

Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Educational Practices in Upper Basic Schools in Ilorin, Nigeria

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Abstract

This research work explored the attitudes of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin, Nigeria. It adopted a descriptive research design. Eight schools from public and seven from private were selected, using purposive random sampling technique. 200 respondents were selected from selected schools using simple random sampling technique. One research question was answered and three null hypotheses were tested. Data collected through a researcher designed questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings revealed that the attitudes of the teachers towards inclusive educational practices was negative. The finding of the study also showed that, years of teaching experience is not a determinant of teachers' attitude towards inclusive education as there was no significant difference in the attitude of teachers based on years of experience. Finally, it was also discovered that teachers do not have different opinion in their perception on the inclusive educational practices. Based on these findings, it was recommended that students with special needs should be placed in a separate school so that teachers who are trained specifically for students who falls into such category would equip them passionately with necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes that make them responsible and recognisable members of their society.

Keywords: Teachers' attitude, inclusive education, teaching experiences and upper basic schools

Introduction

Across the world, there are many reasons why children do not attend school; these include a high level of mobility, social conflict, child labour and exploitation, poverty, gender, and disability. These factors contribute to varying degrees to a high rate of illiteracy and poverty index in emerging economies like Nigeria. Education is the basic human right that should be feasibly accessed by all. There is a global realisation of the fact that education is the main tool for the attainment of sustainable growth and development in all facets of human society. It has the potential of solving social problems of different nations (Olokooba, 2018). In the last few decades, education systems have changed drastically as educating students with special needs in regular schools has become an important goal in many countries and also in Nigeria. This development to keep students with disabilities in regular education settings instead of referring them to special schools is best described with the term 'inclusion'. According to (Ajuwon, 2008), supporters of inclusive education use the term to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he/she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the auxiliary services to the child and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). This is a salient aspect of inclusion and requires a commitment to move essential resources to the child with special educational needs rather than placing the child in an isolated setting where services are located (Smith, 2007). For the child with a special educational need to benefit optimally from inclusion, general education teachers must be able to teach a wider array of children, including those with varying needs, and to collaborate and plan effectively

needs students have a right to the benefits of full school experience, with needed modifications and support, alongside their peers without special educational needs who receive general education.

The concept of this policy is based on the principles that all children regardless of ability or disability have a basic right to be educated alongside their peers in their local schools (UNESCO, 2001). The new trend is aimed at removing social prejudice and alienation that has been hitherto meted on special needs children within and outside the classroom. Therefore, inclusive education is enshrined as part of a broad human rights act that adopts the agenda for collective commitment to meet the goals of ("Education for All" 2000). Education for all is a desire to develop agenda for all-inclusive human society in the whole universe, thereby it is presented as global aspiration. In Nigeria, Education for All (EFA) is a programme domesticated by Federal Government in form of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) aiming at universalizing access to education and thereby reducing drastically the incidence of mass illiteracy in the country. The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is a governmental intervention programme designed to actualise the Education for All (EFA) goals. Its goals are related to second and third Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted in September 2000 at the United Nations Millennium Declaration and fourth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which commenced in 2016. The two goals of MDGs were achievement of universal primary education and promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women while SDGs is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The compulsory, free Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act was passed into law in 2004. It represents the Government's strategy to fight illiteracy and extend basic education opportunities to all children and illiterate adults in the country (Olokooba, 2018; Okunloye, Olokooba, & Abdulsalam, 2017).

The Nigerian National Policies on Education so far (1977; 1981; 1998; 2004; 2013) have been restructured conveniently to be suitable for implementation of the Universal Basic Education as one of the strategies to meet the goals of education for all. It gave free education for all school-age children (with disabilities and non-disabled children) and non-literate adults (Fakolade, Adeniyi, & Tella, 2009). Ever before the adoption of inclusive education policy in Nigeria's National Policy on Education in 1977, children with special needs are segregated and stigmatized. For instance, children with mental retardation are seen as useless, worthless, and also regarded as people without hope for the future, and therefore educating them is regarded as a waste of money, time, and energy (Ebigbo, 2001). Children with behavioural problems are isolated for fear of violent and temperamental behaviours exhibited by such people. In the past, many children with special needs were only temporary guests in general education classrooms and few efforts were made to assist so they could be successfully educated with their non-disabled peers (Artiles, Harrs-Murri, & Rotenberg, 2006).

This indicated that there was an educational imbalance to the extent that, many school-age children were helpless in their pursuance of educational goals. The early history of the education of children with special needs in Nigeria was that of brutality and discrimination, supported by superstition and ignorance which were dispelled by the intervention of Christian missionaries, years back. In practice, the attitude of Nigerian people is highly degrading and negative on those children with special educational needs. This may be due to lack of empathy on the part of some people whom these set of children get acquainted with. Empathy is the ability of an individual to share someone's feelings and experience by forming a mental image of what it would be like to be in that situation. This type of feeling leads to a deeper understanding of what other people are experiencing and may contribute to helping to accept others, who may be different from oneself in terms of disability. When this is lacking, it discourages a nurturing attitude towards people in need of care and assistance.

Attitude-- refers to positive or negative evaluation of people, events, activities, and ideas or just about anything in the environment. This is measured by the Multidimensional Attitudes towards Inclusive Education Scale (MATIES) (Mahat MATIES). Positive-teacher-pupil relationships seem to be fundamental to effective classroom management, as any strategy a teacher employs ought to be more successful in a climate of mutual respect. This is because the extent, to which teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in students as individuals, as well as care and concern for the class as a whole, is reflected in the planning, organization, and management of learning experiences. This shows how highly important a teacher is in class. Ghergut, (2010) opined that in

every educational setting, teachers/educators are considered important as they are the major pillars in the teaching and learning process, without a doubt, the most important person in the practice of curriculum. With their knowledge, experience, and competencies, teachers are central to any curriculum improvement and implementation effort, they are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom and outside the classroom as well. Regardless of which philosophical belief the education system is based on, it is a known fact that teachers influence students' learning. Better teachers foster better learning. Teachers are most knowledgeable about the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom.

A teacher must be able to infuse into the curriculum every student's need irrespective of his/her condition. Mashiya (2003) stressed the central role of teachers in implementing the curriculum and call on teachers to be a facilitator in the classroom to provide the desired active learning environment that is appropriate to learners. Learning may tend to pose significant difficulty for some children with special needs when teachers are lacking in some qualities such as work experiences or have a neurotic personality which is characterized by tension, aggression and, irritability, that is, a negative attitude. On the other hand, if teachers' attitude is positive towards children with special educational needs in their classes, inclusive education provides the opportunity for special needs children to be exposed to the richness of regular education environment where they learn by observations from peers without special needs (Mastriopieri & Scruggs, 2004).

The positive attitude of teachers fosters the placement of children with special needs along with their peers without special needs in a good learning environment that enhances their social skill development (Ajuwon, 2008). The opportunity for the special needs children to benefit from denied of general teachers' quality teaching, make friends, be accepted and cared for and also for those children without special needs to identify the differences between them and cultivate tolerance and respect advocates teachers' attitude (Zionts & Calliott, 2002; Fakolade, et al., 2009). Therefore, the attitude of teachers is argued to play a vital role in implementing inclusive education, as human behaviour and actions are influenced by attitudes. However, in a study conducted by Avramidis, Baylis and Burden (2000) discovered that teachers had strong, negative feelings about inclusive educational practices and that students with disability should be placed in separate schools with special teachers in charge.

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A standard inclusive classroom comprises able students probably gifted and talented, average students, students with learning difficulties, students with behavioural problems, and so on. Positive teachers' attitude may increase their belief that all students belong to the inclusive education classroom and that teachers can meet the needs of all students, regardless of what those needs may be, therefore cultivating an inclusive culture in students. The concept of inclusion has a value orientation based on the premise that all individuals with disabilities have a right to be included in naturally occurring settings and activities with their peers, siblings, and friends (Smith, Polloway, Patton & Dowdy, 2001). In a study carried out by Kurniawatiab, Minnaerta,

Given this, there is a need to investigate the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin. An upper basic school is a general education school, following a lower and middle basic school (primary school), which provides opportunities to acquire secondary education at the first level. The time prescribed for the fulfillment of the upper basic school curriculum is three years with Age level from 12 to 15. This means basic education is the starting point in the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes that can help individuals function effectively in society.

Following the decision of the Federal Government of Nigeria to introduce the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in September 2004, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) restructured and re-aligned all extant Primary and Junior Secondary School (JSS) curricula into 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum for implementation in Nigerian schools with effect from September 2008. Universal connotes a programme that is meant for all facets of the society, the developed; underdeveloped; the rich; the physically fit; and the physically challenged, the gifted and the average students; the dropouts and every other individual who is ready to acquire knowledge. This 9-year Basic Education curriculum gave way for what Nigeria now have today as Lower Basic (primary 1-3), middle basic (primary 4-6), and upper basic (JSS 1-3).

However, teachers need to provide the desired active learning environment that is appropriate for each learner to be able to impact positively on learners. Fakolade et al. (2009) explored the attitudes of teachers about the inclusion of special needs children in their secondary schools in general education. The result indicates that teachers held negative attitudes. Rieser (2005) opined that all learners, with or without disabilities, have a right to be educated together in age-appropriate class groups in regular classrooms of community schools. To Ozoji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016), the purpose and relevance of inclusive education are to ensure access to education in the most suitable and less discriminatory learning environments as well as ensuring the provisions of appropriate and functional education within professionally recognised best practices. The study of Alghazo and Naggat Gaad (2004) showed that teachers with one to five years of teaching experience held significant more positive attitudes towards the inclusion of pupils with special needs compared with teachers with 6–11 years' experience and those with 12 or more years of experience.

Multiple intelligence theory has been adopted in many areas of education including special education classes. This pointed out that intelligence should be assessed to better understand the teaching and learning process. The theory focuses on the capacity to solve problems considering various cultural settings. Furthermore, teachers are required to view school education from an individual-centered perspective. It was suggested that the goals of education should be to understand each child in depth and help optimize development by matching a child's learning level with the appropriate teaching methods. Children have the capacity to utilize all senses and most children show different profiles in how they blend these intelligences to solve problems (Takahashi, 2013).

From the few available studies, teachers are expected to demonstrate their readiness to accept children with special needs into their classes, take responsibilities for such children, and help them to adjust to the school environment. This study, therefore, investigated teachers' attitudes towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin.

Research Question

The research question raised to guide the study was:

1. What is the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were postulated to be tested in the study:

1. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on school type.
2. There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on years of experience.

- There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on training.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was employed. The population for this study comprised all upper basic school teachers in Ilorin. The target population for this study comprised 200 upper basic school teachers in Ilorin. There are three LGAs that constitute Ilorin. These three LGAs are made up of one hundred and twenty public and private schools with fifty-two public schools and sixty-five private schools. Seven schools from private and eight from public schools were selected. A simple random technique was used to select these respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a researcher designed questionnaire titled Teacher's Attitude towards Inclusive Educational Practices in Upper Basic Schools Questionnaire. The items in this questionnaire were face and content validated by experts in the Department of Social Science Education, Faculty of Education, University of Ilorin. The corrections made were incorporated to the final draft of this instrument. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean, ANOVA and t-test were the main statistical tools used in this research work. Three hypotheses were tested using t-test and ANOVA at 0.05 significant level. The responses from the respondents were compared, classified to answer the research question, and hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: What is the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin?

Table 1
Attitude of Teachers towards Inclusive Education

Statement	Number	Total Score	Mean	Ranking
The inclusion of learners with special needs in the classroom would be a worthwhile undertaking.	200	665	3.33	5 th
Special educational needs students should be taught separately in special education schools.	200	687	3.44	2 nd
Inclusive school permits the academic progression of all students regardless of their ability.	200	525	2.63	16 th
The needs of special educational needs students can be best served in special, separate settings.	200	680	3.40	3 rd
Special education teachers are trained to use different teaching methods to teach students with disabilities more effectively than regular teachers	200	689	3.45	1 st
Teachers with long term training are more positive towards inclusive education than those with short term.	200	633	3.17	7 th
Teachers training is very important in the formation of positive attitudes towards inclusive education	200	671	3.36	4 th
In-service training is an effective way of improving teachers' attitudes towards inclusion.	200	653	3.27	6 th
Students with special needs are difficult to teach than those in regular schools	200	619	3.10	8 th
Teachers get frustrated when having difficulty in communicating with students with special needs.	200	615	3.08	9 th

Teachers are not comfortable including students with special needs in a regular classroom with other students without a disability.	200	601	3.01	10 th
The inclusion of learners with disabilities in the classroom would give a better understanding of other people's differences.	200	486	2.43	17 th
Teachers in private schools find it strenuous to teach special needs students than public schools.	200	551	2.76	15 th
Special needs students in public schools have access to better learning than those in private schools.	200	460	2.30	19 th
Public school teachers are more receptive towards including students with mild disabilities rather than private school teachers	200	485	2.43	17 th
Male and female public-school teachers are more supportive of the inclusion of SEN children in general education classrooms than private school male and female teachers.	200	482	2.41	18 th
Teachers with much years of experience are positive towards inclusive education	200	569	2.85	12 th
Teachers with much years of experience have corresponding knowledge and skills to educate students with disabilities	200	568	2.84	13 th
Teachers with greater teaching experience are more comfortable in teaching students with special educational needs.	200	563	2.82	14 th
Teaching experience offers teachers a greater sense of overall effectiveness, a sense of efficacy in classroom management, and effectiveness in the use of educational strategies in an inclusive classroom.	200	577	2.89	11 th

Table 1 revealed attitudes of upper basic school teachers towards inclusive educational practice in Ilorin. Teachers' responses with a mean that is above the benchmark of 2.5 were taken as accepted by the teachers and were subsequently rated. It was revealed that most of the sampled teachers believed that special education teachers are trained to use different teaching methods to teach students with disabilities more effectively than regular teachers. The second leading position goes to teaching special education needs students separately in special education schools, the third-highest ranked opinion of the teachers was that the need of special education needs students can best be served in a separate setting. Items 12, 14, 15, and 16 which all relate to the inclusion of special education needs students into the regular school and the positive attitude of public school upper basic teachers towards this direction were not accepted by the sampled teachers. Hence, it can therefore be concluded that the attitudes of the teachers in Ilorin towards inclusive educational practice were negative. They believed that; the learners should be trained by specifically trained teachers in a special school setting.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on school type

Table 2

t-test Table for Inclusive Educational Practices based on School Type

School Type	N	Mean	std. Deviation	T	df	sig.(2-tailed)
Public	89	58.43	6.748			
Private	111	59.24	6.856	-.835	197	.405

calculated t-value of $-.835$ and a p-value of $.405$ testing at an alpha level of 0.05 . There was no significant difference in the observation for Public ($M = 58.43$, $SD = 6.748$) and Private ($M = 59.24$, $SD = 6.856$; $t(200) = -.835$, $p = .405$, (two-tailed). Since the p-value is greater than the alpha level ($p > 0.05$), the hypothesis is therefore retained. Consequently, there is no significant difference in the perception of upper basic school teachers in Ilorin towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference is the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on years of experience.

Table 3

ANOVA Table for Inclusive Educational Practices based on Year of Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Between Groups	386.833	3	128.944	2.878	.037
Within Groups	8781.962	196	44.806		
Total	9168.795	199			

Tables 3 showed the result of the one-way between-groups analysis of variance which was conducted to explore the perception of upper basic school teachers on inclusive educational practices in Ilorin. This was analyzed on the bases of categorizing the respondents' years of experience into three groups: 5 years and below, 6-10 years as well as 11 years and above. There was a statistically significant difference at $p < .05$ level of significance in the perception of the teachers across the three groups: $F(3, 196) = 2.878$, $p = .037$. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected meaning that, the teachers differ significantly in their perception of the inclusive educational practices in Ilorin.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on training.

Table 4

ANOVA Table for Inclusive Educational Practices based on Teachers Status

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	sig.
Between Groups	23.460	2	11.730	.253	.777
Within Groups	9145.335	197	46.423		
Total	9168.795	199			

Tables 4 showed the result of the one-way between-groups analysis of variance which was conducted to explore the perception of upper basic schoolteachers on inclusive educational practices in Ilorin. This was analyzed by categorizing the respondents into three groups: principal, subject teacher, and class teacher. There was no statistically significant difference at $p > .05$ level of significance in the perception of the teachers across the groups: $F(2, 197) = .253$, $p = .777$. This implied that the null hypothesis is retained and that, the teachers do not differ significantly in their perception of inclusive educational practices in Ilorin.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to determine teachers' attitudes towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin. The result showed that the attitude of teachers in Ilorin towards inclusive educational practice was negative. Findings of the research showed that most of the sampled teachers believed that special education teachers are trained to use different teaching methods to teach students with disabilities more effectively than regular teachers. They thought that learners should be trained by specifically trained teachers in a specially built school. Also, the need for special education needs students can best be served in a

separate setting. Therefore, the inclusion of special education needs students into the regular school and the positive attitude of teachers towards this direction was not accepted by the sampled teachers thereby, showing a negative attitude towards inclusive education. This result confirmed several previous studies such as Avramidis, Baylis, & Burden, (2000) as their result showed that teachers had strong, negative feelings about inclusive educational practices and that students with disabilities should be placed in separate schools with special teachers in charge.

Another finding from the research indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin metropolis based on school type. The result showed that both public and private school teachers agree that students with special needs are not to be included in a regular setting as this is seen as tasking and inconvenient. This finding contradicts the study of Kurniawatia, Minnaert, Mangunsong, and Ahmed (2012) whose result showed that private school teachers are more favorable than public school teachers to the inclusion of special educational needs students in regular school.

This study also indicated that there is no significant difference in the attitude of teachers towards inclusive educational practices in upper basic schools in Ilorin based on years of experience. Teachers differ significantly in their perception of the inclusive educational practices in Ilorin Metropolis based on their years of experience. This finding may be due to peoples' different types of emotions from time to time, such as fear, sadness, anger, and so on. However, the findings negate the study from researchers like Alghazo and Naggar (2004) who recorded a significant difference in the attitude of teachers based on their years of experience.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this research work, it was concluded that teachers' attitude towards inclusive educational practices was negative. Both private and public-school teachers believed that the inclusion of students with special educational needs into a regular school would not be appropriate. Years of teaching experience is not a determinant of positive attitude towards inclusive education as there was no significant difference in the attitude of teachers based on their years of experience. Teachers irrespective of their status do not differ in their opinion and perception of inclusive educational practice.

Recommendations

Sequel to the findings of this study, the following recommendation were suggested:

1. Special education needs students should be placed in a separate school so that teachers who are trained specifically for students who fall into such categories would be able to equip them passionately, with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitude to become responsible and recognisable members of their society.
2. In-service teacher training for regular teachers should be developed to support inclusive education if such practice is to be adopted in regular schools.
3. Teachers should be encouraged in such a way that will accommodate positive attitude towards inclusive education if such a concept is to be introduced in schools
4. The government should not only talk about inclusion on paper as seen in the national documents but facilities and necessary tools that will enable inclusion to be fully practiced should be put in place.

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