

Inclusive Education in Nigeria: An Appraisal on the Roles and Challenges Facing History Teachers

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Abstract

The idea of inclusiveness in education was meant to allow special education needs (SENs) students spend most if not all of their time with their non-disabled colleagues. Today, inclusivity idea is no longer defined by physical and cognitive disabilities but also adopts some wide range of human diversity reference to gender, ability, age, culture, language and other human features. This paper explores the concept and policy of inclusive education in Nigeria. More specially, it considers the roles of history teachers in facilitating the implementation of inclusive education among both physical and cognitive students in schools. The paper also covers some current issues and challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria and identifies the important component and forms of inclusive education that if properly carried out, will lead to change in the successful implementation of inclusive education. The study adopted a historical and descriptive research method. Some of the challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria were lack of knowledge on the part of classroom teachers, attributed to poor training from the teaching schools and the issue of inadequate funding of projects and programmes. This paper recommends that one way of overcoming the challenges is to improve on the teachers training methods which can increase competence and foster professional skills, attitude and beliefs for effective implementation of inclusive education practices. The government at federal, state and local levels should also increase campaign to create awareness in order to enlighten parents on the need to send their children with special needs to schools.

Introduction

The central purpose of establishing schools is to ensure that all students have access to acquire knowledge, information and skills that will prepare them to contribute to communities' development, as well as to have better and independent lives. Thus, the success of every student in schooling processes depends on the quality of the teachers and their attitudes towards teaching and learning. The study unraveled the current development in inclusive education system in a broader discussion about the roles of history teachers in educating students more effectively than may have been done in the past decades in Nigerian schools. The concept and philosophy of inclusive education as an

approach gain an international recognition when the United Nations (UN) promoted the idea of “Education For All” (EFA) at the conference in Thailand in 1990.

In a similar vein, the Salamanca conference in 1994 by United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) designed a policy statement on inclusive education which urged nations to development educational systems that can respond to the diverse needs of heterogeneous students’ population including those with special needs¹. Although equality of education systems has become a prominent agenda of international organization, the successful implementation of inclusive education practice is largely dependent on teachers. According to Salami Adeyemi Rilwan, inclusive education was not a norm in Nigerian schools². In confirming this assertion, Awambe Kelvin, argued that, years ago, special classes were created for students with special needs, and special educators felt that if they would teach the students separately in smaller groups, they would help them to catch up.³

However, it was observed that, students in segregated special education classes have fallen further behind. In a similar vein, students with special educational needs taught in inclusive classes made better or comparable academic progress compared to students in segregated classes.⁴ Also, these students are fared better in regard to acceptance, interaction and peer relationships.⁵ Consequently, it is obvious that this trend of class segregation cannot be sustained in Nigerian educational system hence; this justifies the need for the full implementation of

¹UNESCO, The Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy and Practice in Special Needs Education, (Paris, www.unesco.org/education/educprog/sne/salamanc/stateme.html, 1994, paragraph 2) Retrieved on 07/08/2020

²Salami Adeyemi Rilwan, *Challenges in the Nigeria educational system: Issues and Prospects* (Ibadan: Blossom publishers, 2013) 42-46.

³Awambe Kelvin, “Inclusive education programmes: Roles and challenges of guidance and Councilors,” *Journal of National Association for Exceptional Children* 21, no.1 (2019): 206-212

⁴Odom Samuel, Buysse Virginia and Soukakou Elena, “Inclusion for young children with disabilities: A quarter century of research perspectives,” *Journal of Early Intervention*, 33, no.4 (2011): 344–356.

⁵Buysse Virginia, Goldman Barbara Davis, and Skinner Martie, “Setting effects on friendship formation among young children with and without disabilities.” *Journal of Exceptional Children* 68, (2002): 503– 517.

inclusive education system. Dinesh Kumar and Shruti Kirti Rastogi opined that, the basic philosophy behind inclusive education is that children, who learn together, learn to live together. For them, it is a new approach to common schooling for all children with access to a curriculum appropriate for all pupils.⁶

In recent times, the concept of inclusive education or inclusivity in the teaching and learning process in Nigerian schools is no longer defined by physical and cognitive disabilities of students, but also includes a full range of human diversity with references to culture, gender, language, ability, and all other human features. It is against this backdrop that the roles of history teachers become inevitable in schools' setting, particularly with respect to the implementation of inclusive education policy. History is an integral component of any educational system. It helps in boosting the confidence of students with any form of disability to maintain a positive view of them and encourage them to be more productive to the society at large.

Concept and Component of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education entails an educational system which allowed all students irrespective of their physical and cognitive disabilities to receive instruction in the same educational setting. Inclusive is a radical departure from the traditional segregation approach of educating children with disabilities which involves the adaptation of regular school practice to suit the needs of children with disabilities.⁷ Inclusive education as a full integration of learners with and without special needs into the same classrooms and schools and thereby expose them to the same opportunities.⁸ It means that all students in a school regardless of their strength and weakness in any area become part of the school community where they are taught to play together, communicate without possible labeling and discrimination of any sort.⁹ It is a process that allowed children to be seen as equal members of

⁶ Dinesh Kumar and Shruti Kirti Rastogi, "Inclusive education: Changing role and responsibilities of teachers." Internet Material Retrieved on 07/08/2020 from <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305494453>, pdf files.

⁷ Florence Banku Obi, and Ashi, Mary, "Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Access and Equity." *Journal of Education and Practice* 7, no.5 (2016): 168-171.

⁸ Sambo, Anpe Maria and Gambo Morice Bwoi, "Administration of inclusive education in Nigerian schools: Issues and implementation strategies." *National journal of inclusive education* 3, no.1 (2015), 107-115.

⁹ Awambe Kelvin Op cit 206-212.

the classroom without being marginalized by their colleagues. According to the Federal Ministry of Education defined inclusive education as the process of addressing all barriers and providing access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning environment.¹⁰

Consequently, Garuba Ayo identified some key components of inclusive education that must be in place for its successful implementation in Nigerian schools as follows;

- A sense of belonging to a group (all students are considered active members of the class). In an inclusive environment, students who have disabilities feel welcomed as those without disabilities.¹¹
- Heterogeneous group: All students including those with special need are educated together in groups with those without disabilities.
- Share activities with individualized outcome: They share educational experience (lessons, laboratories, fieldwork and group learning at the same time). The learning objectives for the students are individualized to meet each student learning needs.
- Use of environment frequented by individuals without disabilities: The learning experience takes place in general education classrooms and community work sites.

In a similar vein, Ozoji Emeka Desmond, outlined the following goals of inclusive education as;

- To build supportive school community that is able to identify and minimize barriers to learning and participation.
- To provide education for all children with diverse learning needs within their structured schools community.
- To ensure successful learning and social experience competence.
- To empower children who are hitherto excluded or isolated.
- To educate more children better, and
- To enable students to participate in mainstream education to the best of their abilities, etc.¹²

¹⁰Federal Ministry of Education, *National policy on inclusive education in Nigeria:*

Guideline for implementing the national policy on inclusive education (Abuja: Federal Ministry of Education Press, 2016), 1-44.

¹¹Garuba Ayo, "Inclusive education in the 21st century: Challenges and opportunities for Nigeria." *Asia Pacific Disability Rehabilitation Journal* 4, no.2, (2013), 191-200.

Forms of Inclusion

Aneesunnisa Begum identifies three forms of inclusion as follows:

- **Physical inclusion:** This form of inclusion has received consistent promotion and support from the government. In this case, all policies and regulations are made toward the realization of free and compulsory education for all children. Thus, no institution can deny admission to a child with any form of physical disability.¹³
- **Cognitive inclusion:** This is the process in which the educational institutions allowed the children with special educational needs to study in general classrooms with their non-disable colleagues. This process gives all children equal opportunity to learn, understand, and respond to questions at appropriate time and manner in the course of teaching and learning process in the class.
- **Social inclusion:** This form of inclusion generally occurred in our day to day activities in the society. It involves the general acceptance of person with physical and cognitive disabilities in the socio-economic strata of the society. This gradual acceptance by the public was achieved through the help of the mass media, government policies, and educating the populace which brings about attitudinal changes in the society.

The Role of History Teachers

Teaching is dynamic and in many ways becoming a more cumbersome profession in Nigeria as a result of increasing numerous contradictory expectations from the parents, and the society at large. Consequently, to achieve the goal of professionalism in teaching, it is imperative that history teachers in particular adopt the use of several teaching methods in implementing the contemporary curricula which promote competency, performance and is students centric based. According to Carr E.H, “history is the continuous interaction between the historian and his facts and unending dialogue between the present and the past”.¹⁴ Smit cited in Okpeh Jr sees history as the totality of all the changes that humanity

¹²Ozaji Emeka Desmond, *Special needs education and rehabilitation for beginner professionals*, (Jos: Dekapublication, 2005), 27-35.

¹³Aneesunnisa Begum, “Inclusive education: Issues and challenges,” *Scholarly Research Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*, no.35, (2007), 6563-6571.

¹⁴Carr Edward Hallet, *What is History*, (London: Macmillan press, 1954).

and society have undergone the study of which is also known as history.¹⁵ Thus, it is the role of history teachers to understand how physical and cognitive disability affects students' ability to learn academic skills or to adapt to social environment. As observed by Mastropieri and Scruggs that a regular classroom teacher is responsible for any adaptation that may be necessary for students' success in learning environment; consequently this teacher must have the necessary knowledge and skills needed to develop and use curricula to satisfy the diverse needs of his students.¹⁶

We are living in an era in which parents have high expectation that their children will learn high-level skills such as how to access, analyze and scrutinize vast quantities of information. In a similar vein, teachers are being evaluated by their ability to have students pass test that often give no value to disabilities.¹⁷ It is on this note that history teachers should use their skills to modify assignments for students and redesign the classroom activities in order to meet the specific interest of the students, regardless of their capabilities. These teaching skills can be used not just at the primary, secondary levels, but also at the higher institutions. It means more activity based teaching rather than the conventional or traditional method which is teaching –centered and lecture method commonly observed in history class.

More so, history teachers assist students with physical and cognitive disabilities to solve complex problems that require knowledge from other related disciplines. They are responsible for teaching and inculcating into children those isolated skills and information acquire from other disciplines. This in turn creates an opportunity for these students to accept themselves in spite of their differences and encourage cooperation as well as become more resourceful and creative in the society.

Generally speaking, teachers are expected to meet the needs of all students and move them towards attainment of their individual potential even as they are pressured to prepare students for maximum performance on high-stakes

¹⁵Okpeh Okpeh Ochayi Jr, "The Idoma and Minority Group Politics in Northern Nigeria 1946-1960: A study in an aspect of the National Question." (M.A Thesis, University of Jos, 1994) 44-51.

¹⁶Mastropieri Margo and Scruggs Thomas, *The inclusive classroom: Strategies for effective instructions* (NY: Pearson pub, 2004), 14-20.

¹⁷ Sharma, Kaushal, *Learning beyond the classroom* (New Delhi: S.R Publishing House, 2013), 15.

assessment tests this is the primary measure of students and schools success.¹⁸ Here are some roles which history teachers must play for successful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria schools.

- The teacher should take care and assist the economically disadvantaged children and youths and be willing to work with them.
- History teachers must accept, appreciate, and promote the culture and characteristics of disabled students which will encourage cooperation as well as enhance social relations among students.
- The teacher should observe the students behavior in various class settings which will help him/her in individual assessment.
- The teacher should be able to plan and apply a variety of instructional techniques when teaching.
- The teacher should develop the skills in the selection of appropriate teaching methods to manage individual and group behavior in class.

If history teachers play these roles together with their skills and competencies, the goals of inclusive education in Nigeria schools will be attained.

Challenges of History Teachers in the Implementation of Inclusive Education

It should be noted that no government in the world can switch overnight from integrated approaches of education to inclusive education system. Thus, “twin track” approaches may be adopted meaning that special or integrated initiative and inclusive schools sit-side-by-side as governments work towards the proper inclusion of all children in line with human rights principles within mainstream education system over time.¹⁹ According to Education For All (EFA) Nigeria report cards for 2005, 2006, and 2007 cited in Iwuamadi, F. N. and Obasi M.O, succinctly outlined the several challenges in the educational sector that tend to affect the implementation of inclusive education as follows:

- Erratic and inadequate funding of projects and programmes;
- Massive neglect in the development of functional school libraries over the years;

¹⁸ Spalding Elizabeth, Klecka Cari, Lin Emili, Odell Sandra and Wang Jian, “Social justice and teacher education: A Hammer, a Bell, and a Song.” *Journal of Teacher Education*, 61, no.3 (2010)191-196

¹⁹Lucy Akinyi Eunice, Ezekiel Onyango Nyangia, and John Aluko Orodho, 39-50.

- Lack of adequate available reliable and up-to-date baseline data to facilitate effective planning;
- Inappropriate socio-cultural and religious practices;
- Providing child-friendly environment through the renovation of dilapidated, physical structures;
- Funding remains a huge challenge in all sectors and particularly so in the non-formal education sector with serious implications for the adequate provision of basic infrastructure, equipment, instructional materials and transportation for facilitators, teachers and supervisors to reach distant places etc.²⁰

Generally speaking, teachers training programmes, teacher attitude, and availability of teaching materials and equipment provision as well as financial sources are among the top challenges facing the implementation of successful inclusive education in Nigeria. Teachers' attitude toward inclusive education remains the ultimate challenges since it is often influenced by the presence of all other factors itemized above.

Conclusion

Inclusion of physical and cognitive disability students have become a matter of priority in countries around the world and in Nigeria in particular. The successful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria requires dedication and willingness on the parts of all stakeholders especially teachers. Dinesh Kumar and Shruti Kirti Rastogi observed that teachers for inclusive education must have skills to identify the specific needs of each individual learner, and respond to them by deploying a wide range of teaching strategies and have the ability to work in close collaboration with colleagues, parents and the wider community. The objective of EFA is to achieve equal educational opportunities for all children in the 21st century, despite their peculiarities. Presently in Nigeria, inclusive education still remains in the realm of rhetoric and far from effective practice as a result of poor policy implementation and lackadaisical attitude of the teachers, the populace and the government. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made;

²⁰ Fidelia Iwuamadi and Mang Obas, "Challenges of adopting inclusive education in Nigerian school system," *Journal of Assertiveness* 2, no.4 (2015), 54-65.

- There should be record keeping or data of all children with physical cognitive disability in order to ensure adequate planning which should be proactive and realistic.
- The government at federal, state and local levels should increase campaign to create awareness in order to enlighten parents on the need to send their children with any form of disability to schools.
- Teachers' training schools should improve on the teachers training methods which can increase competence and foster professional skills, attitude and beliefs for effective implementation of inclusive education practices.
- Most of the schools for children with special needs in Nigeria are concentrated in urban areas, big cities and local government headquarters. The majority of children with disability who live in rural areas do not get benefit from these schools. Hence justify the need to establish inclusive schools in rural areas.
- There should be community involvement and partnerships between government agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) which will be instrumental in promoting inclusive education.

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