Teachers Attitude to Curriculum Change: Implications for Inclusive Education in Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated teachers' attitude towards implementing inclusive education in secondary schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design and was guided by three research questions. The instrument for data collection was a researcher designed questionnaire of three parts. Part A dealt with teachers attitude towards inclusion (TAIS), part B dealt with teachers' views on inclusive education (TVIS) while the third part dealt with teachers barriers to inclusion (TBIS). The sample comprised 255 secondary school teachers from the zone. Data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings indicated that secondary school teachers in Owerri Education zone have positive attitude and views towards inclusive education. However, lack of training and instructional materials as well as disenabling environment were major barriers to the adoption of inclusive practices. It was recommended that teachers should be exposed to in-service training, workshops and conferences to equip them for the challenges of inclusion. Special education should also be a core subject in all teacher training colleges, Colleges of Education and Faculties of Education in Nigeria. Government should endeavour to restructure school environment to suit inclusive standards and also provide assistive technology in order to meet the UNESCO global objectives of inclusion.
Keywords: Attitude, Change, Implementation, Inclusive Education, teacher.

Introduction

Curriculum is a complex social and educational construct that leads itself to a plethora of definitions – some narrow, some broad. Scholars define it to suit their various view points. In general terms, however, curriculum is a systematically organized body of knowledge through which the goals of education can be achieved for the fulfillment of the needs and aspirations of any given society. Taner & Tarner (1980:18) defined curriculum as "planned and guided learning experiences and intended outcomes formulated through systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth in social competence". This definition implies that curriculum enables students to gain knowledge and understanding as well as develop skills, attitudes, values while interacting with each other and with teachers. Curriculum involves all that take place in the lives of learners and the impact that these experiences have on the society.

Curriculum includes the sum total of school experiences, what is to be learned, the expected change in behaviour, the processes involved and the nature of techniques, approaches (methods) and other relevant equipment and facilities. But the school curriculum, like the society which it services is dynamic. Curriculum reflects societal changes. These changes accommodate needs which the society perceives as important and necessary for the wellness of the majority of people. Curriculum change therefore occurs as a result of review or reform in an existing curriculum consequent upon pressing need or lack of relevance of the old or existing curriculum in dealing with societal problems.

Curriculum change according to Pretorius (1999) encompasses goals, content, teaching and learning resources etc that take care of deficiencies and inadequacies in an already existing curriculum. Through curriculum change, new ideas which may be social, cultural, political, economic and technological are infused into the curriculum, leading ultimately to the strengthening of both internal and external processes of the school. Alibi and Okemakinde (2010) see educational reform or change essentially as a re-examination of the goals and objectives of education, as the worth of any educational system as an investment lies in its capability to continuously serve the stakeholders better and remain relevant to national development. This search for quality education for all citizens consequent upon the realization that the current curriculum is deficient in meeting global education needs made Nigeria to adopt the policy of inclusive education.

Inclusive education advocates the re-structuring of institutions (schools) classrooms and approaches to instruction to meet the needs of students with peculiar needs. Booth (1997:78) defined inclusion as "the process

of increasing participation of learners in, and reducing their exclusion from the curriculum, culture and communities of neighbourhood and mainstream centres of learning". This means that inclusion requires that all learners with or without disabilities or learning difficulties should study together and support each other. By so doing, all forms of discrimination will be removed thereby ensuring everyone's self worth. All children are majorly educable and no one should be denied the benefits of education. The definition of inclusion by UNESCO (2005) buttresses the above point. To UNESCO, inclusion is

> a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range, and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.

The foregoing definitions show clearly that inclusion differs from mainstreaming. The former advocates that all children should be educated alongside their peers in the same environment whereas the later recommends separate schooling or separate learning centres (which may be in the same environment) for children with disabilities.

Inclusion is derived from the social model. The perspective of the social model is that it is society that is disabling not the individual. According to this model, it is the failure of society to adapt the environment to accommodate an individual's condition that is disabling (Kellet 2008:163). Educationally, this model requires that the physical environment, teaching styles and the teaching and learning processes be adjusted to meet the diverse needs of all learners. Though the developed nations have aligned themselves fully with this social model, most developing nations more or less incline themselves towards the charitable model which views disabled people as tragic figures who deserve pity and philanthropy. In a world fixated by the dynamics of economics where people struggle daily for existence, scarce resources should not be wasted on those who can hardly contribute to economic growth. Philanthropic organizations should take care of them. This idea informs the thoughts and beliefs of many citizens of the developing world and these feelings which are embedded in culture, constitute a huge obstacle to the full implementation of the inclusion programme. From all the foregoing, it is clear that for inclusive education to be successfully implemented, there must be an enabling environment. This environment includes teachers, materials, examination processes, school management. The schools (especially teachers) are central to the implementation of inclusive education. Were these central figures involved in the process of implementing, inclusive education in Nigeria?

Inclusive education was adopted into the Nigerian education system in 2008. It grew out as an off shoot of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MOGS). In an effort to accomplish EFA goals, Nigeria, in 2000, established the Universal Basic Education (UBE). In 2004, the National Assembly passed UBE into law. In 2006, the Federal Republic of Nigeria launched the National Action Plan (NAP) to back UBE and facilitate the achievement of EFA by 2015. This move was to ensure that all children in Nigeria are given equal access to education and the empowerment and privilege associated with it.

Implementing Curriculum Change in Nigeria

Nigeria has a chequered history of educational reforms/change. Though she is a signatory to many global declarations in education, Nigerians are yet to feel the impact of these educational reforms. Once a new policy is enunciated, the Ministry of Education and all other relevant agencies in the education sector receive it with a lot of enthusiasm necessitating a flurry of activities. But soon after, the enthusiasm wanes, usually after so much money has been expended. Consequently, the entire reform/change process is either half hazardly pursued or in some cases out rightly abandoned, as no clear guidelines are given for its implementation. Finally, the innovation is either substantially scaled down or completely abandoned. In the 1980's Nigeria adopted the 6-3-3-4 education system. This system was intended to bridge the gap between primary and secondary education. Children were expected to spend six years in the primary school, three years in the junior secondary school, three years in the senior secondary school and four years in tertiary institutions. This change necessitated the introduction of a syllabus heavy with science and technology for the junior secondary school to enable students to learn skills for self sufficiency so that they could choose not to complete the senior secondary school. But the system totally failed because the proponents of the programme did not take into consideration important elements of implementation such as manpower, teacher training, laboratories and other equipment. Many of the equipment shipped into Nigeria at huge costs to tax payers lay abandoned in the offices of principals of schools. Some of the machinery are still in crates up to this day. In like manner, all other programmes like the computer education programme, entrepreneurship studies have also suffered the same fate. Even the UBE now practiced in Nigeria suffers from huge implementational problems.

Many reasons have been given by scholars why curricular changes fail. According to Yusuf & Yusuf

(2009) unsuccessful implementation is caused by inconsistency and lack of political will on the part of government, lack of adequate manpower (quantity and quality) poor funding, faulty monitoring policies. Most of these problems centre on the fact that the implementers of any change who are teachers are rarely involved in the formulation of change policies.

Implementation according to Mezieobi (1993) gives the curriculum document its real meaning via testing its workability. Implementation complements the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined efforts of teachers, students and others. Bruner (1960:xv) opines that

> A curriculum is more for teachers that it is for pupils. If it cannot change, move,
> perturb and inform teachers, it will have no effect on those whom they teach. It must
> first and foremost be a curriculum for teachers. If it has any effect on pupils, it will
> have it by virtue of having an effect on teachers.

The above statement clearly states that the teacher is the most important single factor in curriculum implementation as the success of any curriculum change depends on how it is perceived, understood and interpreted by the implementers (teachers). It is a matter of regret that in Nigeria, teachers' views, perceptions, conceptions are not considered in the introduction of any kind of curricular change. Barr cited in Banning (1954) pointed out that attitudes of teachers are central to curriculum change. This implies that teachers views, interests, opinions perceptions and attitudes towards any curriculum change must be sort for, in order to ensure effective implementation of such change in the educational system.

This is more so in any inclusive environment. An inclusive classroom must take care of cultural, intellectual, physical, social and mental diversities of all who teach and all who learn. Taking care of these diversities is bound to cause interactional and curricula problems. To support learning processes in inclusive classrooms, teachers must be trained in proper pedagogical and other communication skills. Research has shown that even in developed nations, implementation of new curriculum takes teachers a considerable amount of time to become competent and confident in its use (March 2006, Vica, 2008). According to Kellet (2008), teachers have tried to resist inclusion on the basis that they do not possess adequate skills to teach children who have emotional as well as behavioural problems, more so because their presence may seriously hamper the learning of other pupils. Teachers also complain about inadequate number of teaching and other support staff, poor funding, inadequate infrastructural facilitates to implement the programme. These complaints affect the attitude of teachers to inclusion.

In Nigeria, the situation is more gloomy. Despite the fact that the National Policy on Education (NPE) (2008) contains curricular recommendations for adoption of inclusive education, very little provision has been made to actively involve teachers. Inclusive education involves all teachers yet teacher training institutions do not offer foundational courses in inclusive education to all teachers. For example the University of Nigeria, Nsukka has the largest Faculty of Education in Sub-Sahara Africa, yet her teacher education curriculum does not contain any core course in special education that is mandatory for all teachers. As a result universities and teacher training colleges produce unskilled and untrained teachers who are unable to face the challenges of inclusive education practices.

Many teachers resist the adoption of inclusive education simply because they are not trained in inclusive practice. Lack of training creates fear in teachers who as a result perceive themselves as unprepared to undertake the rigours of special needs students. As a result teachers develop low confidence as well as negative attitudes to inclusion (Ozoji 1998 and Obani 2002). Buttressing this fact, Okeke-Oti (2010) observed that training in special education increases teachers' understanding and attitudes to inclusion. The enabling and stimulating environment required for achieving the goals of inclusion can only be achieved if teachers adjust properly to inclusion.

An attitude is a point of view that someone holds towards an idea or object in every day life which invariably affects the individual's thoughts actions and beliefs. Anyone can develop positive or negative attitudes towards any idea. But for one to do any given task satisfactorily, the one must need to have a positive attitude towards it. Teachers perceptions and attitude present the most formidable single obstacle to inclusion (Mitler, 2000).

Culture influences the attitude and behaviour of people towards societal problems. Each culture has its own unique characteristics which usually are only understood by its indigenous peoples. Inspite of enormous exposure to education and civilization, many people from the developing nations still see disability as a curse which comes as a result of atrocities committed either by the disabled, or their parents and grand parents. Some regard disability as contagious. This perception is not restricted to illiterate people. Cases abound where the elite prevent their children from interacting, intermingling or marrying the disabled no matter the cause of the disability. Teachers are members of various communities where these disempowering perspectives of disability hold sway. These perspectives constitute a huge set back because teachers attitude is considered as a major factor that guarantees the success of inclusion in school. Teachers with positive attitude will contribute positively to the success of inclusion while those with negative attitudes are likely to frustrate all the laid down processes and

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proceedings for successful implementation of the inclusive practice.

Though Nigeria adopted inclusive education as a major reform in 2008, the nation has huge challenges of implementation arising from complex social, ethical, economic, religious and administrative problems. Of all the 36 states that make up Nigeria, including the Federal Capital Territory, only four states Imo, Delta, Akwa-Ibom and Oyo states have seriously started implementing the programme. These four states have made primary and secondary school, school free, compulsory and mandatory for all pupils irrespective of gender, religion, social class. Parents who fail to send their children to school stand the risk of being arrested and prosecuted. Because of this government policy, many disabled children who otherwise would not have been in school are now seen in many schools in the affected states.

Statement of Problem

In 2008, Nigeria adopted inclusive education as a major reform in her educational system. But ever since then, students with disabilities still suffer indignities both in and out of school. Their complaints range from inability to access the physical environment, the use of non inclusive teaching methods by teachers, non inclusive assessment strategies and inadequate provision for curricular and non curricular activities. Students also complain of poor attitude of teachers towards the disabled which they believe is responsible for most of the marginalization which the affected students experience. This study sets out to determine the attitude of teachers towards inclusive education practices in Imo state of Nigeria. Specifically the study sought to determine teachers views about inclusive education programme, teachers' attitude towards implementing inclusion and what teachers see as barriers towards full implementation of inclusive education.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study
1.   What are the views of teachers in Owerri Elucidation zone towards inclusive education?
2.   What is the attitude of teachers in Oweri Education zone toward inclusion?
3.   What barriers do teachers in Oweri education zone perceive as militating against the implementation of inclusive education?

Research Method

The study adopted descriptive survey research method. A descriptive survey study seeks or uses sample data to document, describe and explain what is in existence and so was deemed appropriate for the study. The study was carried out in Owerri Education zone of Imo state, Nigeria. Imo state has three education zones and is one of the four states in the federation that has fully adopted inclusion as an educational practice. Owerri Education Zone has eleven (11) local government areas with a total of (154) secondary schools and 2,229 secondary school teachers. The instrument used was designed by the researchers and face validated by experts in Educational Psychology and Measurement and Evaluation from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The corrections and suggestions of the experts were used to sharpen the instrument. The instrument was made up of 3 sections. Section A with 17 questions sought information on the views of teachers about inclusion (TVIE) section B which has 12 questions sought information on teachers' attitude to inclusion (TAIS) while section C with 8 questions sought information about teachers' perceived barriers to inclusion (TPBIS). The instrument is a four point modified Likert Scale of Strongly Agree (SA=4), Agree (A=3) Disagree (DA=2) and Strongly Disagree (SD=1). The criterion mean of 2.50 was used. Mean scores of 2.50 and above were accepted (positive attitude in section B) while scores of 2.49 and below were rejected (negative attitude). Cronbach alpha was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument which yielded a co-efficient reliability of 0.75, 0.80 and 0.72 for items on sections A,B & C respectively. A total of 229 copies of the instrument were administered with the help of four research assistants and 214 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved. Data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions.

Presentation of Results

Table 1 Mean responses of secondary school teachers views on inclusive education (TVIE)   n=214

Section A

S/N	Teachers Views on Inclusive education	Mean	SD	Decision
1.	The inclusion of special educational need students in my classes increases my work load.	3.25	.85	Accept
2.	All learners should be educated together in schools.	2.94	.94	Accept
3.	Inclusive education if properly planned should be adopted as an educational practice.	2.83	.91	Accept
4.	Students who are crippled or lame should be in regular classrooms.	2.73	.91	Accept
5.	Students who have slight mental impairment should be accommodated in classrooms.	2.57	.97	Accept
6.	Having all students irrespective of disability in the same class can be beneficial.	2.56	1.01	Accept
7.	If a teacher is resourceful, he/she can teach all categories of students in the same class.	2.17	1.00	Reject
8.	In general, inclusive education (inclusion) is a desirable educational practice.	2.72	.95	Accept
9.	Teachers should simplify lessons for disabled students.	3.25	.82	Accept
10.	Teachers should reduce the number of lessons of disabled students.	2.91	.90	Accept
11.	Special educational needs students should be given more time to complete assignments.	2.69	1.03	Accept
12.	Learners who are long or short sighted but who can read standard printed materials should be in regular classrooms.	2.67	.92	Accept
13.	Teachers should not modify assignments for the special educational needs students in subject areas.	2.60	.81	Accept
14.	Hearing impaired learners, but not deaf should be in regular classrooms.	2.33	.96	Reject
15.	Special educational needs students should not be enrolled in schools/classes until they attain a minimum level of proficiency.	2.12	.95	Accept
16.	Learners who cannot control movement of their limbs should not be in regular class.	1.93	.00	Reject
17.	Blind learners who cannot read standard printed materials should not be in regular classrooms.	1.93	.96	

Table 1 above shows that secondary school teachers are generally of the view that inclusive education be adopted as an educational practice. This is shown from their responses to questions 1,2,3,4,5,8,9,10,11 & 12 13 with mean scores of 3.25, 2.94, 2.83, 2.73, 2.57, 2.56, 2.72, 3.25, 2.91, 2.69, 2.67 and 2.60 respectively. They however are of the opinion that not all students who have disability should be in regular classrooms. This is evident from their responses as seen in questions 14, 15, 16 & 17. Teachers are of the view that seriously physically challenged learners, hearing impaired learners, deaf learners and blind learners, who have not attained minimal proficiency should not be in regular classrooms. They also feel that it will be good to simplify lessons for students with special needs, reduce their workload as well as modify their assignments (items 9, 10 & 11).

Section B

Mean responses of secondary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

S/N		Mean	SD	Decision
18.	I appreciate every child in my class irrespective of the physical or mental state.	3.52	.70	Positive
19.	I give special education needs students more time to complete their class work.	3.51	.68	Positive
20.	I pay attention to the complaints of special educational needs students in my class.	3.02	.66	Positive
21.	I am interested in receiving more training in special education.	3.01	.82	Positive
22.	I respect my special needs students.	3.00	.80	Positive
23.	I do not enjoy giving special needs students punishment.	2.55	.72	Positive
24.	I like giving special educational needs students less assignment than other students.	2.40	.67	Negative
25.	I grade the scripts of disabled students with general comments to avoid discouraging them with raw scores.	2.36	.078	Positive
26.	I encourage disabled students to attend and stay in school.	2.53	.95	Positive
27.	I like using different teaching methods in order to carry special educational needs students along.	2.35	.79	Negative
28.	Effort is more important than achievement for special learners.	2.82	.80	Positive
29.	Accommodating special educational needs students in classes creates a positive educational atmosphere and challenges teachers' abilities.	2.65	.95	Positive

Responses as seen from the table above show that teachers attitude to inclusive education is more positive than negative. Teachers appreciate students irrespective of status (item 18), give educational needs students more time to complete their work (item 19). Pay attention to their complaints (item 20) are willing to receive more training in inclusive practices (item 21) do not enjoy disrespecting or punishing disabled students (Items 22 & 23) encourage them to attend school (Item 26) and also adopt different teaching methods to help them learn (Item 27). However teachers exhibit some negative attitudes as seen from responses to items 24, 25 and 28. These items show that they have a patronizing attitude towards them. Teachers regard effort as being more important, give disabled students little homework and do not grade them like other students.

Table 3

Mean responses of teachers about perceived barriers to inclusive education.

S/N		Mean	SD	Decision
30.	Cultural perception of disability as a curse	3.78	.78	Accept
31.	Stress associated with planning for different groups of people.	3.67	.84	Accept
32.	Lack of sufficient knowledge on inclusive education practices.	3.54	.88	Accept
33.	Lack of in-service training on inclusive education programme.	3.51	.89	Accept
34.	Lack of inclusive laboratories for teaching special educational needs students.	3.49	.76	Accept
35.	Lack of proper incentives for accommodating the challenges of inclusive education.	3.24	.68	Accept
36.	Lack of instructional materials for teaching special educational needs students.	2.98	.67	Accept
37.	Lack of co-operation from other teachers and school administration.	2.85	.77	Accept

In table 3 above, secondary school teachers in Owerri Education Zone unanimously agreed that all the items in the table constitute barriers to teachers implementing inclusive education. They strongly agreed that cultural perception of disability (Item 30), stress associated with planning for different groups, (Item 31) lack of knowledge about inclusion (Item 32) lack of in-service training (Item 33), lack of incentives for teachers (Item 34), with mean scores of 3.78, 3.67, 3.54, 3.51, 3.24 were strong barriers to inclusion. They also agreed with items 35 (mean 3.49) item 36 (mean 2.98) and item 37 (mean 2.85). These last three items deal with lack of enabling environment for inclusion like laboratories, assistive technology and lack of cooperation from other staff. These items constitute serious impediments to individual teachers.

Discussion of results

Findings show that secondary school teachers in Owerri Education zone posses positive attitude and views towards inclusive education. This positive attitude includes appreciating every member of their class irrespective of the complaints, being interested in receiving more training on inclusive education practices. This could be as a result of the policy of Imo State Government toward students with disabilities. The disabled in the state are actively involved in many state affairs and receive a lot of state assistance. They also have a recognized union sponsored by the state government. This has a great impact on teachers' attitude towards this special group of learners.

Since secondary school teachers have positive attitude to inclusion, then one would expect the implementation process of inclusive education to be a smooth one without much difficulty in the zone. This is because the attitude of teachers to any educational innovation determines to a greater extent the level of implementation of that educational innovation. This finding agrees with Abrar, Baloch and Ghouri (2010) who pointed out that both principals and teachers demonstrated an optimistic and positive attitude towards inclusive education in Karachi, Pakistan. But this finding is against the views of Hussain, Ali, Khan, Ramzam and Quadeer (2011) which found out that majority of teachers do not have positive attitude towards inclusion.

Results also indicate that secondary school teachers identified lack of training, instructional materials and facilities, co-operation, cultural influence, stress and poor incentives as the major barriers to implementing inclusive education. The study also revealed the need for seminars, workshops, conferences and in-service training to help enhance teachers skills which will make them confident and ready to dispense their duties effectively. This converges with the findings of Okeke (1998) which found out that the major barrier in implementing inclusive education is lack of trained teachers.

Findings also revealed that secondary school teachers in Owerri Education Zone suggested that physically challenged learners, hearing impaired learners, deaf learners, blind learners and special educational learners who have not attained certain minimal proficiency should not be in the regular classroom while also suggesting that it will be good practice to accommodate visual impaired learners who can read standard printed materials in regular classroom, simplify lessons for special educational needs students, reduce their workload and also reduce as well as modify their assignments.

Conclusion

This study is a survey of secondary school teachers' attitude to curriculum change with regard to inclusion of special needs students in regular schools in Owerri Education Zone of Imo State, Nigeria. Based on the findings, the study revealed that secondary school teachers in Owerri Education Zone posses positive attitudes and views towards the implementation of inclusive education programme. However, the findings of the study also revealed that teachers identified training, lack of facilities and cultural perceptions as major barriers to the implementation of the programme in Owerri Education Zone. If teachers are not properly trained and equipped with knowledge and skills, no circular change can be successfully implemented. Teachers who are presently in service and those who will be recruited in future need to e trained and retained in emerging educational practices such as inclusion. The Nigerian government has taken a bold and laudable step by introducing inclusive education. The government should now take a step further by creating the positive environment that will enable the major actors

(teachers) to implement the desired change.

Recommendations

- Government and private organizations or individuals interested in education should pursue more vigorously comprehensive and qualitative sensitization programmes at all levels of education system on inclusive education. This sensitization programme should also include radio and television programmes for public awareness. Community institutions should also be used as agents to create awareness

- Attention should be focused on the need to give practicing teachers training on inclusive education practices through seminars and workshops. The curriculum of teacher education programmes in all teacher training institutions should be restructured to include compulsory (core) courses for all teacher trainees. Curriculum planners should also develop curriculum in all areas which will be flexible thereby accommodating the heterogeneous experiences that are bound to be seen in any inclusive classroom.

- The government should enter into partnership with Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) especially those from countries where inclusive education has taken root. This will facilitate aid in the area of assistive technologies such as braille, audio tapes etc. This is because it is only teachers who have the expertise and the right attitude, that can provide the necessary leadership and guidance for these special needs students in mainstream schools.

- The government should endeavour to restructure the school buildings and school plants as much as possible to accommodate special needs students. This will eliminate the various structural barriers to inclusion while ensuring a more inclusive friendly environment.

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