educational facilities and materials are critical requirement for the success of any educational undertaking. These include the very basic ones such as books, seats, classrooms and playgrounds among others (Orodho, 2014).

Finally, all the respondents in research question five were of the opinion that there is need to sensitize parents with children with disability to develop positive attitude towards them. Parents should be sensitized on the importance of taking these children to schools and not viewing it as a curse having a disabled child (UNESCO, 2015).

Conclusion
All over the world there is a new trend toward development of inclusive education because of its relevance for the total educational development of children with special needs. Inclusive education is targeted at children with disabilities. Hence, concerted efforts are required by every stakeholder to support and see the effective implementation of inclusive education in our country Nigeria and Delta State in particular.

Recommendations
1.   The community which includes parents should be sensitized on their role in ensuring success of inclusive education.
2.   There is need for in-service training for teachers teaching special educational needs
3.   Government through ministry of education should fund inclusive education for SNE
4.   There should be aggressive sensitization campaigns to enable all stakeholders in education understand their roles in the provision of inclusive education.

References
Bauer, M. A et. al, (2004) Inclusive classroom: video cases on CD-Rom Activity and learning Guide to accompany teaching Special Students in General Education classrooms. New Jersey.

Bigge, J. (2005). Teaching individuals with physical and multiple disabilities.5th Edition. New York: Routledge Falmer, Taylor and Francis Group.

Bleck, J. and Nigel, W.R. (2004).Interaction and Societal Stereotypes. London: Billing and Sons.

Ford, A., Davern, L.& Schnorr, R. (2001). Learners with significant disabilities; curriculum relevance in an era of standards based reform, Remedial and special education. Reports inc.

Getange, K.N., Onkeo, J.M. & Orodho,. A.J.(20140). Alternative sources of funding for free day secondary education (FDSE) in Kisii Central, Kisii County, Kenya. *International Organization of Scientific Research (IOSR) Journal of Dental and Medical Sciences (IOSR-JDMS)* Vol.13.;Issue 4, VerVI (April,2014) pp14-23.www.iosrjournals.org .

Orodho, A.J. Waweru, .N.P. & Getange, K.N.(2014).Progress towards attainment of education for all (EFA) among nomadic pastoralists : How do we dismantle the gender jinx in Mandera County, Kenya. *International Organization of Scientific Research (IOSR) Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (IOSR-JHSS).* Vol 19, Issue 2, Ver. II, (February ,2014) pp106-117.www.oisrjournals.org

Orodho, A.J.(2014). Attainment of Basic Education for All by 2015 : From Rhetoric Chimera to Practice in Kenya. *International Journal of Current Research (IJCR).* Vol.6, Issue 01, pp4666-4674 January 2014 *http://www.journalcra.com.*

Ozoji, E.D (2010). Course Materials on elements of Special Education (Revised Edition) Deka Publication – Jos, Plateau State.

Smith, J.D. (2004). Inclusion schools for all students. Belmont C.A: Wordworth Publishing Company.

Tilstone, C- Florian, L. & Rose, R (2005). Promoting inclusive practice 3rd Ed. London and New York: St. Edmunds Burg Press Ltd.

UNESCO. (2005).The present situation and Freuds of research in the field of special Education, Switzerland: United Nations.