CHALLENGES OF IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENT IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The study investigated the challenges of implementing inclusive education of children with visual impairment in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The design of the study is descriptive survey design. The population of the study was all the 80 teachers of children with visual impairment in the 4 centres in Port Harcourt. The simple random sampling technique was used to draw 25% of the population as the sample for the study. A self-designed instrument titled Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education Scale (CIIES) was used for the study. The cronbach alpha reliability estimate was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The general reliability of CIIES is given at .92, Social Factors Subscale (SFS) .935, Economic Factors Subscale (EFS) .91 and Emotional Factors Subscale (EFS) .87. Three research questions were answered. Mean and standard deviation were used for the data analysis. It was found out among others that the social factors that may challenge effective implementation of inclusive education are: negative attitude of the society towards these students, unadoptable school environment and language/ communication barriers. More so, the economic factors are: inadequate funding, inadequate number of personnel, inadequate training for personnel and inadequate funding to purchase the necessary technological materials, while emotional factors are discrimination against children with visual impairment, lack of awareness of the special needs of children with visual impairment, marginalization of children with visual impairment. The following recommendations were made among others; the school administrators should take social activities like co-curricular activities very seriously in the schools; that the school administrators should endeavour to meet parents, host community and non-governmental functionaries like Tetfund and oil companies for financial assistance.*

KEYWORDS: Inclusive education, visual impairment, social factors, emotional factors

INTRODUCTION

Education is a very important instrument of change and for the development of any nation. It is an essential right that should be accorded to all human beings. Education is a primary indicator of economic and social advancement and development of any country. Nigeria aims at achieving quality education for all but some perceived learning problems of students with special needs constitute a great task in making education for all possible. According to Integrated Education Group (2002) the right of everyone to education is the responsibility of the whole world.

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Over the years there has been disparity in the accessibility of education between the normal children and the children living with disabilities. Education for children living with disabilities was in segregated classrooms with inadequate attention and materials (Dibu, 2005, Ugwu 2015). Recently, a heated debate is ongoing, on the need for inclusive education mostly in developed countries of the world. Inclusive education requires that all children with disabilities should be taught together in the same general classroom with other children who are not disabled. (Obi cited in Ugwu 2015). There is an understanding that the provision of inclusive education for persons with special need can promote better academic and social interaction among the students, thereby breaking down barriers of discrimination. The government has tried to integrate the special needs children into regular education (Charles, 2003). However, he argued that this goal may not be achieved through the provision of separate facilities of those deemed to be special.

The debate is still ongoing in Nigeria where some people are in doubt on the possibility of implementing such educational policy. People's perception is that the task and material resources needed for inclusive education is enormous and considering the economic situation, it may not be an achievable objective. It is based on this background that the researchers have decided to investigate the challenges of implementing inclusive education of children living with visual impairments in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Education For All (EFA), (2005) reported that an estimated 113 million children with disabilities are denied entry into regular education and are more among the dropout, because their learning needs are unmet.

Inclusive education can be seen as a process of enhancing the capacity of the education system in any country to reach out to diverse learners. The basis of inclusion is that special needs pupils have a right to the benefits of a full school experience with needed modification and supports alongside their peers without disabilities who receive general education. The school has a kind of environment that should encourage instead of discourage the learners. School builds the learner's confidence as he tackle's one task after another.

According to Ugwu (2015), inclusion is seen as education for all children in the same learning environment (classroom) or in the least restrictive environment without any discrimination or segregation. Inclusive education is a continuing process rather than a fixed state (Ozoji, 2004). More so, PBS Parents (2016) opined that inclusive education happens when children with and without disabilities participate and learn together in the same classes. The emphasis is that at every point in time schools should work towards increasing population. However, the idea behind inclusive education is assisting students and teachers become better members of a community by creating new vision for communities and for schools. Ozoji (2005) noted that inclusive education has many goals which include dismantling barriers to access and participation and in the end facilitating achievement in school and training. The aim of inclusive education has not been fully achieved due to some striking challenges. Such factors that can influence inclusive education range from economic factors, social factors and emotional factors. Business dictionary.com (2016) defined economic factors as the set of fundamental information that affect a business or an investment's value. They went further to stress that the key economic factors that can be put into consideration are labour costs, interest rate, government policy, taxes and management. These are key economic factors that have the ability to devalue or value educational system of a country.

Business Dictionary.com (2016) defined social factors as the facts and experiences that influence individuals' personality, attitudes and lifestyle. These are factors that influence lifestyle of an individual; it could be religion, family status, family location and family wealth. These are factors that enable the individual get on with other people.

Indeed, Ugwu (2015) stated that to the layman visual impairment refers to blindness which means total loss of sight but to the educational professional, visual impairment means more than just blindness. Consequently, Ugwu (2015) identified two major classes of visual impairments people who are legally blind (total blindness) and those with partial sight (partially-sighted). Total blindness simply put, is inability to feel light from dark or loss of useful sight. It is very easy to identify a blind person on the street ,while you cannot notice somebody with partial blindness easily.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the numerous benefits that inclusive education tends to have, a number of obstacles stand to impede its effective implementation. However, when inclusive education fails there stands to be segregation, discrimination, inequalities superior/inferiority complex uneven comparison etc. The problem of this study therefore is to determine the factors that may challenge/impede effective implementation of inclusive education of children with visual impairment in Port Harcourt.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study seeks to investigate the challenges of implementing inclusive education of children with visual impairment in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
The objectives in specific terms are as follows:
1.   To identify the social factors that may impede effective implementation of inclusive education of children with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.
2.   To identify the economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education of children with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.
3.   To identify the emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education of children with visual impairment in an inclusive setting.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked to guide the study.
1.   What are the social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impairment?
2.   What are the economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impairment?
3.   What are the emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impairment?

METHODOLOGY

This research adopted the descriptive survey design. In this design, data are usually collected from a selected group of respondents with a uniform criterion. The results of such data are usually used to generalize for other respondents outside the area on the subject of interest, in the present

research, data were collected from teachers of children with visual impairment in special school for Handicapped children in Port-Harcourt.

In this study the independent variable is the challenges of inclusive education while the dependent variable is successful implementation of inclusive education of children with visual impairment. The population for the study consists of all the 80 teachers in the 4 schools of children with visual impairment in Port-Harcourt city of Nigeria. The sample consisted of the 20 teachers of children with visual impairment who are presently teaching at special school for handicapped children in Port-Harcourt Rivers State.

These teachers were selected and used because they have been involved in the education of children with visual impairment for a fairly long time and as such have gathered enough experience, awareness, insight through their teaching of children with visual impairment. The study employed a proportionate stratified random sampling technique using the 25% of the population. A self designed instrument titled "Challenges of Implementing Inclusive Education Scale" (CIIES). The instrument has two sections. Section A contains demographic information of the respondents. While section B contains 26 items that elicited responses from the respondents. The CIIES was structured after the modified Likert four points rating scales of Strongly Agree- 4 points, Agree- 3 points, Disagree-2 points and Strongly Disagree- 1 point respectively. Any item which the mean value is above the criterion mean value of 2.50 is agreed upon while the responses with mean value below the criterion mean value of 2.50 is disagreed upon as the challenges in implementing inclusive education of children with visual impairment.

The face and content validities were ensured. This was made possible by three experts in Educational psychology measurement and evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling. Uniport their corrections, suggestions and recommendations were incorporated into the final draft of the work. The cronbach alpha reliability estimate was used to establish the reliability of the instrument. The general reliability of CIIES was found to be .92, Social Factors Subscale (SFS) .935, Economic Factors Subscale (EFS) .91 and Emotional Factors Subscale (EFS) .87. These reliability estimates guaranteed the use of the instrument for this study. The researchers and two trained research assistants distributed and collated the instrument from the respondents after they were properly completed. Data collected were analysed using mean via item analysis. Hence any item with a mean of 2.5 and above is regarded as a challenge while any one with less than 2.5 is not a challenge.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented as shown below

Research Question One

What are the social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment?

Table 1: weighted mean and standard deviation scores of social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment

S/N	Social factors	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1	Negative attitude of the society towards this students	3.60	0.92	Agreed
2	Unadoptable school environment	2.85	0.93	Agreed
3	Poor implementation strategy	1.45	0.86	Disagree
4	Language and communication barriers	3.15	1.19	Agreed
5	Public enlightenment on the aim of inclusive education	1.55	1.33	Disagreed
6	Strong leaders support	1.65	0.77	Disagreed
7	Good modification of the teacher qualification	1.80	1.17	Disagreed
8	Good government policies	2.05	1.24	Disagreed
9	Community involvement in inclusive education	1.70	1.19	Disagreed
10	Revision of curriculum to suit children with visual impediment	1.90	0.90	Disagreed
	Aggregate mean ($\bar{x}$)	2.17	10.51 1.05	

Table 1 revealed that items with serial numbers 1, 2, & 4 have their various mean values above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and were therefore agreed by the respondents as the social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment. While items with serial numbers 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 have their various mean values below the criterion mean value of 2.50 and are therefore disagreed by the respondents as the social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment.

Research Question Two
What are the economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment?

Table 2: Weighted mean and standard deviation score of economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment

S/N	Economic factors	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1	Inadequate funding of inclusive schools	3.60	0.88	Agreed
2	Inadequate fund to get the curriculum	1.60	0.99	Disagreed
3	Inadequate number of personnel	3.30	1.08	Agreed
4	Inadequate training for personnel	3.20	1.06	Agreed
5	Unsatisfactory resource for classroom maintenance	1.45	0.76	Disagreed
6	Adequate provision of money for students' welfare	1.80	0.95	Disagreed
7	Inadequate funding to purchase the necessary technological materials.	3.50	0.95	Agreed
8	Adequate resource for provision of relevant materials	1.90	1.12	Disagreed
9	Adequate resource for training of more resource personnel.	2.10	1.17	Disagreed
	Aggregate mean ($\bar{x}$)	2.49	8.96 0.99	

Table 2 shows that items with serial numbers 1, 3, 4 & 7 have various mean value above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and are agreed by the respondents as the economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment. While items with serial number 2, 5, 6, 8 & 9 were rejected by the respondents.

Research Question Three
What are the emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment?

Table 3: Weighted mean and standard deviation scores on emotional factors that may challenge effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment.

S/N	Emotional factors	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remarks
1	Discrimination of children with visual impairment	3.15	1.25	Agreed
2	Lack of awareness of the special needs of children with visual impairment	2.85	1.27	Agreed
3	Marginalization of children with visual impairment	3.60	0.94	Agreed
4	Loss of sense of belonging	3.25	1.16	Agreed

5	Adequate cooperation among teachers and students.	1.55	0.74	Disagreed
6	Anxious feeling by some of the student.	1.95	1.35	Disagreed
7	Good attitudinal change of the teachers.	1.55	0.99	Disagreed
	Aggregate mean ($\bar{x}$)	2.56	7.7 1.1	

Table 3 reveals that items with serial numbers 1, 2, 3 & 4 have their various mean value above the criterion mean value of 2.50 and are therefore agreed by the respondents as the emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment. While items with serial numbers 3, 5, 6 & 7 have their various mean values below the criterion mean value of 2.50 and are therefore disagreed by the respondents as the emotional factors that may challenge effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment.

Summary of Findings
The findings of the study are summarized under the following:
1)   The social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: discrimination of children with visual impairment; negative attitude of the society towards the students; unadoptable school environment, language and communication barriers.
2)   The economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: inadequate funding of inclusive schools; inadequate number of personnel, inadequate training for personnel; and inadequate funding to purchase the necessary technological materials.
3)   The emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: discrimination against children with visual impairment; lack of awareness of the special needs of children with visual impairment; marginalization of children with visual impairment, and loss of sense of belonging.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of the study are discussed under the following subheadings:

The Social Factors that may Hinder Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impediment
The finding revealed that the social factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: discrimination against children with visual impairment; negative attitude of the society towards the students; unadoptable school environment and language and communication barriers. This is in agreement with Ugwu (2012) that some parents and members of the society have negative attitude towards special need children.

The Economic Factors that May Hinder Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impediment

The finding showed that the economic factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: inadequate funding of inclusive schools; inadequate number of personnel, inadequate training for personnel; and inadequate funding to purchase the necessary technological materials. To this end, Ukeje in Doublegist.com (2013) found out that there is a relationship between the quality of teaching personnel and the quality of the education system or process. Moreso, Doublegist.com (2013) reported that it is only fair that adequate manpower and infrastructure should be provided in all schools and their places of location.

The Emotional Factors that may Hinder Effective Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Visual Impediment

The study revealed that emotional factors that may hinder effective implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impediment are: discrimination of children with visual impairment; lack of awareness of the special needs of children with visual impairment; marginalization of children with visual impairment, and loss of sense of belonging. The finding of this study is supported by Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities (2005) when they opined that young people with learning disabilities should not be put into a separate box, packaged up and labeled as "special". They should have the same opportunities, the same thinking and planning, as anyone else. Therefore, young people with disabilities should not be marginalized or traumatized, they should be fully involved in the whole educational processes.

CONCLUSION

From the results and findings, the study concludes that the obstacles militating against successful implementation of inclusive education for children with visual impairment include social factors, economic factors and emotional factors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that
1)   The school administrators should be able to take social activities like co-curricular activities seriously in the schools.
2)   The school administrators should endeavour to meet with the parents, host community, and non-government functionaries like Tetfund, and oil companies for financial assistance.
3)   The guidance and counsellors employed in the special education centers should be given the opportunity to help both the teachers and students out of their pressing problems.

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