

**SOME DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND ATTITUDE OF  
SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TOWARDS INCLUSIVE  
EDUCATION IN THE CALABAR EDUCATION ZONE OF CROSS  
RIVER STATE, NIGERIA**

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**Abstract**

This study seeks to evaluate some demographic variables and attitude of secondary school teachers in Calabar Education Zone towards inclusive education. Inclusive education is gaining grounds because there is considerable evidence, based on research, to support its benefits and teachers' attitude is vital to its success. Nigeria has many people living with various disabilities and they need to be educated to enable them contribute to the development of the country. A sample of 100 secondary school teachers was randomly selected from 10 mainstream secondary schools in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. The dimensions of the independent variable were: Teacher's age, educational qualification and number of students in the classroom. Accordingly, three research questions were raised and three hypotheses formulated for the study. A questionnaire captioned: Demographic Variables and Attitude of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education Questionnaire (DVATTIEQ) was designed, validated and administered. The results showed that majority of the teachers had a negative attitude towards inclusive education and their age, highest educational qualification and number of students in their classrooms did not affect their attitude towards inclusive education. It was recommended that the Government should organize workshops and enlighten the teachers on the imperative and advantages of inclusive education.

**Keywords** – Attitude, Secondary School Teachers, Inclusive Education, Calabar Education Zone.

### **Introduction**

Education is a veritable tool for economic, political and social emancipation – its benefits are countless. Accordingly, educational systems throughout the world are grappling with the challenge of providing an effective education for all children and young people. In Nigeria today where the educated and able bodied are finding it difficult to get by, given the parlous state of the economy, one can only imagine the plight of the uneducated citizens especially those living with disabilities or glaring mental, social and physical abnormalities.

Apparently in realization of this fact the then Minister of Education, Chief (Barr) Ezenwo N. Wike, in his forward in Nigeria National Policy on Education envisaged an ‘expanded role for education as an investment for economic, social and political development; an aggregate tool of empowerment for the poor, and the socially marginalised groups; an effective means of developing the full capacities and potentials of human resource, as well as the development of competent work force through the acquisition of practical life skills relevant to the world of work as a veritable means of developing sound intelligent learning societies, fit and relevant to the 21st century’ (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013).

The task of making education to take on this ‘expanded role’ is enormous as *the country has an illiteracy level of 30%(65-75m) with about 10%(20m) living with various forms of disability*. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), there are more than 10m Nigerian children who are out of school and about 7m of them have various forms of disability (Aduge-Ani, 2018).

Faced with these challenges, there is an increased interest in the idea of inclusive education. Additionally, inclusive education and inclusive classrooms are also gaining steam because evidence abound, based on research, about their benefits. Many studies over the past three decades have found out that students with disabilities have higher achievement and improved skills through inclusive education and their peers without challenges also benefit (McManis, 2017). For students with disabilities (SWD), the benefits of inclusive education include academic gains in literacy (reading and writing), mathematics and social studies, better communication and improved social skills and more friendships. More time in the general classroom for SWD is also associated with fewer absences and referrals for disruptive behaviour. This could be

related to findings that they have higher self-concept, they like school and their teachers more, and are more motivated to working and learning (McManis, 2017).

Inclusive education seems to have emanated from a global movement tagged “Education For All” (EFA) led by UNESCO. The aim of this movement is meeting the learning needs of all children, youths and adults. EFA was adopted by ‘the Dakar Framework in April 2000 at the World Education Forum in Senegal, Africa, with the goal that all children would receive primary education by 2015. Many children do not receive the education they desire or want, therefore this goal was put in place to help them. The EFA goals form part of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially MDG number 2 on universal primary education and MDG number 3 on gender equality in education, by 2015 (United Nations, 2015).

It is noteworthy that federal government has adopted inclusive education as a veritable tool in realising its policy objectives as contained in Section 7 of the National Policy on education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) which makes allowance for the education of persons with special needs through inclusive education. The policy hopes to achieve its objectives, through the provision of ‘inclusive education services in schools which normal persons attend, in age appropriate general education classes directly supervised by general teachers.’

In spite of government’s policy thrust, not much seems to have been achieved in the area of inclusive education. The primary underlying causes of this situation are the exclusive and inaccessible nature, structure and system of virtually all primary and secondary schools in Nigeria; the confinement of the education of children with disabilities to very few, poorly staffed, poorly equipped and out dated special schools; very low public awareness on issues of inclusive education; inadequate institutional and human capacities required to implement inclusive education; and inadequate, poor implementation or non-availability of appropriate legal and policy frameworks required for the implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. (National policy brief on inclusive and accessible basic education for children with disabilities, n.d.)

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 them for productive lives as full members of society (Adetoro, 2014). The Nigeria National policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) stated, ‘Persons with special needs shall be

provided with inclusive education services in schools which normal persons attend, in age appropriate general education classes directly supervised by general teachers.’ In practice, what is obtained across the country is integrated (or mainstreaming) and segregated education. Integrated education is similar to inclusive education, but without any ideological commitment to equity or equal opportunity. Students with special needs are put in mainstream classroom with some adaptations and requisite resources. These students are then expected to make adjustment and fit into the pre-existing structures, attitudes and environment. Integration is often mistaken for inclusion because, since Students with Special Needs (SWSN) are placed in a mainstream classroom, it is a step towards inclusion. However, if there is no paradigm shift within the school to perceive SWSN as equals and if the curriculum is not adjusted to accommodate all categories of students, then the students are integrated, but not inclusive (Gaur, Malik & Verma, 2016).

Segregated education occurs when students with disabilities learn completely separate from their peers. This is often seen in developing countries, and it takes place in the form of special schools created specifically for the education of students with disabilities, or in completely separate classrooms for students with disabilities. Segregated education sees the child as the problem in the system, the impediment to learning. Consequently, these students are given a different curriculum and a different method of testing is employed. This separation in school often leads to separation in other areas of life as well (Gaur, Malik & Verma, 2016).

In inclusive education, the school and classroom operate on the premise that students with disabilities are as fundamentally competent as students without disabilities. Therefore, all students can be full participants in their classrooms and in the local school community. Successful inclusive education happens primarily through accepting, understanding, and attending to the students’ differences and diversity, which includes the physical, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional. This is not to say that students should never spend time out of regular education classes, if need be - for instance, for speech or occupational therapy. However, the goal is that this should be an exception. The driving philosophy is to make all students feel at home, appropriately challenged and supported in their efforts. The core principle of inclusive education is that every learner matters and matters equally.

In Cross River State, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has the responsibility for formulating policies of education and for providing leadership and the strategic direction for development of education within the state. The Ministry seeks to meet the educational needs of the people of Cross River State through

the establishment and operation of Primary and Secondary Schools, Technical Colleges and Colleges of Education, State University of Technology, special education and literacy centres, and state libraries. There are 656 secondary schools in the state and 274 are owned by the government. In addition to these, there are a number of vocational learning centres, which were established based on the needs and requirements of specific communities. The state is divided into three education zones for administrative purposes, namely: Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja. The operations of private educational institutions are constantly monitored and evaluated by the Ministry of Education through the process of accreditation and inspection (Ayara, Essia & Udah, 2013). The state has what it terms 'special needs schools' which are mainly for the physically handicapped though a few normal students also attend.

With a lot of emphasis placed on inclusive education by Governments all over the world, it is our firm believe that very soon Cross River State will practice inclusive education in its real sense. Its success will amongst many factors depend on the teachers because effective inclusionary practices have been found to depend to a noticeable extent on the sentiments of teachers about the nature of disability and their perceived roles in supporting students with special education needs (Jordan, Schwartz, & McGhie-Richmond, 2009). According to Forlin, Earle, Loreman & sharma (2011), teachers' positive attitudes are amongst the strongest predictors of the success of the inclusion reforms.

Schmidt & Vrhovnik (2015) investigated the attitudes of teachers towards the inclusion of children with special needs in primary and secondary schools in Western Slovenia. The sample comprised 200 teachers from twenty schools of whom 100 were primary school teachers and 100 were secondary school teachers. The sampling was non-random and purposive. The results revealed that secondary teachers showed more positive attitudes towards Special Needs (SN) students than their primary colleagues. The youngest group of teachers, those aged from 20 to 30, were more desirable for the provision of adequate support. Teachers with fewer SN students in class (up to two students) showed a higher degree of support for inclusion of SN students than do other groups of teachers.

Ross-Hill (2009) opined that a better understanding of teacher attitude towards inclusive education can assist in improving the learning environment and service delivery. The attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in Jordanian Schools was studied by Al-Zyoudi (2006). A sample of 90 teachers (54 female and 36 male) was obtained from seven schools. The results of this study showed that teachers' attitudes were strongly influenced by the nature

and severity of the disabilities, the years of teaching experience and training received.

In his investigation of the attitudes and concerns of 100 teachers about teaching in inclusive classrooms in Ghana, Agbenyega (2007) found out that teachers were majorly concerned about their lack of skills to effectively teach students with special needs and also the lack of resources to accommodate individual differences. He concluded that teachers' acceptance and commitment to implementing inclusive education may be affected by their attitudes and concerns. On the other hand, teachers with apprehensive tendencies may adopt practices that promote exclusion rather than inclusion in their classrooms (Sharma, Forlin, & Loreman, 2008). In view of these, this paper seeks to investigate some of the factors or variables that may affect the attitude of teachers in secondary schools in Cross River State towards inclusive education. It is our hope that the results, conclusions and recommendations will assist the State Government in drawing up its policies and implementation strategies on inclusive education.

### **Research Methodology**

To achieve the purpose of the study, three hypotheses were formulated:

- 1) There is no significant influence of teacher's age on their attitude towards inclusive education
- 2) The teachers' educational qualification does not significantly influence their attitude towards inclusive education.
- 3) The number of students in the classroom does not significantly influence teacher's attitude towards inclusive education.

### **Design**

The research design used was the Ex-post facto design which is concerned with studying phenomena of interest that have already occurred and cannot be manipulated. The Ex-post facto design was chosen over other designs because the researchers have no direct control over the independent variable and are to obtain an image of the present situation.

### **Sample**

The sample for the study was made up of one hundred (100) secondary school teachers randomly selected from twenty public secondary schools in five Local Government Areas in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. Five (5) teachers each were selected from four (4) schools from each of the following Local Government Areas: Akamkpa, Biase, Calabar Municipality, Calabar South and Odukpani.

### Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Demographic Variables and Attitude of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education Questionnaire” (DVATTIEQ) which was designed by the researchers. There are two sections in the questionnaire namely sections A & B. Section A has three items on personal information which are age, highest educational qualification and class size. Section B contains twelve (12) items measuring Teachers’ Attitude towards Inclusive Education based on a four point modified Likert typed scale of Strongly Agree (4 points), Agree (3 points), Disagree (2 points) and Strongly Disagree (1 point) for positively worded items and the reverse for negatively worded items. The validation of the instrument was done by two experts in Educational Psychology and two from the area of Measurement and Evaluation all from the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. Cronbach Alpha method was used to test for reliability and the internal consistency. The results were considered to be high enough for use of the instrument in the study.

### Results

The descriptive statistics of the demographic data showing age, highest educational qualification and number of students in the teachers’ classroom is shown in Table 1 and the categorization of the teachers’ attitude towards inclusive education in Table 2 shows that 66% of the teachers have moderate to high attitude towards inclusive education.

. TABLE 1

Descriptive statistics of teachers’ demographic data

S/N	Category	N	Percentage (%)
1	Age		
	41 - 50yrs	31	31
	Above 51yrs	53	53
	41 - 50yrs	16	16
	Above 51yrs	Nil	Nil
2	Highest educational		
	NCE	75	75
	HND	7	7
	Bachelor’s Degree	18	18
	Master’s Degree	0	0
3	Number of students in the 10 - 20 Students	27	27

21 - 30 Students	41	41
Above 30 Students	32	32

TABLE 2

Categorization of Teachers' Attitude towards inclusive education

Category	N	Per cent
Low	34	34
Moderate	35	35
High	31	31

The mean response of the teachers to each of the questions in the second part of the questionnaire that measures their attitude towards inclusive education is presented in Table 3. The scores assigned to each response were as follows: SA = 1; A = 2; D = 3 and SD = 4. The mean and standard deviation for each response was used to assess their attitude towards inclusive education based on a criterion mean of 2.5, meaning that the mean score of 2.5 or more was regarded as positive attitude while mean score that was less than 2.5 was taken to be negative attitude. The results indicate that majority of the teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusive education.

TABLE 3

Mean of the teachers' responses to the questionnaire items on attitude to inclusive education

S/N	Questionnaire items on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education	N	$\bar{x}$	SD	Remark
1	I may not have enough time to plan educational programs for students with disabilities.	100	2.39	.994	Negative
2	It will a bit more difficult to maintain discipline in class	100	2.54	.915	Positive
3	I don't think I have the knowledge and skills required to teach students with disabilities.	100	2.49	.980	Negative



4	I will look at it as an additional workload to teach an inclusive class.	100	2.36	.894	Negative
5	I do not see my school having enough funds to implement inclusive education successfully.	100	2.24	.976	Negative
6	I will need additional incentives (e.g. additional remuneration or allowances) to integrate students with disabilities in my class.	100	2.03	.989	Negative
7	I don't consider my school having adequate special education instructional materials and teaching aids, e.g. Braille.	100	2.24	.955	Negative
8	I fear that the overall academic standards of the school will suffer if inclusive education is implemented.	100	2.82	.957	Positive
9	Teaching inclusive education will likely reduce my performance as a classroom teacher or school principal.	100	2.54	1.019	Positive
10	I will have difficulty in giving equal attention to all students in an inclusive classroom.	100	2.29	1.008	Negative
11	I can't imagine myself coping with disabled students who do not have adequate self-care skills e.g. Students who are not toilet trained.	100	2.37	1.089	Negative
12	I hate the idea of mixing disabled and normal students in the same class	100	2.43	1.148	Negative
Total		100	2.39	0.993	Negative

**Hypothesis one** - There is no significant influence of teacher's age on their attitude towards inclusive education

The independent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' age while the dependent variable is teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The independent variable is categorized into the following age brackets: 30 years

and below; 31 to 40 years; 41 to 50 years and above fifty years. In order to test the veracity of this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. The result is presented in Table 5 and shows that the level of significance is greater than 0.05,  $F(2, 97) = 0.722$ ,  $p = 0.488$ . The null hypothesis is therefore accepted which is that the teachers' age have no significant influence on their attitude towards inclusive education.

TABLE 4

One way analysis of variance of teachers' age and their attitude towards inclusive education

Propensity to take Risks	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
30yrs & below	31	28.39	5.846
31 - 40yrs	53	29.34	5.893
41 - 50yrs	16	27.44	5.944
Above 51yrs	0	0	0
Total	100	28.74	5.870

  

Sources variance	of Sum Squares	of df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	50.061	2	25.030	.722	.488
Within Groups	3361.179	97	34.651		
Total	3411.240	99			

**Hypothesis two** - The teachers' educational qualification does not significantly influence their attitude towards inclusive education.

Teachers' (highest) educational qualification is the independent variable while

TABLE 5

One way analysis of variance of teachers' educational qualification and their attitude towards inclusive education

Educational qualification	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
NCE	18	28.61	5.772
HND	7	26.29	4.536
Bachelor's Degree	75	29.00	6.011
Total	100	28.74	5.870

  

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47.534	2	23.767	.685	.506
Within Groups	3363.706	97	34.677		
Total	3411.240	99			

The dependent variable is teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The veracity of this hypothesis was tested using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The result as presented in Table 5 shows that the level of significance is greater than 0.05,  $F(2, 97) = 0.685$ ,  $p = 0.506$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted which implies that the teachers' (highest) educational qualification have no significant influence on their attitude towards inclusive education.

**Hypothesis three** - The number of students in the classroom does not significantly influence teacher's attitude towards inclusive education. The independent variable in this hypothesis is the number of students in the classroom while the dependent variable is teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The independent variable is categorized into the following age brackets: 10 – 20 students; 20 – 30 students and above 30 students. In order to test the veracity of this hypothesis, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)

was used. The result is presented in Table 6 and shows that the level of significance is greater than 0.05,  $F(2, 97) = 1.739$ ,  $p = 0.181$ . Thus, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that the number of students in the teachers' classroom has no significant influence on their attitude towards inclusive education.

**TABLE 6**  
One way analysis of variance of number of students in the classroom and teachers' attitude towards inclusive education

Number of students in the classroom	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
10 – 20 students	27	29.52	5.338
21 – 30 students	41	26.46	5.559
Above 30 students	32	27.16	6.516
Total	100	28.74	5.870

  

Sources of variance	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	118.085	2	59.043	1.739	.181
Within Groups	3293.155	97	33.950		
Total	3411.240	99			

### Discussion

The statistical analysis has shown that on the whole the teachers who participated in the study had an attitude towards inclusive education of 2.39 which is less than the threshold of 2.5 (Table 4). This means that the teachers have a negative attitude towards inclusive education. The result obtained from the analysis of hypothesis one showed that the null hypothesis was accepted implying that there was no significant influence of teacher's age on their attitude towards inclusive education in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. This finding is supported by several studies that failed to detect differences in teachers' attitude based on the age of the teachers (Galaterou & Antoniou, 2017).

The result from hypothesis two also indicates that the teachers' educational qualification does not significantly influence their attitude towards inclusive education in Calabar Education Zone of Cross River State. This is corroborated by Kern (2006) in her Ph.D research on survey of teacher attitude regarding inclusive education within an urban Pennsylvania school district, the Chester Upland School District in the United States of America. She studied teacher's attitude to inclusion based on gender, age, educational level, teaching level and number of special education courses taken. Apart from age, other variables including the teachers' (highest) educational qualification did not have any significant influence on their attitude towards inclusive education.

Regarding hypothesis three the result was that there was no significant influence of number of students in the classroom on teacher's attitude towards inclusive education. Generally speaking, the fact that none of the variables considered had a significant influence on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education could perhaps be explained by the fact that being Christians, the teachers may have imbibed the teaching of Christ on empathy as can be gleaned from one of His beatitudes – blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy (Matt 5:7, NKJV).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the finding that teachers in Calabar education zone do not have a positive attitude towards inclusive education means that more work has to be done through enlightenment and workshops to explain the imperative of inclusive education. The Cross River State Government should therefore commence the training of its teachers and provide all the required facilities needed for the implementation of inclusive education based on international best practices in order to maximise the potentials of all its children for the socio-economic development of the state.

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