

IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: IMPLICATION FOR STAKEHOLDERS PREPARATION

Anyanwu C.J.

Dept of Special Education

Alvan Iko Federal College of Education

Introduction

There abound in literature, many benefits accruable from inclusive practice which has made proponents of inclusive education, stress the need for its implementation. Judging from the definitions of inclusive education, one could conclude that the basic rationale for the programme include; minimizing discrimination, improving access to quality education, equality of right to education and social integration. Arguing in favour of inclusive education over segregation, Chukuka (2005) mentioned that it would help increase public awareness and sensitize greater number of the public on the potentials and capabilities of persons with disabilities. Just like Cook (2013) he is of the belief that this would help reduce discrimination, denial and deprivation suffered by persons with disabilities. This is based on the assumption that discrimination against special needs children is mainly borne out of ignorance on the part of the public. Many professionals in the field of education have argued in favour of inclusive education. According to Okuyibo (2001), it increases access, Obani (2004) said inclusive education is “more desirable” than segregation, Osatuyi (2005) believes that since special schools have not been very effective in preparing special needs students for life in the larger society, inclusive education offers a better alternative to expose these children to the realities and demands of the larger society (Chukuka 2005). Cook(2013) believes that it exposes the special needs children to the real world experience that is, learning to interact and function with people who do not have their kind of special needs.. Most of the authorities believe that educating special needs students in regular schools affords them opportunity to develop appropriate social skills as early as possible (Kanu 2001, Howard(2000), Adeniyi and Egunlobi (2003). Barton (2003) observed that inclusive education affords persons with disabilities opportunity to be seen with a “dignified view of difference”. It creates opportunity and freedom to relate with other “normal” peers in their daily academic and social engagement. The fact that they are not separated helps reduce the incidence of being labeled different and has the tendency of giving them a sense of belonging (Omori 2013).The implication of the above views is that inclusive education is less discriminatory. It also helps to incorporate children with special needs into the main stream of the society and affords them opportunity for easy integration.

Flowing from the foregoing, Alphonsus (2010) agreed with Dada (2005) by pointing out that appropriate modification of existing practices, availability of support services and interventions that are need- based are some of the hallmarks of inclusive practice. Some of these modifications supports and interventions are to meet the sensory.

mental, social and emotional needs of these individuals having difficulties in their learning

Inclusive educational practice tends to promote teaching in ways that accommodate the learning needs of all children in the classroom including those with special needs (Nwazuo and Iheanacho 2012). It involves teaching and planning teaching-learning experiences in ways that meet the differentiated needs of all learners in the classroom, be they normal, disabled or disadvantaged. The classroom setting is indeed where the role of the teacher is really changing towards reducing discrimination and encouraging interaction in more prominent ways. This could be achieved through commending the tiniest effort or intellectual contributions made by the learner with disabilities. This in turn will help build the child's self esteem and image and help encourage the child to engage in more efforts.

Explaining further on the concept, Iheanacho and Nwazuo (2012), observed that, it involves making adaptations, modifications, expansions and re arrangement in structures, classrooms, physical policies, equipment, planning, and evaluation. All these are geared towards enhancing access to appropriate education to all learners with or without disabilities. Improving access to the kind of education that meets the social, physical, emotional needs of all learners.

Adedokun (2012) studies the usefulness of inclusive education for community development. She used a sample of 217 respondents consisting of students, parents and teachers. She reported that her analyses of result revealed that inclusive education could help in the following ways;-improvement in school attendance, reduced dropout rate, reduced segregation tendencies and empowerment individuals for contribution to community development.

Research reports and theoretical writings inclusive education have focused on best practices and pre-requisite factors that determine effectiveness of inclusive practices in in schools, achievement of learning objectives and development of life skills in students that attend inclusive schools. However ,some studies have reviewed the theoretical basis of inclusive education and some others have investigated the effectiveness of inclusive education as against the convention special school systems, that are designed to cater for definite population with the same kind of disability and presumably similar special needs (Spriggs 2008 and)

Inclusive education is an off-shoot of the drive towards realization of education for all (EFA) agenda (Conie 2005). This system proposes:

- Serving all children (including those with disabilities and other special needs in the mainstream school setting.
- Curricular and environmental modification to accommodate the participation of all students/pupils in school life.
- That students regardless of special needs attend neighborhood schools with need appropriate support alongside their peers.

- That education in regular classroom is a step in integrating special needs individuals into the mainstream of the society by help reduce discrimination, social exclusive.

This paper intends to review current trends in empirical research and literature as regards inclusive education. For the purpose of this paper, this will be done according to the following:

- Personnel preparation and availability
- Attitude of parents, teacher, students with disabilities and normal students.
- School environment adaptation
- Legislation
- Stakeholders sensitization
- Equipment material resources
- Funding
- Class size/ population
- Support personnel

Personnel Preparation and Availability

Teacher competencies have been seen by authors and researchers as a major determinant factor of how successful inclusive education experience could be (Thompson 2000, Ozoji, 2005, Ikwue and Oriade, 2007, Fafunwa, 2007). Inadequate training is blamed for poor inclusive practices .For example, Faro (2010) observed that rejection of special needs children in regular schools is usually as a result of inadequate training on the part of teachers and school administrations. She reported that mainstream teachers she studied felt that they did not have needed skills for working with special needs children. That is to say, the type of training teachers received may lead to their feeling of adequacy or ineffectiveness in teaching these groups of children Current teacher preparation practices have not matched the complex role the teacher is expected to play in an inclusive setting. Since the teacher is expected to respond to the diverse needs of students who make up the class, there is a need to incorporate the elements of these diversities in the training or retraining of these teachers. For example, the tendency for a regular teacher to have a hearing impaired or visually impaired student in his/her inclusive classroom is high, if inclusive educational policy is implemented. If the teacher hardly had practical experience in special needs education, the tendency is high that he would only pass on minimal theoretical knowledge.

This is far behind what is needed in such setting and this may have a negative impact. There seems to be a consensus that teacher competence in certain areas are necessary, if special needs pupils/ students should remain and succeed in inclusive school settings. Some of these competencies include:

- Curriculum adaptation
- Classroom management
- Collaboration skills

- Communication skills
- Behaviour management skills
- Parents education
- Initiating and managing peer tutoring
- Use of information communication techniques (Adelodun,2012, Mohammad, 2012, Ozoji 2005, Anyanwu 2011).

Curriculum Adaptation is one of the hallmarks of inclusive practice. Unegbu (2008) made a case for training teachers on the use of multi-modal approach to curriculum adaptation. He believes that, it would help teachers get acquainted with knowledge and skills needed for visual, auditory, kinesthetic and tactile modes of instruction that would help make their instructions more inclusive.

Trying to describe curriculum adaptation, Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey (2005:7) cited in Mbegwa (2010:31) stated that curriculum adaptation refers to; “providing instruction in well-defined learning problem related to the specific needs of the learner with diverse abilities while also ensuring that they are included in the regular programme as much as possible”. Omori (2013) stated that the adaptation could be in form of colour coded chapters so to enhance comprehension; audio taped texts, shortened assignments and summarized chapters. In other words this could be achieved through flexible ways of making content accessible, adjusting time schedule for assignment completion, task differentiation, emphasis on academic and vocational goals(UNESCO 2005) The focus here is that the instruction is structured to address the learning abilities and needs of all learners who are enrolled in the same classroom.

Research reports from Africa especially reflect that the current teacher/ personnel preparation for inclusive education is still at the infant stage for example; Ekere (2012) reported that insufficient number of support personnel is a major factor hindering effective implementation of inclusive education. She reported that in her research, she found out that there was just one interpreter for eleven (11) hearing impaired students enrolled in different departments of the University of Calabar. Many scholars believe that training has close tie with inclusive practice. In this line of thought are, Obioha and Atheng (2011) they opined that the special training would enhance that ability of teachers to help special needs students improve in their academic performance.. This is corroborated by Oclo and Subbey (2008) who observed that poor quality of teachers training is among that factors militating against effective implementation of inclusive education. It could be deduced that they believe that the higher the quality of training, the higher their level of inclusive teaching in a heterogeneous classroom.

Equally on Teacher preparation, (2009),research report, pre-service teacher in the department of special education university of Botswana reported that the exposure to instructional equipment and time allocated for teaching practice was inadequate. Generally empirical research and theoretical papers refer to the need for improvement in methodology, adaptation, in Nigeria, literature on how effective teachers have been in

implementing inclusive education is poor, we have more of teacher perceptions that are not based on practical experience in inclusive classroom. However, it is evident that much has not been done on teacher preparation and motivation to work in such settings.

Attitudes towards Inclusion

Attitudes in this regard refer to beliefs about inclusive education. That is the image major stakeholders have about it or the qualities they attribute to it or in general terms, it is how effective people concerned think inclusive education is or will be.

Ajohia- Andrew (2007) stated that regular teachers in Guyana had negative attitude towards inclusion of special needs children in the regular classroom. Their major reason being that, attending to special needs should be restricted to special teachers alone. Equally Ajohia-Andrew (2007) reported that some parents of children in special preferred placing their children in special schools, claiming that they do not gain much from the mainstream and those regular teachers are not well prepared for meeting the needs of their children/wards.

Ozaji (2003) observed that if societal attitude towards persons with special needs were to be positive, it will motivate and make special needs individuals happy and ready to learn. He believes that special needs children learn best where they feel accepted and relaxed. Ozaji (2007) reported that most regular teachers believe that special schools are best for special needs individuals. Although most teachers are concerned about persons with disabilities having access to education they believe their education is the sole responsibility of special teachers in special schools. Mc Dowel (1999) cited in Mugu and Jonathan (2008) reported that most teachers believe that programmes and instructional materials needed for effective education of special needs individuals are not given priority attention. Brownnel and Pajares (1999) effectiveness of inclusive practice could be enhanced by collaboration between teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders in the planning and implementation. That is to say inclusive education is not a one man show; rather the teacher is expected to be a coordinator of programmes and persons that would make the project work. Carrington (1999) observed that effective inclusive practice would need fundamental alteration in teachers' perception of knowledge and their roles in the inclusive settings. This is because of the general belief that, actions are informed by perception (William and Finnegan 2003)

Use of information and communication technologies: Many theorists have argued that training teachers in the use of information and communication technologies would have a positive impact on inclusive practices. For example Uwalaka (2008) opined that, use of information and communication technologies helps bridge sensory barriers to learning. In line with this Nwazuoke (2008) observed that skills in the use of assistive technology is a valuable skill for teachers in inclusive settings. This helps to make individualized instruction less cumbersome for instructors (Nwachukwu 2010). ICT facilitates presentation of instruction in visual, auditory and tactile medium because some of them

are specially designed for special needs students (Omori 2013). Babudo (2007) pointed out that training in ICT could help a teacher learn how to assess, design and produce instruction materials with ease. Bearing in mind the advantage of this in the career of teachers in inclusive settings, she advocated making ICT material accessible to teachers in training and teachers in the field.

Environmental Adaptation:

This involves removal of all physical barriers that might lead to exclusion, making the learning environment safe. It involves making the physical learning environment more accessible for persons with special needs. For example use of tactile, auditory, visual sense and smell to design way finding instructions, removal of distractive noise through sound insulation devices, modification of keyboards, use of jaws, adjustable toilet facilities, removal of things that might cluster the way, use of ramps, classroom aids, and classmates providing assistance (Moores-Abdol 2011, Omori 2013). These authors believe that such modification will make the learning environment more natural and accommodating. This is because the basic needs of the learners are taken into consideration in modifying the environment. Hence the learning environment could be termed inclusive because barriers are considerably reduced. Then in relation to stakeholders preparation, there will be need to sensitize the school administrators on the need for environmental modification and training of technicians that can help in such jobs. Taiwo (2012) reported that the school she studied had made some physical and structural changes to accommodate special needs but little about modifying classroom practices; hence some teachers who believed that learners do not fit into the regular classroom still excluded them from some classroom experiences. This is against the tenets of inclusive which proposes active participation of all students in school activities/experiences. There are researches especially in China on the effectiveness of inclusive practices. They examined how effective inclusive practices have been for especially those with learning disabilities (Mensah 2012) and the mild to moderate disabilities. Their results are pointers on the effectiveness of inclusive practices with need appropriate support.

Most paper from Nigeria are assessing pre-requisite components, possible benefits of inclusive education, awareness and challenges in areas of teacher preparation training, re-training, attitude re-orientation instrumentation curriculum adaptation and teachers perception policy. (Egaga, Ewa and Olayi 2012 a & b) Ihenacho Osuorji and Thompson 2012, Genba bala Na-ta' ala (2012), Aka 2012, Ade 2012, Adetoro 2012), A Eli and Enueme 2012). Most research here dealt more on proposal/preparatory level of inclusive education. Countries like Nigeria have embraced the concept but not much of implementation has taken place. Olugbega (2012) observed that students with disability, street children, nomadic children, orphaned children and girls in the Northern part of Nigeria are not yet reached with qualitative education in line with drive to achieve education for all (EFA) come 2015. Olisa and Okoli (2012) pointed that cognitive

restructuring proved useful in increasing visually impaired students acceptance of inclusive education.

Inclusive Education Challenges and Prospects

The essence of inclusive education in Nigeria is predicated on the need to achieve education for all come 2015 as declared by the United Nation and this is based on the philosophy of UBE which include:

- Help develop in individuals a sound and effective citizen
- Full integration of the individual into the community
- Provision of equal access to education opportunities regardless of language, Religion, ability etc.

All these is geared toward developing individuals' life skills for self reliance and contribution to the progress and sustenance of his community, the need to provide need appropriate education for all learners is essential to the development of human capital, national integration and economy.

The challenges of implementing the inclusive policy (full inclusive / partial inclusion) could be deduced to include:

- Conceptualization of the policy.
- Drafting of implementation a blue print.
- Domestication of the policy.
- Sensitization of stakeholders
- Legislation
- Teacher preparation and motivation
- Funding
- Research
- Support services
- Materials
- Curriculum

Prospect

The bright prospect of inclusive education is directly related to the challenges already explored. The Federal Ministry of Education and institutions of higher learning where teachers are trained must rise up to design effective implementation strategies and initiatives for the sensitization and implementation of inclusive education. There is need to take practical steps to mobilize needed human and material resources, both from within and outside the public sector of the nation.

Teacher factor is an essential issue that directly affects the success of educational programmes. Although elements of special education is being taught to all current pre-service teacher in Nigeria there seems to be a gap between the knowledge they acquire and the practice of inclusive education. Although the FME and other partners are

organizing seminars on inclusive education all over the country, it has not being matched with practical steps to bridge this gap the following suggestions are made.

1. Institution that train teachers should establish inclusive education service in their staff/demonstration schools.
2. The Federal Ministry Education (FME) should allocate a higher proportion of the UBE/Special Education Intervention fund to states that are implementing inclusive education.
3. Personnel who work in such settings should be paid the 35% basic allowance for special services as stipulated by the Federal ministry this would motivate the best hands to remain in service. Equally incentive like recognition and awards for hard work should be used to motivate teacher who work in inclusive ways.
4. More states should put in place laws guiding access to inclusive education for all and penalty for defaulters.
5. Institutions of higher learning where teachers are trained should as a matter of urgency incorporate inclusive strategies in their teacher preparation curriculum and establish model inclusive education centers.

Conclusion

Although Nigeria is involved in the pact for inclusive education for all regardless of ability, disability, gender, race religion, language and circumstance of life, there is need to be more practical and precise efforts in making education accessible to special needs children. This could be achieved through improvement in sensitization of stake holders, advocacy, funding, legislation, training and re-training of personnel, motivating service providers through incentives, provision of needed materials and use of specially trained personnel on the job.