

DETERMINANTS OF EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AT THE BASIC EDUCATION LEVEL IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study was aimed at examining the determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education at the Basic Education level for national development. Inclusive education at the basic level is key to national development because no school age child is left behind. Children with disabilities are integrated into the main stream to enable them learn in normal classrooms. There are certain things needed in inclusive education for effective implementation of the programme at the Basic Education level. This paper therefore looked at the term inclusive education, Basic Education and determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education in terms of information for planning, provision of school libraries, provision of qualified personnel and funding. Some recommendations were made, one of which is that, government should provide infrastructural facilities and funds for effective implementation of inclusive education at the Basic level of education.*

KEYWORDS: inclusive education, universal basic education, information for planning, provision of school libraries.

INTRODUCTION

Education is the key to national development and everyone has the right to education irrespective of one's status. However, despite global progress in achieving universal access to education, more than half the 65 million children with disabilities in low- and middle-income countries are not in school. They face multiple barriers to receiving an education including inaccessible schools, inaccessible teaching materials, prejudice and discrimination from teachers and bullying from peers. The situation is particularly concerning girls with disabilities. Globally this group of students face learning crisis at all levels of education. Not only are children out of school, but once in school, they are failing to learn. Children experience lower levels of enrolment, attainment and literacy. The attainment gaps between children with disabilities and children without disabilities are growing, and children with disabilities are being left behind (Ibok, 2015). There is not enough investment in education and many governments consider investment in inclusive education costly, citing resource constraints. However, the opportunity costs to the economy and health sector of children being out of school provide a powerful argument for increased investment in education that promotes inclusion of all children (Tony, 2015).

Education is crucial in fostering tolerance between people and contributes to more peaceful societies. Inclusive education is important in the development of Nigeria because bringing students with and without special needs together show the younger generation that a diverse group of people make up a community and that no one type of student is better than the others. Inclusive education will thus remove barriers to friendship among students with and without special needs, imbuing in them the spirit of cooperation and team work (Strully, 2016) which is the essential ingredient

germane to national development. Inclusive education welcomes diversity among all learners it removes segregation of any kind from educational practices, caters for the unique needs and learning styles of individuals and provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement. Inclusive education is premised on the fact that if the right to education for all is to be upheld, all learners must have access to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives because education is not only about making schools available to those who are already able to access them but it is about being proactive in identifying barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education as well as removing those barriers that lead to exclusion in national development (Ibok,2015). 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. Nigeria has the most out-of-school children worldwide (UNICEF, 2012). Most of these children are not in school because they are poor or because they are girls, have a disability or are from a minority ethnic group. Nigeria Ministry of Education efforts to get all children into school have failed, unless schools welcome and support children who are missing out, it may which affect national development. Increasingly, policy-makers, non-governmental organizations, educationists and activists recognize that good quality education for all children can only be achieved through schools that welcome and accommodate all children without discrimination and gender disparities which promote national development in Nigeria. The Nigerian Government has the main responsibility for making education accessible and beneficial for all children. National education policies and systems are therefore a key target for reform and designing clear strategies to make their education systems inclusive.

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, 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 (Ugwu, 2015). There is an understanding that the provision of inclusive education for persons with special needs 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, 2013). However, the author argued that, this goal may not be achieved through the provision of separate facilities for 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. Based on this, this paper therefore looked at determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level for national development.

Concept of inclusive education

Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in education. This may be in formal schools, or in non-formal places of learning, such as extra-curricular clubs and humanitarian camps. It often involves working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education,

so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework (Sightsavers, 2011). The concept of inclusive education includes all learners, but it may be interpreted differently according to the context. For example, while it covers children excluded on the basis of language, gender, ethnicity, disability and other factors, it can focus on children with disabilities only. At the same time, children may be affected by more than one issue. A child with disabilities may also speak the language of a minority ethnic group, or be a refugee, or, if she is a girl, her family and society may not value girls' education. According to Udo (2012), making schools inclusive for boys and girls with special needs improves all learners, including students facing exclusion because of other challenges, or more than one issue.

According to UNESCO (2011), Inclusion is:

- Recognition of the right to education and its provision in non -discriminatory ways.
- A common vision which covers all people.
- A belief that schools and other places of learning have a responsibility to educate all children (and adults) in line with human rights principles.
- A continuous process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners –regardless of factors such as disability, gender, age, ethnicity, language, HIV status, geographical location and sexuality –recognizing that all people can learn.

Inclusive education is the full integration of learners with and without special needs into the same classrooms and schools and thereby exposing them to the same learning opportunities. Ahmad (2010) defined inclusive education as the education of all children and young people with and without disabilities or difficulties in learning together in ordinary pre-primary schools, colleges, and universities with appropriate network support. Okwudire and Okechukwu (2018) saw inclusive education as the progressive increase in the participation of students, in reduction of their exclusion from the cultures, curricula, and communities of local schools. The authors further explained that with inclusive education, all students in a school regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area become part of the school community. It is a place where children are seen as equal members of the classroom without being marginalized. According to Ibok (2015), inclusive education means, providing to all students, including those with significant disabilities, equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services, with the needed supplementary aids and support services, in age appropriate classrooms, in order to prepare students for productive lives as full members of society. It provides for equal access to educational opportunities in Nigeria at all levels of education. Inclusive education is a process of enhancing the capacity of the education system in any country to reach out to diverse learners for national development. The basis of inclusion is that special needs pupils have a right to benefit from a full school experience, with needed modifications and supports, alongside their peers without disabilities who receive general education.

Nigeria in 1993 made a decree No. 96 for the provision of inclusive education with clear and comprehensive legal protection and security backing (FRN, 2013), yet due to governmental policies and cultural constraints, such decree did not succeed. This is a big problem for most special

education and non-special education school administrators in Nigeria. The notion of inclusive education was initially thought to be a concept in Nigerian educational system. However, inclusive education has since then witnessed some tremendous improvements in the last decade despite cultural, social-economic, and political constraints (Eskay, 2009). Inclusive education is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world (Ainscow, 2014). In some developing countries like Nigeria, inclusive education is thought as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Consequently the National Policy on Education in Nigeria states that Special Education is created as a formal special educational training given to people (children and adults) with special needs (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). However, this is contrary to the international practice where inclusive education is seen “as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners” (UNESCO, 2011).

Concept of Universal Basic education

Universal Basic Education (UBE) refers to education offered at the primary school up to the junior secondary level. UBE is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built. It is a nine (9) educational programme designed to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as to stimulate national development.

According to Adesina (2006), the philosophies behind the introduction of UBE in Nigeria are three-fold thus:

1. The development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen,
2. The full integration of the individual into the community, and
3. The provision of equal access to education opportunity for all citizens of the country of the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system.

The Universal Basic Education’s mission is to serve as a prime energizer of national movement for actualization of the nation’s UBE’s vision, working in concert with all stakeholders. This will mobilize the nation’s creative energies to ensure that education for all becomes the responsibilities of all (Ejere, 2011). The Universal Basic Education Commission in its annual report in 2005 listed the objectives to include: ensuring unfettered access to 9 years of formal basic education, the provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age, reducing drastically the incidence of drop out from the formal school system, through improved relevance, quality and efficiency and ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills, as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for lifelong learning.

The achievement of the above-mentioned objectives and indeed the UBE’s vision and mission of the Scheme, an Act tagged UBE Act was enacted on the 26th May, 2004. This Act made provision for compulsory, free, Universal Basic Education and other related matters. Following the enactment of the Act, the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) was established. The Act provides three sources of funding for the implementation of the UBE, which are;

- i. Federal Government Grant of not < 2% of its consolidated revenue fund; funds or contributions in the form of federal guaranteed credits and local or international donor grants.

- ii. The state government can only benefit from the Federal Government block grant meant for the implementation of the UBE if it can contribute at least 50% of the total cost of the project. This is to ensure the state's commitment towards the project.
- iii. The Local Government is to contribute its quota too to the implementation of the scheme.

In a clear form, Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a reformed programme in Nigeria's basic education delivery (from primary one, all through to junior secondary school class 3) and is to reinforce the implementation of the National Policy on Education (NPE) in order to provide greater access and ensure quality throughout the Federation as it is free and compulsory (Adomeh, Arhedo & Omoike, 2017). UBE is a scheme and process of fulfilling the aim of Education For All (EFA) as endorsed at the World conference on education held in Jomtien in 1990. According to the world conference on education, basic education is made free and available to all and sundry, thus emphasizing free access, equity, efficiency, literacy, numeracy and lifelong skills for all. Universal Basic Education: Matters Arising The Universal Basic Education as introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria has been described as a laudable development by scholars and policy evaluators, but it appears that it is leaving many issues unresolved which are likely to bedevil the programme just as the UPE scheme was. The name 'Universal Basic Education' ordinarily would have suggested that every Nigerian child, without exception would have access to basic education without hindrance (Aluede, 2016)

Basic education is fundamental to human and societal development. It is the foundation upon which other levels of education are built and a necessary prerequisite for human and national development (Anaduaka & Okafor 2013). According to Etuk, Ering and Ajake (2012), the primary target of the UBE policy was ensuring that every Nigerian child acquires a minimum of 9 years basic education. Universal basic education comprises (9) nine year duration comprising (6) six years of primary education and (3) three years of junior secondary education. It also includes adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education levels to take care of those who dropped out of school (National Policy on Education 2013; (Aboluwodi, 2015). Aboluwodi (2015) averred that, Universal Basic Education is designed to ensure free access to education, reduce the rate of dropout to the minimum, make education relevant to the needs of learners and make education a lifelong enterprise. The author maintained further that the cardinal concerns of Universal Basic Education are deeply rooted in how to meet the basic learning needs of children, adolescent, youth and adults and that it has to do with the all-round development of the child. That is, a life-long learning programme aiming at improving the literacy level of the children and adults.

Determinants of effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level for national development.

There are certain factors that determine effective implementation of inclusive education. When these factors are considered and put in place, implementation becomes easy. These determinants are as follows:

Information for planning

Inadequate data for planning is a major setback facing the UBE programme. Inadequate and poor information pose planning difficulties and implementation challenges. Unreliable data prevent

adequate projections in terms of expected enrolment, required teachers, infrastructural needs and equipment. When data provided for planning are inaccurate, the decisions based on such data would be faulty (Ejere, 2011; Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). Horn (2013) conducted the study to examine the relationship between inadequate information and the implementation of inclusive education at the Basic Education level in Zamfara State. In order to achieve this, two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha levels. The design adopted for the study was the ex-post facto. The sample for the study consisted of 150 teachers randomly selected in Zamfara State. The sample was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used for this study was an adapted 12 items, 4- point rating scale questionnaire. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The results obtained amongst others, revealed that there is a significant relationship between inadequate information for planning and implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level.

Provision of infrastructural facilities

Provision of infrastructural facilities is one of the significant determinants in the implementation of inclusive education. According to Salihu and Jamil (2015) one of the ways to assess the effectiveness of the UBE Scheme is to look at the availability of infrastructures needed for it implementation. The authors noted that infrastructure such as classroom, books, and other learning materials are insufficient to meet the goals of the programme, and to ensure access by everyone. The implementation of the inclusive education at the basic education level is confronted with lack of infrastructural facilities like Braille, type writers, environment friendly walk ways for the blind and those on wheel chairs. It is just of recent that there are provisions of walk ways for those on wheel chairs in some schools. There are no such things in the primary schools except in some model and private schools. The UBE programme as a whole is faced with the issue of inadequate learning facilities which affect the learning conditions of the pupils negatively thus, defeating the goals and objectives of the programmes. Shortage of equipment, infrastructures, text-books and instructional materials are undermining the successful implementation of the UBE programme. Without the provisions of adequate textbooks and instructional materials, it is difficult to implement the school curriculum (Etuk, Ering and Ajake, 2012).

A number of Primary schools in Nigeria are characterized by limited resources, overcrowded class rooms and dilapidated buildings (Olor, 2015). It is not in dispute that in some primary schools, some pupils learn under trees, Three demographic studies on the existing national situation in the primary education sector revealed that 12% of primary school pupils sit on the floor, 38% of classrooms have no ceilings, 87% of classrooms are overcrowded, while 77% of pupils lack textbooks (Adepoju & Fabiyi 2007). It is observed that, most schools in the country especially the ones located in the rural areas are plagued with very poor infrastructural facilities. In addition, there is insufficient provision for introductory technology and modern information technology facilities. The effect of this is that UBE will produce pupils who are not only ill-equipped in terms of skill but also suffer from a condition (Giddens, 2016). Many researchers such as Opoh (2011) and Mezieobi, Fubara and Mezieobi (2013) revealed that overcrowding and shortage of classrooms (a situation where students learn under trees shade), poor sanitation facilities and teaching equipment are militating against effective teaching and learning in the schools. The special need children are worst hit in this debilitating condition of the schools.

Provision of school library

Efforts by governments to promote education and literacy in Nigeria have failed because there was no provision for school libraries in the implementation of these programmes. The successful implementation of the UBE has serious implications for school libraries. It indicates an expanded vision for school libraries to include not only libraries in primary and secondary schools, but also libraries for early childhood education (in homes, communities, daycare centers and nursery schools), in skills centers for out-of-school youth, in adult education centers, in schools for nomadic peoples. Some of these may take very different forms from traditional school libraries (Dike, 2013). If all children and all citizens must acquire literacy, reading materials, the abundant and pleasurable reading materials found in libraries must be provided. For learners to develop skills for lifelong learning, they have to be given opportunities to enquire, to search, to explore, to practise, to solve problems –such as are found in libraries. If students are to be introduced to the world of knowledge and teach them to handle information in many forms, we need the resources of a well-equipped library. School libraries are basic to the successful implementation of UBE in Nigeria (Otor, 2015).

The school library provides information and ideas that are fundamental to successful functioning in society and gives students lifelong learning skills develops the imagination, citizenship, critical thinking skills, and ability to use information in different media (Ibok, 2015). School library materials enrich textbooks and teaching materials. When librarians and teachers work together, students achieve more. School library services serve everyone in the community, including those, such as people with disabilities, who need special materials and services. Censorship should not be tolerated. School libraries must be free of charge and, if they must share facilities with another library type, the school library's unique needs must be considered (Ibok, 2015). The school library helps children learn to enjoy reading, learning, and using library resources as lifelong habits, and gives them the chance to evaluate and use information. It exposes them to a range of thoughts, opinions, and ideas, and gives them awareness of other cultures.

Vincent (2015) conducted a study to examine the relationship between provision of libraries and inclusive education in the implementation of Universal Basic Education Programme in Rivers State. In order to achieve this, two hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level. The design adopted for the study was the ex-post facto. The sample for the study consisted of 200 teachers randomly selected from 10 public secondary schools. The sample was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. The instrument used for this study was an adapted 18 items, 4-point rating scale questionnaire. The data collected were subjected to statistical analysis using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient. The results obtained amongst others, revealed that there is a significant relationship between provision of libraries and inclusive education implementation at the basic education level.

Provision of adequate and qualified personnel

Teachers are the implementers of the curriculum at any level of education in Nigeria. For effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic level, there must be adequate and qualified staff to teach both special needs children and the normal children. Most of the recruited personnel are not qualified to teach and are not committed, lack trust and integrity in achieving the goals and

objectives of the inclusive education. These categories of personnel have infiltrated the UBE, making it hard to produce and identify the success of the programme.

Funding

A major constraint or challenge of the effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level for national development is inadequate funding. It is disheartening to note that, most of the available funds meant for the execution of effective implementation of inclusive education at basic education level are embezzled and squandered (Ibok, 2015), hence some of the facilities meant for the special needs children are not provided. The federal government takes the lead in setting policy and financing basic education through transfers to states, financial responsibility for basic education is shared between the states and local governments. Local governments are charged with paying salaries and allowances of primary school teachers. In spite of the shared responsibility for UBE financing by the three tiers of government, funding has remained an issue. Similarly, funds estimated for renovating the existing school structures and building new ones are hardly disbursed. Most schools have dilapidated structures with no libraries, laboratories and other support facilities (Ejere, 2011).

Though the federal government takes the lead in setting policy and financing basic education through transfers to states, financial responsibility for basic education is split largely between the states and local governments. Local Governments, for instance, are charged with paying the salaries and allowances of primary school teachers. Despite the shared responsibility for UBE financing by the three tiers of government, funding has remained an issue. Laudable policies formulated by government go into thin air at the implementation stage due to poor funding. The effectiveness of policy implementation is largely determined by the efficiency and competence of governmental implementing agencies if adequate funding is provided. According to Dike (2003), inadequate funding impedes effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education. This finding also agreed with the finding of Ibok (2015) who found out that improper funding for inclusive education impede the implementation of the Universal Education programme. According to Ejere, (2011), inadequacy and mismanagement of fund affected effective implementation of inclusive education in basic education level in terms of expected enrolment, required teachers, infrastructural needs and equipment. Hidden cost of education is also negatively affecting the achievement of the UBE objectives. These are associated costs of sending children to school such as uniforms, textbooks, note books, pencils, biros and even Parent Teachers Association (PTA) levies. Despite declarations that the UBE is meant to be free and compulsory, many children are not in school because of hidden costs. The attitude or behaviour of policy implementers tends to affect its performance (Anaduaka & Okafor, 2013). This is because most often, money meant for the programme is being diverted into personal use which is inimical to the success of the UBE programme.

CONCLUSION

Effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level for national development is dependent upon adequate provision of the necessary infrastructure, funds, and qualified personnel. It has been anticipated that the policy will be able to lead to more positive outcomes when compared to the ones previously implemented if all hands are put on deck. Under

this scheme or policy, all the tiers of government have been obliged by a mandate to provide free access to education for all the citizens of Nigeria. Students are required to attend compulsory nine (9) years in primary education and junior secondary education, in which the former should be completed for a period of 6 years while the latter should be completed in a period of three (3) years. It is pertinent to note that without the various determinants mentioned in this work, effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education will be in futility. There is need for provision of relevant information for planning, infrastructural facilities to cater for the special needs Children, provision of qualified personnel at the basic level in terms of special teachers' interpreters and adequate funding. When all these are put in place, they will go a long way to enhance effective implementation of inclusive education at the basic education level for national development.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are made.

1. Government should increase the budgetary allocation to the education sector in regard to the recommendation of UNESCO that 26% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) should be allocated to the sector. Also, government at all levels should increase the funding of education especially the UBE programme.
2. Adequate infrastructure and facilities should be provided even to the very grassroots by the government to ensure coverage.
3. Only qualified and skilled teachers should be recruited by the government.
4. A special directorate of inclusive education should be created in federal and state ministries of education charged with the responsibilities of planning, strategizing, implementing, and monitoring of inclusive education activities in Nigerian schools by the federal government.
5. Initial training and retraining of general and special education teachers to partake in the principles and practices of inclusive education should be put in place by the government prior to their utilization.

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