

VOLUME 10, NUMBER 1, MAY 2014

ISSN 0794-2192

# **African Journal** **of Historical Sciences in** **Education**

A Journal of Historical Education Society of Nigeria  
An Affiliate of the International Standing Conference  
for the History of Education (ISCHE)

*Secretariat:*  
*Department of Teacher Education*  
*University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.*

## EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR THE SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN IN NIGERIA: STRATEGIES INVOLVED

Idemudia, Eferetin Stanley (Ph.D), Eze Joseph  
Chukwuemeka & Aderibigbe, Samson A.

22

### ABSTRACT

*The aim of this paper is to examine the principles and practices of inclusive education as well as the strategies involved in its implementation. Advocates of special education reform have variously proposed some single panaceas for special needs children on inclusive education many focused on commitment, trained and certified teachers hence, the need for educational planners to ensure proper planning and successful educational programmed implementation on inclusive education. The study revealed important changes made in classroom practices to support inclusion as well as the assistance of supporting teachers and paraprofessionals in general education classroom services which often yield positive effects on students' learning outcome.*

*The paper also recommends that to effectively implement inclusive education, it is necessary to examine policies, practices and procedures already in place and plan for new policies and support the new service delivery option.*

### INTRODUCTION

Education is the most important instrument of change as any fundamental step in the intellectual and sociological outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (NPE2004). In lieu of this, the importance of education to humanity and the economic sector in any particular society cannot be over emphasized as it gives ample opportunity to those that are educated to contribute meaningfully to national development be it in health, sport, agriculture etc. It is obvious that where education takes place, the overall socialization of the people will definitely have a great impact on national growth and development. In the views of

Oliseamaka (2007), education is regarded as the excellent catalyst for national development. She further stressed that, this is why the highly developed nations invest extensively in education so as to maintain the status quo

The word 'inclusion' according to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English means the act of including someone or something in a larger group or set or the fact of being included. (Ladipo 2002) sees inclusion as a means of enabling pupils to participate in the life and work of mainstream institution to the best of their abilities whatever their needs.

Inclusion is the "keystone" of today's government education policy. Farrell and Alnscon (2002) describe it as "a process in which schools communities, local authorities and government strive to reduce barriers to participation and learning for all citizens".

Smart, Engelbrecht, Eloff and Petripher (2002) define inclusive education as "the shared value accommodating all learners in a unified system of education empowering them to become caring, competent and contributing citizens in an inclusive, changing diverse society". While Hall (2002) sees inclusion as a principle that refers to the right of all learners to feel welcome in a supportive educational context". Inclusion is also described as the placement of students with special needs in general education" Doorlag (2006), Idol (2006).

"Inclusion is the principle applied to accommodate/include all human beings, thus the full spectrum of diverse abilities, within one system, in such a manner that all involved can be assured of successful, equal and quality participation in real life experiences from birth to the grave. This implies that all have to perceive and treat themselves and others as dignified human beings, in enhancing human potential maximally and in succeeding to achieve whatever outcome is envisaged and humanly possible" (Burden, 2000).

York, cited by Carreiro King (2003) defines inclusion as an involvement of students attending the same schools as siblings and neighbours, being members in general education classrooms with chronological age-appropriate classmates, having individualized and learning objectives and being provided with the support necessary to learn for example special education and related services.

Inclusive education means that all students in a school regardless of their strengths, weaknesses or disabilities in any area become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers, and support staff" Carreiro, (2003). Karagiannis, Stainback and Stainback, cited by Swart and Petripher (2006) explain

inclusive education as the practice of including everyone irrespective of talent, disability, socio-economic background, or cultural origin in supportive mainstream schools and classrooms where students' needs are met.

Gross (2002) corroborates Swart and Pettipher's definition by describing inclusive education as the process by which a school attempts to respond to all the children as individuals by considering and restructuring its curricular provision and allocating resources to enhance equality of opportunity, through this process, the school builds its capacity to accept all children from the local community and in so doing, reduces the need to exclude children. In their own view Leyden and Miller (in: Visser, 2002) define inclusive education as the equal and optimal education of all learners within one school system. All learners are recognized as having diverse needs, but are valued for their shared humanity. It is also a system where all learners can be educated together and where personal diversity is seen to be enriching.

Alper, Schloss, Etscheidt and Macfarlane (2001) maintain that inclusive education is the provision of educational experiences for all learners experiencing barriers to learning and development. Such learners would participate in the same classroom situation with those learners who are not experiencing barriers to learning and development. Such learners would participate in the same classroom situation with those learners who are not experiencing barriers to learning and development at the same mainstream schools and same mainstream classes that their peers attend.

Apart from equality and quality education for all Nigerian children as contained in National Policy 2004, it is simply right and just to support inclusive education. The advocates of inclusive education believe that inclusive education is in the best interest of the children with special needs as segregation, does not only violate their fundamental human rights but is also responsible for low or poor performances of children with special needs. According to Gentry and Jones (1972), unequal results are a result of segregated schools. This is why many educators and researchers view inclusive education as the most effective strategy for gaining equality. Educational planners are in the position to determine priorities of the Nigerian educational system through appropriate strategies for diagnosing aspects of the education that need special attention, like the creation of a truly inclusive education. In this regard, children with special needs are included in all aspects of the classroom, together with their peers, regardless of their abilities or disabilities and all their educational needs

met through services provided within the public school system. This type of truly inclusive educational system would imply a transformation of our society. It would mean an end or at least the beginning of the end to isolation of children with special needs by Nigeria and Nigerians. Genuine inclusion must remain the goal of Nigerian society, in line with Federal Government Policy on Education (2004) which states categorically that all Nigerian children should have equal educational opportunities devoid of discrimination. This is why Oriade (2009) observes that FGN (2004) makes it clear that the Nigerian children should have equal educational opportunities with no discrimination whatsoever.

#### Importance of Inclusive Education

Education as a rule changes with years, time and place in response to needs and demands from the society that established it. Therefore, the present rapid changes in Nigerian educational system, demand that children with special needs be taught together with their peers in the same school and classroom, as any form of segregation means violation of their fundamental human rights. Gwanshak (2009) observes that inclusive education is a system of education that accommodates all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions to learn in the same class with other non handicapped children. Again, Oriade (2009) citing Chukwuka (2006) viewed inclusive education as a system of education which offers every member of the society an equal opportunity to acquire basic education in the regular neighbourhood school environment. Proponents of inclusive education believe that segregated schools produce unequal results, especially, socially and psychologically, and can be harmful to children with special needs. Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students with needs. Under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all of their time with non-disabled students. Implementation of these practices varies. Schools most frequently use them for selected students with mild to severe special needs.

Inclusive education differs from previously held notions of 'integration' and 'mainstreaming', which tended to be concerned principally with disability and 'special educational needs' and implied learners changing or becoming 'ready for' or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by

students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil, and educational rights. Inclusion gives students with disabilities skill they can use in and out of the classroom, "Students learn the importance of individual and group contributions and develop valuable life skills that are often unexplored in less inclusive settings". Taparak, Renee and Christine Walther-Thomas (2009).

#### Classification

Inclusion has two sub-types. The first is sometimes called regular inclusion or partial inclusion, and the other is full inclusion. "Inclusive practice" is not always inclusive but is a form of integration. For example, students with special needs are educated in regular classes for nearly all of the day, or at least for more than half of the day. Whenever possible, the students receive any additional help or special instruction in the general class and the student is treated like a full member of the class. However, most specialized services are provided outside a regular classroom, particularly if these services require special equipment or might be disruptive to the rest of the class (such as speech therapy), and students are pulled out of the regular classroom for these services. In this case, the student occasionally leaves the regular classroom to attend smaller, more intensive instructional sessions in a resource room, or to receive other related services, such as speech and language therapy, occupational and/or physical therapy, and social work. This approach can be very similar to many mainstreaming practices, and may differ in little more than the educational ideals behind it.

In the "full inclusion" setting, the students with special needs are always educated alongside students without special needs, as the first and desired option while maintaining appropriate supports and services. Some educators say this might be more effective for the students with special needs. At the extreme, full inclusion is the integration of all students, even those that require the most substantial educational and behavioral supports and services to be successful in regular classes and the elimination of special, segregated special education classes. Special education is considered a service, not a place and those services are integrated into the daily routines and classroom structure, environment, curriculum and strategies and brought to the student, instead of removing the student to meet his or her individual needs. However, this approach to full inclusion is somewhat controversial, and it is not widely understood or applied to date. Much more commonly, local educational agencies provide a variety of settings, from special classrooms to mainstreaming to

inclusion, and assign students to the system that seems most likely to help the student achieve his or her individual educational goals. Students with mild or moderate disabilities, as well as disabilities that do not affect academic achievement, such as using wheelchair, are most likely to be fully included. However, students with all types of disabilities from all the different disability categories have been successfully included in general education classes, working and achieving their individual educational goals in regular school environments and activities.

#### Strategies Involved in Implementing Effective Inclusive Education Strategy

Students in an inclusive classroom are generally placed with their chronological age mates, regardless of whether the students are working above or below the typical academic level for their age. Also, to encourage a sense of belonging, emphasis is placed on the value of friendships. Teachers often nurture a relationship between a student with special needs and a same-age student without a special educational need. Another common practice is the assignment of a buddy to accompany a student with special needs at all times (for example in the cafeteria, on the playground, on the bus and etc). This is used to show students that a diverse group of people make up a community; that no one type of student is better than another, and to remove any barriers to a friendship that may occur if a student is viewed as "helpless". Such practices reduce the chance for elitism among students in later grades and encourage cooperation among groups.

Teachers use a number of techniques to help build classroom communities:

- Using games designed to build community
- Involving students in solving problems
- Sharing songs and books that teach community
- Openly dealing with individual differences by discussion
- Assigning classroom jobs that build community
- Teaching students to look for ways to help each other
- Utilizing physical therapy equipment such as standing frames, so students who typically use wheelchairs can stand when the other students are standing and more actively participate in activities

- Encouraging students to take the role of teacher and deliver instruction (e.g. read a portion of a book to a student with severe disabilities)
- Focusing on the strength of a student with special needs

It is noted that inclusive education, though relatively new to the academic world, has both positive and negative implications. The teachers and parents who support the inclusive educational setting defend that it is effective and necessary for social and academic achievement. Those who do not support it have had unsuccessful personal experiences, and thus maintain that individualized instruction for students with special needs is more effective. On these premises, it is believed that the implementation of inclusive education needs to be seamless, and a reflection on the successful relationship between the collaborating teachers. The mainstream teacher needs to understand each special education student's Individualized Educational Plan, and prepare and execute lessons accordingly. Additionally, the collaborative teacher must be practiced in the content area and in special education to ensure that every lesson's objectives are met.

Teachers must maintain a consistent and open relationship with parents as well. Keeping parents up to date with their children's progress is essential for a number of reasons, but the most important reason is that the teacher can communicate with the students effectively and maintain a positive relationship. An open rapport is important between parents and teachers so that the teachers are made aware if there is a problem outside of school. Some special education students receive additional services and tutoring, so the school teacher should be aware of these services and how the student is progressing. There are a number of methods a teacher can employ to effectively communicate with parents. Apart from traditional methods, such as e-mail and phone conversations, weekly "newsletters" are sometimes used, discussing group work and highlighting personal achievement. Other teachers can send home hand-written notes to add a personal effect. A more regimented way is to have parents sign graded school work and examinations. Teachers need to decide what method works best for their learning environment.

It is imperative that teachers in every discipline master the ability to differentiate instruction. Therefore, the inclusive setting is an environment in which teachers' abilities grow continually. Many mainstream teachers claimed to have become much better teachers in general because of their

experience with special education. Special education training helps teachers teach all levels, not just those students with special needs. By extension, we encourage all future educators to become familiar with special education methods.

#### Principles of Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

Equity and inclusive education:

- **Is a foundation of excellence:** In a diverse society, equity is a fundamental requirement for educational excellence and high standards of student achievement.
- **meet individual needs:** Equity does not mean treating all students in the same way but, rather, responding to the individual needs of each student and providing the conditions and interventions needed to help him or her succeed.
- **identifies and eliminates barriers:** All students are supported equitably through the identification and removal of discriminatory barriers that limit their ability to achieve to their full potential.
- **promotes a sense of belonging:** Equity and inclusive education contribute to every student's sense of well-being.
- **involves the broad community:** Effective and meaningful school-community partnerships are an essential component of an equitable and inclusive education system.
- **builds on and enhances previous and existing initiatives:** Sound research and analysis of successful policies and practices form the basis for the development and sharing of resources.
- **is demonstrated throughout the system:** The ministry, school boards, and schools will incorporate principles of equity and inclusive education throughout their policies, programs, and practices.

#### Equity and Inclusive Education Strategy

The strategy of "Developing and Implementing Equity and Inclusive Education Policies" also acknowledge societal issues such as sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and socio-economic status. Furthermore, the strategy recognizes that factors such as race, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, gender, gender identity, and class often intersect to create additional barriers for some students. The strategy

recognizes that publicly funded schools must increase their efforts to develop an approach that will respond to the full range of needs within the education community. Effective implementation is essential and is therefore a key component of this strategy.

#### References

- Ainscon, A. (2002) When Special Education Goes too Easy on Students (Wall Street Journal online)
- Alper, F. Schloss, G. Etscheidt, L. Macfarlane, B. (2001) Finding Efficiencies in Special Education Programs. *Education Week*, Vol. 30 Issue 16, P32-34.
- Burden, (2000) Inclusion or Exclusion? A narrative inquiry of a language teacher's identity experience in the 'New York Order' of competing pedagogies. 10. *Teacher Education Research*
- Carreiro, C. (2003) Inclusion in Political Life: The experience of people with intellectual disability on Government disability advisory bodies in Australia. 36(1)27-38.
- Chukwuka, L. (2006) Counselling Children with Special Needs in an Inclusive Classroom setting. *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 9 (8), 33 - 36.
- FGN, (2004) National Policy on Education.
- Gentry, A. and Jones, E. (1972) Meaning and Concept of Inclusive Education in Classroom Management. *Journal of Special Education* 9, (13) 77-79.
- Gross, Y. (2002) Inclusion and Special Needs Children. London. *Africraft Press*.
- Gwansbak, S. (2009) Strategies Involve in Educating the Special Needs People in an Inclusive Environment. *Journal of Social Psychology* 11 (7) 11-14.
- Hall, Z. (2002). Special Education in Inclusive Setting. *The Way Out*, Vol. 5, (12) 109-115.
- Idol, C. 2006. "Modifying Schoolwork in Inclusive Classrooms", *Theory into Practice* 45, (3), 215-223.
- Iadipo, O. (2002) Inclusive Education under the Nigerian context. *Journal of Social Psychology* 5, (11) 60-66.
- Karagiannis, L., Stainback, D., and Stainback, T. (2006) Inclusion and Graduation Rates: What are the outcomes? *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 241-252.
- Oliseemaka, C. (2007). Classroom Management in Inclusive Settings. *Theory into Practice*, 42, 327-333.
- Oriade, C. (2009) Strategies for Inclusive Education of the Special Needs Children: Assessment Procedure. *Journal of Counselling Psychology* 7, (4), 55-58.
- Smart, C. Engelbrecht, E. Eloff, K. and Peltipber, C. (2002) Different Strategies for Embracing Inclusive Education: A Snap Shot of Individual Cases from Three Countries. *International Journal of Special Education* 25, 98-109.
- Tapasasak, K. Reese, S. and Christine W. (2009) Remedial and Special Education. A Pedagogical Approach. London. Eastwood press.

