

## *Inclusive Education Practice in Southwestern Nigeria: A Situational Analysis*

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### *Abstract*

This study presented situational analysis of inclusive educational practice in southwestern Nigeria. The study employed descriptive survey research design. Samples of 131 teachers, 51 parents and 51 head teachers/principals were purposively selected from State Grammar School, Ipakodo Junior Grammar School, Methodist Grammar School, Ijokodo High School and St. Peter College in Southwestern Nigeria. Three research questions were answered. A questionnaire tagged inclusion assessment inventory with reliability coefficient of 0.71 was used to collect data. The data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentage. The results revealed positive attitude of teachers and negative disposition on the parts of government and parents to inclusive education practice in Southwestern Nigeria. Strong advocacy and re-orientation were recommended.

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### **Background to the Study**

A major problem often encountered by exceptional child in the regular education programme is that of acceptance unto group relationships (Ojo & Adebisi, 2012). The problem of acceptance remain prevalent as a result of the age long notions and some myths attributed to the existence of special needs persons in many societies, especially in Africa. However, the last three decades have witnessed international debates particularly in developing countries like Nigeria on inclusive education; that is educating students with special needs and non-special needs in the same classroom (Fakolade & Adeniyi, 2009). Inclusion is an educational practice based on a notion of social justice that advocates access to equal educational opportunities for all students regardless of the presence of any visible or obscure challenges. Steinback (2005) defined inclusion as the process of allowing all children the opportunity to fully participate in regular classroom activities regardless of disability, race or other characteristics. The participation here is focused on their capabilities and abilities to bring about productive accomplishment. In this regard, inclusion represents the belief that students with special educational needs should be fully integrated into general education classrooms and that their instruction should be based on their abilities, not their disabilities (Al Zyoudi, 2006 & Alkhatteb, 2003). Thus, inclusive education aim at restructuring schools activities in order to respond to the learning needs of all children (Ainscon, 1995).

For inclusive education to succeed, there are numbers of factors that must interplay. Studies have revealed that some variables could predict the success or failure of the programme. In preparing

for inclusion, attitude, beliefs, expectation and acceptance of people are very paramount. In Nigeria, a number of factors can inevitably prompt the success or failure of inclusive education. These ranges from family, school partnerships, collaboration between general and special education teachers, government disposition, well-structured and constructed individualized education programme plan, parental involvement and disposition as well as societal perception.

Researches by Fakolade & Adeniyi (2009), Arif & Grad (2008) & Jung (2007) have in various instances and locations investigated attitude of teachers towards inclusion. There are some research evidences that reported that positive attitude of teacher could predict successful inclusion of students with disabilities in regular classroom (Sharma, Florin, Lowerman & Earle, 2006, Al-Khatteb, 2004 & Mowes, 2000). For instance Kisanji (1999) reported the finding of UNESCO on teacher education in 14 countries involving all world regions in early 80s, the finding showed that regular classroom teachers were willing to take on responsibility for special needs children, but were not confident whether they have the skills to carry out that tasks. The fear exercised here came out of little knowledge and supportive psychological base.

Furthermore, Desforges & Abouchaar (2003) have submitted that pupils' achievement and adjustment are influenced by parents, family, peer groups and neighborhoodss. Early studies often showed strong positive links between parental involvement and students' academic progress (Desforges & Aboucharr, (2003). Therefore, if there is strong link between the achievement of students without special needs and parental involvement, it can then be inferred that such characteristic will influence the performance of students with special needs in inclusive setting. Furthermore, studies have revealed preconditions for success or failure of inclusion. One of such is parents living in poverty are more likely to be stressed and depressed and this may affect their support for their children with special needs (Larzelere & Patterson, 1990; Harris & Marmer, 1996). Another is the stigma likely to experience by parents of special needs children (Smith, 1996 & Kissane, 2003).

Another critical concern in the implementation of inclusive education is government disposition to the policy statements. With the world declaration on education for all 1990 in which it was mandated for all countries to provide basic education to all children. To this end, basic educational services of quality should be expanded, and consistent measures must be taken to reduce disparities (UNICEF, 1998). Hence, Nigeria government came up with a declaration of universal basic education for all Nigerians not minding their disadvantages in 1999. The revised National Policy on Education (2004) clearly stated that the education of children with special needs shall be free at all level. It further declared that all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education shall be provided. The expectation is that, with the proactive implementation of the policy statement, Nigeria government would have moved towards achieving millennium development goals.

However, since the declaration of Universal basic education for all, implementation of this policy statement is far below the expected target now that 2015 is fast approaching in view of deadline set by Millennium Development Goals (MDGS). It is therefore imperative to assess the level of implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria especially in the Southwestern zone that has been setting pace in the educational development programmes in Nigeria.

## **Research Questions**

1. Do attitudes of teachers in inclusive schools in Nigeria favor successful implementation of inclusive educational practice?
2. Do attitudes of parents in Southwestern Nigeria favor inclusive education practice?
3. To what extent has government in Southwestern Nigeria encouraged inclusive education practice?

## ***Methodology***

### **Population**

The target population for this study were parents, teachers that are directly involved in inclusive education practice and Head or principals of schools where inclusive education are being practiced in the six states of southwestern Nigeria..

### **Sample**

The samples comprised 131 teachers, 51 parents and 51 head teachers/principals purposively selected from State Grammar School, Eric Moore, Ipakodo Junior Grammar School, Ikorodu (Lagos State) Methodist Grammar School, Bodija Ibadan, Ijokodo High School, Ibadan (Oyo State) and St. Peter College, Abeokuta (Ogun State), Nigeria. The locations selected were schools practicing inclusion/integration.

### **Research Instrument**

The instrument used was structure questionnaire tagged Inclusion assessment inventory (IAI) that is subdivided into four parts (ABCD) Section A was used to generate demographic data. Section B measured teachers attitudes, C measured parental disposition toward inclusion while D measured the extent of government participation in inclusive education practice. The instruments was prepared in four (4) Likert scale (SA, A, D, SD) SA means Strongly Agree; A means Agree; D means Disagree; and SD means Strongly Disagree; Mostly Applicable (MA), Sometimes Applicable (SA); Rarely Applicable (RA); and Not applicable (NA).

Examples probing questions in each of the sections are: Section B *“Apart from time wastage, there is also wastage of fund on inclusive education, section C. “I believed that teachers in conventional school will not attend to the needs of my special needs child”* and Section D. *“Government buys materials / books needed in our school for inclusive education services”.*

### ***Method of Data Collection***

Before distributing the structured questionnaire among the participants, the researchers visited each location and explained the intent of the assessment. Parents of the special needs children were consulted during Parents Teacher Association Meeting. Thereafter, the questionnaires were distributed among participants that cooperated with the researchers. Their responses were collected after they have adequately attended to the items in the questionnaire.

### **Research Design**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to present a situation analysis of inclusive educational practice in Southwestern Nigeria. There was no manipulation of any variable.

## Data Analysis

The data collected were collated, coded and analyzed using simple percentage to present situational analysis of inclusive education practice.

## Results and Discussion

### Research Question One

Do attitudes of teachers in inclusive schools in Southwestern Nigeria favor successful implementation of inclusive educational practice?

**Table 1: Frequency counts and percentage showing attitudes of teachers towards inclusive education in Southwestern Nigeria.**

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	Inability of the teacher to have positive attitude towards inclusive education has great effect on the policy implementation	61 (46.6%)	37 (28.2%)	14 (10.7%)	19 (14.5%)
2	There is nothing wrong in introducing inclusive education services in schools	55 (42.0%)	56 (42.0%)	6 (4.6%)	14 (10.7%)
3	The inclusive education services in the school are those I like in the Nigeria educational system	25 (19.1%)	53 (40.5%)	21 (16.0%)	32 (24.4%)
4	If I have my way, inclusive education practice would be given more priority than any other practices in the educational system	46 (35.1%)	38 (29.0%)	16 (12.2%)	31 (23.7%)
5	Apart from time wastage, there is also wastage of fund on inclusive education practice	16 (12.2%)	18 (13.7%)	36 (27.5%)	61 (46.6%)
6	The fund spent on inclusive education practices/services could have been used on other aspects of educational systems	21 (16.0%)	23 (17.5%)	34 (26.0%)	53 (40.5%)
7	It is difficult for teachers to cope with the amount of work that inclusive education practice entail	30 (22.9%)	32 (24.4%)	33 (25.2%)	36 (27.5%)
8	Inclusive education is difficult to practice because it requires more specially trained teachers	65 (49.6%)	40 (30.5%)	17 (13.0%)	9 (6.9%)
9	It is difficult to cope with inclusive arrangements because of	70 (53.4%)	40 (30.5%)	9 (6.9%)	12 (9.2%)

	lack of specialized equipment for teaching children with special education needs in my school				
10	Government does not motivate teachers in inclusive settings, so many teachers left inclusive setting for conventional arrangement	84 64.1%	27 20.6%	7 5.3%	13 9.9%

Results from Table 1 above revealed that on item no 1, 74.8% were in support of the opinion that inability of teacher to have positive towards inclusive education will affect the practice while 25.2% held contrary opinion. Item no 2 revealed that 84.7% supported that these is nothing wrong introducing inclusive education, 15.3% have negative opinion. On item no 2, 59.6% likes inclusive educational practice while 40.4% will not support the practice. The result of item no. 5 revealed that 25.9% believed that the practice waste fund and time whereas 74.1 opined that it is a worthwhile programme. The result on item no 4 revealed that inclusive education should be given higher priority. On item no 6, 66.5% believed that adequate funding should directed toward the programme while 33.5% held contrary opinion. On item no 7, 47.5% believed that it is difficult to cope with amount of work in inclusive system while 52.7% believed that coping with work in inclusive setting is not difficult. Item no 8 revealed that inclusive education will be difficult to practice 80.1% supported the opinion of the item while 19.9% had contrary opinion. Item No 9, revealed that it is difficult to cope in inclusive setting because of lack of supporting equipment. On item 10, 84.7% believed that personnel left inclusive setting because of lack of motivation while 15.2% held contrary opinion.

Summarily, from all the responses, the results indicate that teachers' attitudes favor inclusive education in Southwestern, Nigeria.

### Research Question two

Do attitudes of Parents in Southwestern Nigeria favor inclusive education practice?

**Table 2: Frequency Counts and Percentage showing Parents Attitude to Inclusive Practices**

S/N		SA	A	D	SD
1	I will allow my child with special needs to attend non-special schools	6 11.8%	4 7.8%	33 64.7%	8 15.7%
2	If my child with special needs attend non-special school, it will aid his/her psychological wellbeing	3 5.9%	3 5.9%	17 33.3%	28 54.9%
3	If my child with special needs attend conventional school, his/her academic performance will improve	3 5.9%	2 3.9%	7 13.7%	39 76.5%

4	I believe if my child with special needs attend non-special school, it will change his/her orientation about society	2 3.9%	3 5.9%	13 25.5%	33 64.7%
5	I believe that teachers in conventional schools will attend to the needs of my special needs child	2 3.9%	3 5.9%	16 31.4%	30 58.8%
6	I believe that other students that are non-special needs will not maltreat my child with special needs in conventional school	3 5.9%	3 5.9%	18 35.3%	27 52.9%
7	I believe that inclusive education will build inclusive society	3 5.9%	2 3.9%	16 31.4%	30 58.8%
8	Societal orientation about special needs children will change if special needs children are allowed to attend conventional schools	4(7.8%)	2(3.9%)	20 (39.2%)	25 (49.0%)
9	I believe that my child with special needs will achieve his/her full potentials if allow to go to conventional school	6 11.8%	- 0%	21 41.2%	24 47.0%
10	I will not support the idea of allowing children with special needs to attend conventional school	2 3.9%	2 3.9%	23 (45.1%)	24 (47.1%)

Results from Table 2, as revealed by item No 1, indicates 19.6% of the parents with special needs children will like their children attend conventional schools while 80.4% held contrary opinion. Response to item 2 revealed that 11.8% believed that if special needs children attend conventional school, their psychological wellbeing will improve, but 88.2% had contrary idea. Item No 3 revealed that larger percentage (90.2%) did not believe that academic performance of special needs children could improve in conventional school. Responses to items 4 revealed that larger percentage of parents of special needs children opined that the orientation of their children will not change by attending conventional school. Item 5 revealed that 9.8% believed that teachers in conventional school will attend to their children while 90.2% believe not. Item 6 revealed that 88.2% have the fear that non-special needs in inclusive setting will maltreat their children while 11.8% believed not. Item 7 revealed that 90.2% believed that inclusive education cannot build inclusive society while 9.8% held contrary opinion. Responses to item 8 revealed that 88.2% believed that societal orientation will not change even if special needs children attend conventional schools. Item 9 revealed that 88.2% believed children with special needs cannot achieve their full potential by attending conventional schools. While 11.8 held contrary notions. Item 10 revealed that larger percentage do not support the idea of allowing children with special need to attend conventional school. It can be generally inferred from the responses that parents' attitudes to inclusion may not favor successful implementation of inclusive education.

### Research Question three

To what extent has government in Southwestern Nigeria encouraged inclusive education practice?

**Table 3: Frequency Counts and Percentage that showed the Extent of Government Participation in Inclusive Education Practice**

S/N		MA	SA	RA	NA
1	We practice inclusive education in our school	32 62.7%	17 33.3%	2 3.9%	- 0%
2	Government sponsors our teachers on training for quality inclusive education services	7 13.7%	22 43.4%	11 21.6%	11 21.6%
3	Government recruits staff for inclusive education practices	9 17.6%	20 39.2%	14 27.5%	8 15.7%
4	Government monitors/supervises inclusive education programme by constantly visiting schools	8 15.6%	11 21.6%	21 41.2%	11 21.6%
5	Our schools are properly consulted during problem identification associated with inclusive education	4 7.8%	7 13.7%	19 37.3%	21 41.2%
6	Government buys materials / books needed in our school for inclusive educational services	6 11.8%	8 15.6%	18 35.3%	19 37.3%
7	Government equips schools with infrastructure and other learning materials needed in our schools for inclusive education	8 15.7%	6 11.8%	11 21.6%	26 51.0%
8	Government extends financial subsidy for us for inclusive education	7 13.7%	1 2.0%	15 29.4%	28 54.9%
9	Inclusive education practice is considered crucial by government	6 11.8%	6 11.8%	12 23.5%	27 52.9%
10	Non-government organizations assist the schools in promoting inclusive education service	6 11.8%	8 15.7%	8 15.7%	29 56.9%

From Table 3, item 2, 56.8% of the respondents agreed that government sponsors teachers on in service based on the needs for implementation of inclusive education while 43.2% disagreed. Responses to item no 3 indicated that the government recruits staff for inclusive education with positive opinion recording highest percentage i.e. 56.8% against 43.2%. Item no 5 revealed that government did not take supervision of the programme serious with 62.8% agreeing that the programme is not well attended to. Responses to item 4 revealed that government do not mostly

consult different head of schools before the purchase of materials to the schools. The result of item 6 revealed that books and other materials are rarely bought for various inclusive centers with 72.6% of the respondents indicating that materials are not bought. Item 7 revealed that government do not care about necessary infrastructure and other learning materials in the center for inclusive education (72.6% against 27.4%). Item 8 revealed that the centers are not adequately funded. Item 9 and 10 revealed that inclusive education are taken less important in the agenda of government and non-governmental organizations in Nigeria. Summarily, government disposition towards inclusive education in Southwestern Nigeria is not encouraging.

From the above results, research questions two and three revealed the negative stand of parents and government to inclusive education in Southwestern Nigeria. By implication, inclusive education has not enjoyed the needed attitude and support which might be the reason for the less popularity of the programme. Obviously, students with special needs in this region will be socially and emotionally stigmatized by parents who are supposed to provide the necessary support for them. It must be noted according to Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) that there is positive link between pupil achievement and parents support. The evidence of lack of support may constitute major barrier to academic progress of these individuals. Also, government inability to provide necessary assistant may be a major barrier to inclusive education in Southwestern Nigeria.

On the other hand, the positive attitudes demonstrated by teacher as revealed by the result of research question one provides hope because positive attitude and disposition are needed by caregivers to implement the programme of inclusion. This result is in line with Jung (2007), Shippen, Houchins, Ramsey & Simon (2005) and Campbell GImored & Cuskdily (2003) who all believed that positive attitude is needed by teachers in training and the ones on the job for successful integration of students with special needs in regular classrooms.

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

Inclusive education is a programme of action for total integration of persons with special needs. This has been advocated for by UNESCO, UN and other international bodies as reflected in various international conferences and conventions. However, major setback to this in Southwestern, Nigeria are perception and attitude of parents and level government participation which are inimical to the success of the program. Hence there is the need for change of orientation toward this programme.

In view of the results of this study, the following are recommended;

- Mass awareness of the plight of special needs should be carried out by the concern agencies and association.
- Parents of special needs as well as public should be educated and reoriented about the right of this excluded group.
- The implementation of the right of people special needs as recommended by united nation should be advocated for through local, state and national assemblies by various associations responsible for the plight and needs of persons with special needs.
- Government should be ready to live up to their responsibility on the issues of persons with special needs through advocacy, lobbying and human right organizations.

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