

Investigation into the Practice of Inclusive Education in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study ascertained whether or not, Lagos State Government, Nigeria is practicing the inclusive system of education for persons with visual impairment. Descriptive survey method was adopted. The participants were all the children with visual impairment in the 31 designated “inclusive schools”. An interview comprising of 25 self-constructed items was designed. Focused group discussion was held for teachers and the pupils. Findings revealed that there was dearth of professionals, teachers’ welfare was very poor, infrastructure were in disrepair and inadequate. The findings further revealed that the “inclusive schools” in Lagos State were not actually inclusive in its real sense. It was concluded that Lagos State Government’s practice of “inclusive education” was still very far from what it should be. It was recommended that Lagos State Government, Nigeria should practice inclusive education in line with best international standard and practises.

Keywords

Students with Visual Impairment, Inclusive Education, Lagos State Nigeria

1. Introduction

The education of children with special needs did not formally start in Nigeria until the 19th century. The implication is that, the educational needs of these children could not be met because the formal general education was not designed to meet their special needs. This led to the search for new directions in educational provisions for persons with special needs. One of these new directions was integration that sought to educate persons with disabilities and their average counterparts in the same school setting. It was obvious that the practice was without its flaws and loopholes. For instance, some schools of thought believed that the practice of integration further encouraged segregation, labeling, and hence, stigmatizations. More appropriate direction for the education of children with special needs education was being searched for. Obviously, the inadequacies inherent in the practice of integration paved the way for the emergence of inclusive education.

Inclusive education was the product of a world of a world conference on education for all (EFA) which took place in Thailand in 1990. Among the objectives were to consider the fundamental policy shifts required to approach inclusive education, which is how to enable school to several children, especially these children with special needs. Hence, inclusive education has received global attention.

Ozaji (2005) sees inclusive education as an education option or programme carefully designed within the main stream of school community. The United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2005) define inclu-

sive as a:

Process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate average and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (p. 25)

Inclusion is a term which expresses commitment to educate each child to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he/she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the service) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Inclusive education advocates that the child with special needs should be given the right to be educated under the same environment with their peers without special needs. It frowns at the idea of segregation. This is because this type of educational management does not encourage the child with special needs to learn to integrate freely in the society which he is a part. Inclusive education system is about educating children with special needs in neighbourhood schools. The schools they should have attended, if they were having no special learning needs. It connotes that no child should be left out of school irrespective of his/her psychological and physical differences. The implication is such that inclusive learners are made to have a sense of belongingness among their peers and other community members. Features of inclusive education system includes, but not limited to namely: placement into the closest school to the child's home (neighbourhood school); no rejection; no special class or block; special education as a support to the regular education; method of teaching is modified according to the needs of these children; there are support personnel and care giver; the environment is always disability friendly; the curriculum is modified in the regular school and appropriate facilities are put in place.

The movement for full inclusion is part of a broad human right agenda that argues that all forms of segregation are usually wrong and that all children need an education that will help them develop relationships and prepare them for life in the main stream.

Inclusive education, therefore, emerges to correct some perceived challenges in special needs education. komolafe (2013) noted that special need children who spend time with their peers tend to show increase in social skill and academic proficiency. Adebowale and Makinde (2012) stated that advocates for inclusion say that the long term effect is that students who are included at the challenges that others face, increased empathy and compassion and improved leadership skills which benefits the society. Inclusive education enables children with special needs education to learn work. Team work fosters some societal values and virtues like hardwork, communal spirit, endurance, perseverance empathy among others. Looking at the strengths inherent in inclusive education, the Lagos State government, Southwest, Nigeria, felt that children with special needs in the state should not be left out. This paper therefore looks at the implementation of inclusive system as an educational option for children with special needs in the state (Lagos State, Nigeria).

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Until the year 2000, the missionaries dominated the education of persons with special needs. These schools were taken over by the government in Nigeria during the post independent era. In this same year, 2000, Lagos State government returned the schools to original owners. After the return, Lagos State government was without special need schools of her own. This created a gap. Consequently, the government of Lagos State, Nigeria identified some regular schools within the state that could be designated as "INCLUSIVE".

The main problem of this study, therefore is to investigate whether or not there is inclusive system of education in Lagos State, Nigeria is existing only in nomenclature.

1.2. Research Questions

The following research questions were answered:

1. What is the level of adequacy of staff?
2. To what extent is the welfare of teachers taken care of?
3. Is the practice of inclusive education in Lagos State close to what inclusive education supposed to be?
4. What is the state of infrastructure in Lagos State inclusive schools?
5. To what extent has Lagos State Government funded these inclusive schools?

2. Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey. This was used because the researcher did not manipulate any variables in the study.

All the thirty one designated “inclusive” schools were used. The purposive sampling technique was also adopted in this study. Eighty six staff (teaching and non teaching), one thousand, eight hundred and forty five pupils with different categories of special needs were used.

An interview schedule was used to collect data from the supervising Board-Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board, Special teachers, Regular Teachers, non-teaching staff and pupils with special needs. Group discussion was held with regular and special teachers to elicit responses to a list of questions.

3. Results and Discussions

What is the level of adequacy of staff

Respondents agreed that there was a dearth of professional special educators. Some of these school resorted to the use of unqualified teachers. To support this, the 2013 statistics obtained from the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board revealed inadequacy of teachers.

The last column on Table 1 is the vacancy as declared by the state government in each school in 2013 which has not been filled.

3.1. To What Extent Is the Welfare of Teachers Taken Care of?

Respondents equally identified lack of welfare for the teachers. Some teachers have not been promoted for a very long time. Corroborating this was the report of the Punch Newspaper of July 8, 2011 which revealed the ordeal of a teacher with visual impairment who had not been promoted for about twenty years in one of the “inclusive schools”. It must be noted that well motivated teachers will be happier and be more productive.

Is the practice of “inclusive” education in Lagos State close to what inclusive education supposed to be?

For ease of educational administration, Lagos State has been divided into six educational districts. The second column in Table 2 is the Education Districts while the third column showed the number of “inclusive” schools in each district. The findings equally revealed that, the schools were not evenly spread. For instance, on Table 2, Educational district “1” has 6 “inclusive” schools while District “2” has 3 “inclusive” schools and District “3” has 3 inclusive schools etc.

The study further revealed that in all these schools, a block of classrooms was designated as “inclusive” unit in all the schools visited by the researcher. This is not different from the practice of integration.

3.2. What Is the State of Infrastructure in Lagos State “Inclusive” Schools?

On the question, the respondents are of the view that the state of infrastructures has been generally poor. For instance, in

some of these schools, classes were combined. This is a pointer to the fact that there is shortage of classes and teachers. It is worth of note that infrastructure is key to the attainment of successful inclusion.

3.3. To What Extent Has Lagos State Government Funded These “Inclusive” Schools?

The structured questions on funding were not responded to. The researcher gathered that information on funding cannot

Table 1. Show population by the categories of special needs and staff strength.

S/N	NAME OF SCHOOL	POPULATION	NO. OF TEACHERS POST	VACANCY
1	Amosun Primary	51	2	3
2	Aganju Aka Primary School	23	1	1
3	All Saints Primary School	77	4	3
4	Anglican Primary School	76	2	5
5	Amuwo Odofin Primary School	32	2	2
6	Ojuwoye Community School	70	4	3
7	RCM Primary School, Okunrayo	23	1	1
8	RCM Primary School, Ayeteju	20	2	-
9	Olisa Primary School, Agege	43	3	1
10	Army Children School, Maryland	38	1	2
11	Maryland Primary School, Maryland	32	3	-
12	Estate Primary School	38	2	2
13	Central Primary School, Oshodi	118	8	4
14	GRA Primary School, Ogudu	29	3	-
15	Bolas Memorial School, Ikeja	20	1	1
16	New Oke Primary School	50	3	2
17	Methodist Primary School, Apapa	23	1	1
18	Sari Iganmu Primary School	105	2	8
19	Methodist Primary School, Apapa	26	1	1
20	Central Primary School, Festac	22	2	-
21	Oki Primary School, Ipaja	90	5	4
22	Community Primary School, Ajangbadi	75	2	5
23	Muslim Primary School, Badagry	34	2	1
24	Ereko Methodist Primary School	32	2	1
25	St. Joseph Primary School	15	1	1
26	Ore Ofe Primary School	55	5	1
27	L.G. Primary School, Igando	133	3	10
28	L.G. Primary School, Ipakodo	180	13	5
29	Addo Primary School, Eti-Osa	10	1	1
30	L.A. Primary School, Ajara	39	1	1
31	AUD Primary School, Epe	22	2	-
	Total	1,601	86	69

Source: Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board, 2013

be given out by the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board. The question is, if the Lagos State Government is funding the schools adequately, the need to hoard information may not have arisen. Funding of these “inclusive” schools was reflected on the poor and decay infrastructure, poor teachers’ welfare, inadequacy of teachers and so forth.

4. Conclusion

It is worthy of note that the existing structure in Lagos State in respect of “inclusive” schools is still very far from what inclusive system entails. Suffice it to also note that what the Lagos State Government has done is very mundane. The State Government still need to go further from this level so that opportunities are offered to all learners irrespective of their differences.

This will enable them to learn without discrimination and without exclusion (individuals with visual impairment who could not attend school because of non-availability of an inclusive school in their locality). Obviously, inclusive education is not holds any promise to learners with visual impairment if all those identified impediments to their education hold sway.

4.1. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of this study:

- i) All schools in Lagos State must be made inclusive. The idea of having only 31 schools out of the existing 1,004 primary schools (Universal Basic Education Board, 2013) negates the practice of inclusive education system. Consequently, this will bring the schools to the door step of children with special needs and will not make them to travel far every day before getting to school.
- ii) There must be massive building of classroom block, libraries, laboratories and the provision of instructional materials and equipment.
- iii) Promotion should not be just once in teacher's career life, but regular. This will make the teacher happy and hence, they will be more productive.
- iv) Lagos State Government should embark on recruitment of professional teachers, caregiver and other related professionals in accordance to the declared number of vacancies in the state.

Table 2. Showing the distribution of inclusive units across the educational districts.

S/N	District	No of "Inclusive Schools" Picked
1	1	6
2	2	3
3	3	7
4	4	4
5	5	7
6	6	4
	Total	31

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