

ASSESSMENT OF ATTITUDINAL ROLES OF SOCIAL STUDIES EDUCATORS IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

Babajide Olanipekun **OLAOJO**

*Department of Social Studies, Federal College of Education
(Technical) Omoku, Rivers State*

Abstract

This study examined assessment of attitudinal roles of social studies educators in promoting inclusive education in schools. The study is a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprises of about 1000 teachers from special schools, regular primary schools and inclusive schools in Rivers States, Nigeria. Purposive and simple random sampling was adopted and one hundred (100) respondents were used in this study. An instrument titled “Roles of Social Studies Educators in Promoting Inclusive Education in Schools (RSSEPIES)” questionnaire was used. The instrument was validated with a pilot study and the instrument had a test retest reliability co-efficient ($r=0.89$). The data were analyzed using arithmetic mean with four point Likert scale method. Findings revealed that social studies teachers do not have the required training on inclusive education. Special educator’s competence affects inclusive education and that parents’ attitude also affect inclusive education. It was recommended that regular teachers, special educators and other stake-holders should be involved in making inclusive education a success.

Keywords: Attitudinal roles, Educators, Inclusive education, Social Studies.

Introduction

As global connections and cultural diversity become the norms, challenges abound regarding how we envision citizenship, diversity and social equity. Especially now, young people need strong social studies education. It is an education willing to tackling tough and relevant problems about how people ought to live and treat one another in the world. Social Studies values the development of the global citizen, a person who not only seeks to understand himself/herself but also recognizes the interconnectedness of people across communities and countries. Social Studies prepare its students with the skills necessary to engage youth and others in democratic activities that help improves lives and serve the common good. Olaajo (2019) stressed that Social Studies is the study of people in relation to each other and to their world. Social Studies develops the keys values and attitude, knowledge and understanding, skills and processes necessary for students to becomes active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society and world. According to Breth (2017) Social Studies provides learning opportunities for students to value the diversity, respect and dignity and support the equality of all human beings and understand the role of social, political, economic and legal institutions as they relate to individual and collective well-being and a sustainable society. Social Studies recognises the interconnections and interactions among students, schools, communities, national and global institutions.

Education is the bedrock to which any individual or societal development is anchored. Because its indispensable nature, it is desire by every individual irrespective of sex, race, religion, political affiliation and physical disposition. It is in realization of this that government all over the world place high premium in the provision of education for their citizenry (Ikenyiri, 2013). The central purpose of education is to ensure that all learners gain access to knowledge,

skills and information that will prepare them to contribute to societal development and workplaces. Molina (2019) opined that the term inclusion or integration refers to the practice or process of offering educational opportunities to all students together in the regular schools without minding their exceptional condition. Inclusive education therefore is the education of children with special needs with the neuro-typical children within the same learning environment. It tends to bring together children with disabilities to learn with those without disabilities in an age appropriate classroom where they would have been if they had no disabilities, regardless of their strength and weakness in any area and seeks to maximize their potentials.

Inclusive education is premised on advocacy of full human rights and social justice equalizing of educational opportunities (Adediran, 2008). He went further that inclusive education is a part of broad human right agenda that argues that all forms of segregation are morally wrong. Inclusion is viewed as bringing the disabled and non-disabled children and young people to learn together in ordinary pre-school, primary schools, colleges and universities with appropriate network of support. The term inclusive education therefore, is the placement of children together in an age appropriate regular classroom. It brings children with disabilities and those without disabilities to learn together in the same environment, regardless of their strength or weakness in any area, and seeks to maximize their potentials. Balogun (2018) stressed that the practice of mainstreaming is that schools will enroll learners first in special education centres exclusively. Student who perform well may begin attending mainstream classes, whereas, those who do not will continue their studies in a special education setting. They do so because they believe that special education teachers are better equipped to address learner's disabilities and often hold their learners to a higher academic and behavioral standard than mainstream teachers.

If inclusive education is well practiced, it encourages the involvement of parents in the education of their children and the activities of their local schools. It fosters a culture of respect and

belonging (Mercinah & Nirmala, 2013). It also provides the opportunity to learn about and accept individual differences. Nelson (2016) opined that inclusive education system makes teachers and staff flexible when it comes to preparing their teaching and instructional materials because the use of non-traditional resources like videos, audios, kinesthetic and even multimedia can be employed to make learning more accessible and exciting. In his own opinion Akinniyi (2018), stressed that researches has proving it that students learning together in the classroom improve academic excellence. Student set higher expectations for themselves due to the presence of others with diverse abilities. Therefore, students with disabilities challenge themselves to perform optimally like their classmates, while their students also spontaneously set a high standard for themselves.

Parent's participation in the education of the child in an inclusive system can ultimately define its success. Inclusive education involves coming up with innovative and strategic methods of getting parents involved and noticed by children in the learning process (Peters and Kings, 2017). The process of creating educational contents and other learning activities in an inclusive system ensures a significant contribution of parents through the planning stage. The content of the school academic program is such that gives equal opportunity for all the students to participate in all school educational activities at the same place of progress. Educators consider students with disabilities before creating the school curriculum. Townsend (2015) stressed that students in an inclusive education environment naturally learn to take up the responsibility of caring for one another. There are situations where students stand up and speak up to protect their friends who are bullied. It is also the responsibility of the teacher to connect with all the students in the classroom. Speaking to the students one on one are great ways to start building relationship.

Regular teachers attitudes towards inclusion is an area of both immediate and long term interest to all educators involved with special education students. The regular teachers must believe that the learners with disability can succeed in the regular classroom.

The negative attitude and stereotype is often caused by lack of knowledge and understanding as with the society in general. Therefore, public enlightenment work in schools must begin the process of educating the regular teacher and the general community in order to eradicate superstitions about causations of disabilities, and modify the fear and myth about children with disabilities that create misunderstanding and inhibit normal interactions (Ajuwon, 2012). Both regular and special education teachers may be influenced in their views by their perspectives regarding the goals and the context of education. The regular education teachers' responses tend to reflect the major goals of the school which is to focus on the academic matters and prepare students successfully for a career. Therefore, the regular education teachers appears more prone than their special education colleagues to accept that school integration will be beneficial to the educational and vocational skills of students with special needs. Conversely, the special education teachers appears to be bound by the current orientation of special education in Nigeria which focuses on the peculiarities of their disabled students' needs and, as such, see educational and vocational benefits as unattainable in the regular education school.

An inclusive school is a place where everyone belongs, is accepted, supports, and is supported by his/her peers and other members of the school community in the cause of having his/her educational needs met (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). It is designed to benefit everyone, even students with varying characteristics (including those with disabilities) as well as teachers and other school personnel. In inclusive education, learning-friendly and barrier-free environments should be created in every school and community throughout the world so that all children will be enable to develop their full academic, social, emotional, and physical potentials. Thomas and Wayne (2018) opined that majority of children with disabilities in developing countries like ours are out of schools, while many of those who are in school are enrolled in special schools away from their families, friends, and peers. When interaction in cooperative learning is promoted, benefits are achieved both in terms of learning and social acceptance, as special education students' benefit of improved self-esteem, a safer learning

environment, and better learning outcomes.

Parents are seen as a driving factor behind inclusive education because they take the initiative to place their child with a disability in general school. While parents mention different motives for their choice, one recurring motive is the social participation of their child (De-Boer and Munde, 2014). While parental support and involvement have been described as a facilitating factor in the realization of inclusion (Palmer, Fuller, Arora & Nelson, 2001), two groups of parents are identified: those of children with disabilities and those of children without disabilities. As mentioned before, parents of children with disabilities have different motives regarding inclusive education and often prefer general schooling for their child. However, parents of children without disabilities hold neutral, though less positive attitudes. This group of parents has worries about possible negative effects of unusual behavior of children. Moreover, they also wonder whether teachers are qualified enough in educating children with disabilities (De-Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2010). In addition, parents are role models for their children and attitudes can be transferred (Katz & Chamiel, 1989). When parents do not support inclusion, they might negatively influence a child's attitude and behavior (De-Boer; Pijl; Post & Minnaert, 2012) To promote more positive attitude, or at least influenced, through interventions which are related to environmental factors that is, direct and indirect experience with disabilities. Research showed that parents with such experience, as well as with inclusion, hold more positive attitudes than those who do not (Douglas, 2018).

For Social Studies educators to work effectively with special educators, then the special educators needs to understand clearly what is expected of them, emphasize the importance of this clarification in relation to managing student behaviours. The main role of the special education teacher is to provide instruction and support which facilitates that participation of students with disabilities in the regular classroom (Treasure, 2017). There are extreme cases where special need children act out in the class room and as such they might require one-on-one supervision. The special educator need to provide the necessary information to social studies teachers prior to the child entering the general education classroom

regarding the students disability medical concerns and for equipment operation that is ways to meet unique needs. Ayotunde (2016) stressed that there should be collaboration between teacher in adapting the curriculum, providing appropriate modifications, ensuring the implementation of modifications, and assessing overall progress of the child. The special educator is a link between teachers, school parents and families, community services, supplemental services, and other resources. Hence, this responsibility includes developing sensitivity to the culture of the community.

Inclusive educators do not maintain separate classroom responsibilities. Instead, they assimilate into the varied settings in which their students participate (Douglas, 2018). The ability to collaborate with general educators, coaches, related services professionals and vocational personnel is fundamental because they are the instructional providers. Successful special educators are masters of collaboration and skillful negotiators that is a disposition that is difficult for teacher educators to teach. Social studies educators need to take an active role in educating students with disabilities. The present study was designed to reveal any emergent themes regarding these educators' beliefs and practices about inclusion. It is very important to understand social studies attitudes on inclusive education and the enthusiasm to teach in an inclusive education classroom or school. Akinniyi (2018) opined that special and social student educator assumes shared responsibilities for all students. The special educator initiates individual educational planning for students with additional requisites and ensures its implementation. Townsend (2015) affirmed that the success of any educational programme depends largely on the availability of quality teachers. Therefore, this study is to assess the roles of social studies educators in promoting inclusive education in schools.

Inclusive education has to do with bringing together of the disabled and non-disabled learners to learn in the same classroom or school with appropriate network of support that are not properly carried out in Nigeria. The special education needs children most time find themselves in general classroom especially the public schools, with the general education teachers who are not trained to handle the needs of such children and had adversely affected

the smooth education of such children. Some are segregated in a special school where they are taught separately from other children without disabilities. Based on this, the researcher intends to find out the roles of social studies educators in promoting inclusion of children with special education needs and how best to help in their academic achievements as their neuro-typical counterparts.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for the study:

1. To what extent does social studies teachers' attitude affect inclusion?
2. To what extent does special educators' competence affect inclusion?
3. To what extent does parents' attitude affect inclusion?

Methods

The study is a descriptive survey research design. It focused on assessing role of social studies educators in promoting inclusive education in school. The population of the study comprises of about 1000 teachers from special schools, regular primary schools and all inclusive schools in River State, Nigeria. Purposive and simple random sampling was adopted in this study. A total number of twenty (20) teachers were randomly selected from five(5) schools - one (1) special school, two (2) regularly primary schools and two (2) inclusive schools making it a total of one hundred (100) respondents. An instrument title "Role of Social Studies Educators in Promoting Inclusive Education in School (RSSEPIES)" questionnaire was used. It was a self-structure questionnaire which provided optional answers for the respondents according to the variables under study. The instrument was validated with a pilot study on twenty random selected respondents who did not form part of the sample used. The instrument had a test reliability coefficient ($r=0.89$). The data were analysed using arithmetic mean with four point likert scale method.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent does social studies teachers' attitude affect inclusion?

Table 1: Responses on how Social Studies Teachers' Attitude affect Inclusive Education

| S/N | Items | SA | A | D | SD | Total | \bar{X} | Decision |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| 1. | Social studies teacher perceive inclusive education positively | 0 (0) | 34 (102) | 27 (57) | 39 (39) | 195 | 1.95 | Reject |
| 2. | Social studies teacher have the required training on inclusive education | 0 (0) | 5 (15) | 48 (96) | 47 (47) | 158 | 1.58 | Reject |
| 3. | Social studies teacher accept individual differences of inclusion children | 10 (40) | 45 (135) | 34 (68) | 11 (11) | 254 | 2.54 | Accept |
| 4. | Social studies teacher believe that each child has learning potential inclusive classroom | 25 (100) | 55 (165) | 20 (40) | 0 (0) | 305 | 3.05 | Accept |
| | Total | | | | | 2.28 | | |

Source: Field survey, 2020.

Table 1 about reveals that in item 1 it was indicated that social studies teachers do not perceive inclusive education positively and in item 2 it shows that social studies teachers do not have the required training on inclusive education. In the item 3 it show that social student teachers accept individual differences of inclusion children and they also believes that each child has learning potentials in an inclusive classroom.

Research Question 2: To what extent does special educators' competence effect inclusion?

Table 2: Response on how special educators' competence affect Inclusive Education

| S/N | Item | SA | A | D | SD | Total | \bar{X} | Decision |
|------------|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------|-----------|----------|
| 5 | Special educator need to learn more about teaching learners with different type of disabilities in an inclusive classroom | 31 (124) | 24 (72) | 42 (84) | 3 (3) | 283 | 2.83 | Accepted |
| 6 | Special educators need to learn more about teaching strategies and characteristics of the included learners | 44 (176) | 15 (45) | 41 (82) | 0 (0) | 303 | 3.03 | Accepted |
| 7 | Special educators inexperience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities affects inclusive education. | 10 (40) | 40 (120) | 40 (80) | 10 (10) | 250 | 2.50 | Accepted |
| 8 | Special educators have difficulties in managing behavioural problems | 0 (0) | 32 (96) | 23 (46) | 45 (45) | 187 | 1.87 | Rejected |
| Total mean | | | | | | | | 2.56 |

Source: Field survey, 2020.

Result on item 5, 6, and 7 reveals that those statements was accepted while the questionnaire items was rejected with the mean of 1.87 which means that special educators do not have difficulties in managing behavioural problems. To analyze table 2, a cumulative mean of 2.56 of all the responses in the above research question 2

was obtained showing agreement that special educator's competence affects inclusive education.

Research Question 3: To what extent does parent's attitude affect inclusive education.

Table 3: Responses on how Parent's Attitude affect Inclusive Education

| S/N | Item | SA | A | D | SD | Total | X̄ | Decision |
|------------|---|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|-------|------|----------|
| 9 | Parents have knowledge of the various aspects of inclusive education. | 0 (0) | 21 (63) | 17 (34) | 62 (62) | 159 | 1.59 | Rejected |
| 10 | Socio-economic status of parents can influence a neurotypical child behavior towards inclusion. | 35 (140) | 22 (66) | 37 (74) | 6 (6) | 286 | 2.86 | Accepted |
| 11 | Parents negative attitude can demotivate teachers commitment | 33 (132) | 34 (102) | 3 (6) | 30 (30) | 270 | 2.70 | Accepted |
| 12 | Parents contact with individual with disabilities influence attitude differently | 15 (60) | 49 (147) | 18 (36) | 18 (18) | 261 | 2.61 | Accepted |
| Total mean | | | | | | | | 2.56 |

Source: Field survey, 2020.

From Table 3 above it was revealed that parent have little or no knowledge of the various aspect of inclusive education while item 10, 11 and 12 was accepted by the respondents. Therefore parents' attitude affect inclusive education.

Discussions

Result of the respondents' response to research question one affirms that in item 1, in Table 1, 1.95 mean responses indicates that the

statement was rejected. It therefore shows that social studies educators do not perceive inclusive education positively. Item 2, in Table 1, 1.58 mean responses was obtained. This shows that social studies educators do not make effort on inclusive education. Item 3 in the table shows that social studies educators accept individual differences of included children, following the 2.54 mean responses obtained, therefore, the statement was accepted. Likewise item 4 having 3.05 mean response obtained indicates that social studies educators believe that each child has learning potential in an inclusive classroom. Therefore, the statement was accepted. Total calculation of the cumulative mean response indicated 2.28 of all the above items were obtained showing disagreement. Hence, it shows that negative attitude of social studies teachers greatly affect inclusive education. This findings agrees with Balogun's result (2018) and Ajuwon (2012) which argues that the negative attitude and stereotype id often caused by lack of knowledge and understanding as with the society in general. Therefore, public enlightenment work in schools must begin the process of educating the regular teachers and the general community in order to eradicate superstitions about causations of disabilities that create misunderstanding and inhibit normal interactions.

Furthermore, the findings in research question two revealed that item 5, shows that special educators need to learn more about teaching learners with different kinds of disabilities in an inclusive classroom. This is due to the 2.83 mean response obtained. Therefore, the statement is accepted. Item 6, 3.03 mean response was obtained. This shows that special educators need to learn more about teaching strategies and characteristics of the included learners. As stated in item 7, 2.5 mean response was obtained and this agrees with the statement that special educators inexperience in dealing with severe and profound disabilities affect inclusive education. For item 8, the 1.87 mean response obtained indicate contrary to the statement that special educators have difficulties in managing behavioural problems and discipline of children with special education needs. To analyze Table 2, a cumulative mean of 2.56 of all responses in the research question 2 was obtained showing agreement that special educator's competence affects

inclusive education. Therefore, there is need for special education teachers in the area of study to be trained more on how to teach learners with different kinds of disabilities, teaching strategies, and characteristics of the included learners. These findings are supported by Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2002) that lack of experience or confidence in their professional competency may indicate limited training/ or exposure to inclusive practices since special educators are expected to work in class concert with regular teachers to inclusive to modify practices and curriculum and to implement effective and behavioral management strategies, such lack of confidence will negatively impact inclusion outcomes.

Moreover, the findings in research question 3 revealed that from Table 3, item 9 a mean response of 1.59 was obtained which indicates that the statement was rejected. Hence, parents have little or no knowledge of the various aspects of inclusive education. From item 10, mean response of 2.86 was obtained. Therefore, we fail to reject the statement that social economic status of parent can influence a neurotypical child behavior towards inclusive education. Item II indicates that 2.70 mean response was obtained which shows that parents' negative attitude can de-motivate teachers' commitment in inclusive education. From item 12, 2.61 mean response was obtained indicating acceptance that parents contact with individual with disabilities influence attitude differently. To analyse Table 3, a cumulative mean of 2.44 of all the responses in the above research question 3 was obtained. It shows that parents have no knowledge of the various aspects of inclusion education and that parents socio-economic status can influence a neuro-typical child behaviour towards inclusion. Furthermore, parents' negative attitude and socio-economic status of parents is a key factor that can influence a neuro-typical child behaviour and de-motivate teacher's commitment in inclusive education in the area of study. According to De-Boer, Pin and Minaret (2012) negative attitudes of parents towards inclusion may also de-motivate teachers to commit themselves to realizing inclusive practices. Palmer, Fuller, Arora and Nelson (2016) stressed that parental support and involvement have been described as a facilitating factor in the realization of inclusion. Parental attitudes are influenced by several

factors, such as personal ones like education level and socio-economic status (Afolabi, 2014). To promote more positive attitudes, it seems better to focus on environmental factors that can be changed, or at least influenced, through interventions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommended that Social Studies educators should have positive attitude towards inclusive education and should also make effort to succeed. They should be confident and competent in dealing with children with special education needs. Special educators should be trained by experts on how to manage students with different kinds of disabilities. Parents should be made to understand the various aspect of inclusive education, its benefits and they should also give support to the programme. Policy makers on education should make adjustments in curriculum to fit inclusion of children with special education needs in the regular classroom. Regular teachers, special educators and other stakeholders should be involved in making inclusive education a success.

Conclusion

It evident from the study that Social Studies teachers do not have the required training on inclusive education. Social Studies teachers do not perceive inclusive education positively. Social Studies teachers accept individual differences of inclusion children and they also believe that each child has learning potentials. That special educator's competence affects inclusive education. Parents' attitude affects inclusive education.

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