

FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE**ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AMONG
PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS IN
IBADAN, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The concept of inclusive education was proposed with the aim of solving the problem of segregating Children With Disability (CWD) into separate learning environment. The successful implementation of this concept in various communities may be affected by the willingness of school administrators to enroll CWD in their schools. Hence this study was conducted to investigate the attitude of preschool and primary school administrators in the cosmopolitan city of Ibadan, to inclusive education. This cross sectional study involved 87 preschool and primary school administrators. The Teacher's Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Scale was used to assess the attitude of the administrators. A specially designed data gathering sheet was also used to record socio-demographic information on the students and the schools the administrators had oversight of. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Results revealed that CWD accounted for only about 1.0% of the total student population. Visual disability ranked the highest among those with disability (36%, n=43). Only 33.3% (n=29) of all the administrators had a positive attitude towards inclusive education and majority (n=84; 96.6%) indicated that CWD usually learn best in their special education class. The study concluded that majority of the preschool and primary school administrators had negative attitudes towards inclusive education. This may negatively affect the uptake of inclusive education in the area studied. It may therefore be necessary to put in place programs to ensure better understanding of the concept of inclusive education among preschool and primary school administrators in Ibadan North East local government area in Ibadan Nigeria.

Keywords: Attitude; Disability; Inclusive Education; School Administrators

INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF) explains disability as a broad term that depicts impairments of body structures, functions, activity limitations and participation restrictions (WHO, 2002). The preamble to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) further states that disability is an evolving concept which results from the interaction between persons with impairments, the attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (UN, 2008). People Living With Disabilities (PLWD) are reported to suffer from discrimination and

practices that put them at a great disadvantage compared to their counterparts without disabilities (Parmenter, 2008).

In time past, it was common to segregate the people living with disabilities by putting them in residential institutions and enrolling them in special schools (Parmenter, 2008). However national policies in different parts of the world have shifted towards community and educational inclusion (WHO, 2011). Policies such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the UNESCO Salamanca Statements and the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled People which have promoted the protection of the rights of persons living with disabilities (WHO, 2011).

Armstrong et al (2011) defined inclusive education as providing all students, including those with disabilities equitable opportunities to receive effective educational services with supplementary aids and support services as needed in schools. This construct also describes an educational system that includes students living with disabilities and their counterparts without disabilities in every aspect of education by establishing a series of measures to ensure this (WHO & UNICEF, 2017). It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and the understanding that it is the responsibility of the state to educate all children (Madriga et al, 2011).

To reduce or remove the barriers faced by CWD in having access to inclusive education there is a need to understand the particular challenges experienced by the children with disabilities in various different cultural contexts. CWD tend to be marginalized and shunned by the society although the extent of discrimination is reported to vary from culture to culture due to different reasons attributed to the cause of disability (Chireshe, 2011). Disability in African settings has been previously attributed to curses from gods, natural occurrences, and accidents (Agbenyega, 2007& Ocloo, 2008). This varying opinion is believed to influence people's attitudes and prejudices towards children with disability and in turn affect their acceptance and inclusion in the community and regular educational settings (Hattie, 2009).

School administrators are regarded as stakeholders playing important roles in implementing inclusive education (Faas et al., 2018). According to Brent (2014), their roles include acceptance of children with disability into the regular schools, adaptation of school environments to suit all students, procurement and adaptation of support aids for children with disability, supervision of curriculum, and procurement of teaching and learning resources. The willingness or otherwise of the school administrators to implement inclusive education may pose as an attitudinal barrier to the implementation of the concept in CWD (HU & Roberts,2011) especially in an African setting. There is however hardly any scientific evidence on the attitude of school administrators to inclusive education in Nigeria. This study was therefore designed to document the attitude of selected preschool and primary school administrators to inclusive education in Nigeria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This cross-sectional study involved 87 consenting preschool and primary school administrators from randomly selected 87 private and public preschools and primary schools in Ibadan North local government area. This local government area covers a land mass of 27 km² with a population of 856,988 making it the most populous local government in Oyo State.

The schools whose administrators were involved in the study were selected using a stratified sampling technique from the list of schools in Ibadan North local Government Area. Prior to data collection which spanned two months, the ethical approval for this study was obtained from the University of Ibadan/University College Hospital (UI/UCH) Health Research Ethics Committee. Data c

A purposely designed data gathering form was used to document sociodemographic information of the students in the schools and operational information of the schools involved in the study. The Teacher Attitude Towards Inclusion Scale (TAIS) is a self-administered questionnaire which was used to assess the attitude of the schools' administrators to inclusive education. The TAIS is a one-dimensional scale which was originally developed by Salovitta in 2015 to measure teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, as defined in the Salamanca Statement. It consists of 10 items measured on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (scored '1') to strongly disagree (scored "5"). The items on the scale were presented as statements. Every responses such as "strongly agree" and "agree" for items 2,4,7,10, "neutral", "disagree" and "strongly " for items 1,3,5,6,8 and 9 were assigned a score of "1". The reverse responses to these items as listed above were assigned a score of "0". Maximum score obtainable was 10. The scores for each item was summed to get the total score. The mean score was also calculated. A score above 7 indicates positive attitude while a score below7 indicates a negative attitude. The statement "child with special educational needs" in the original instruments was changed to "children with disabilities". The TAIS possesses good psychometric properties (Saloviita, 2015;.Monsen et al, 2015))

Data analysis

Data was analysed using the SPSS version 20.0. Descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages was used to summarize the data collected.

RESULTS

Ninety-five (95) school administrators in Ibadan North Local Government were approached to participate in this study out of which 87 (91.6%) gave their consent and fully took part in the study. Public funded schools represented 69.0% of the schools whose administrators participated in the study. The total population of students in all the schools whose administrators were involved in the study was 12,182 out of which only 119 (0.97%) were students with at least one form of disability. Out of the total of 119 students with disability, 36% (n=43) of the students had visual disability which accounted for more than a third of the total number of students with disability. Other information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: frequency distribution of parameters of the schools selected (N=87)

Variables	n	%
Type of school		
Public	60	69
Private individual owned	23	26.4
Private family owned	1	1.1
Private organization owned	3	3.4
Enrolment based on Disability		
Students with disability	119	1.0
Students without disability	12,060	99
Type of Disability		
Hearing	5	4
Seeing or vision	43	35.3
Physical	40	33.3
Intellectual disability	31	27.7

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of the responses of the 87 school administrators to the items on the TAIS. Majority (n=84; 96.6%) of the administrators agreed that children with a disability usually learn best in their special education class. A significant proportion (72.4%, n=63) of the school administrators agreed that it is the right of children with disabilities to be placed in a special classroom, 70.1 % (n=61) agreed that the school's workload should not be increased by compelling them to accept CWD. Other responses is included in Table 2.

Information on reasons for admission of students with disabilities obtained from school administrators is presented in Table 3. Among the 22 administrators whose schools admitted the children with disabilities, half of them indicated that they admitted the CWD because they considered the disabilities of those children to be non-severe while 2(9.4%) participants reported they admitted to avoid being perceived as discriminatory.

Table 2: Frequency Summary of Responses on the TAIS (N=87)

Variables		n	%
Children with disability learn best in their own special education classes when they have specially trained teachers	Agree	3	3.4
	Disagree	84	96.6
The children with disability should be educated in regular classrooms, with the provision of adequate support	Agree	43	49.4
	Disagree	44	50.6
It is the right of a child with disability to be places in a special classroom	Agree	24	27.6
	Disagree	63	72.4
Children with physical disability should be admitted in regular classrooms with adequate support	Agree	41	47.1
	Disagree	46	52.9
The school's workload should not be increased by compelling them to accept children with disability in their classroom	Agree	26	29.9
	Disagree	61	70.1
The best result is achieved if each child with disability is placed in a special education classroom that best suits him/her	Agree	11	12.6
	Disagree	76	87.4
The students with special educational needs should be educated in regular classrooms as much as possible	Agree	51	58.6
	Disagree	36	41.4
Integrating children with disability create extra work for the school in regular classrooms	Agree	13	14.9
	Disagree	74	85.1
A child with disability should be transferred to a special classroom in order not to violate his/her right	Agree	21	24.1
	Disagree	66	75.9
The learning of children with disability can be effectively supported in regular classrooms as well	Agree	38	43.7
	Disagree	49	56.3

Table 3: Frequency distribution for reason for admission and non-admission of CWD in the schools selected (N=87)

Variables	n	%
Reasons for Admission		
Children with disabilities are not different from children without disabilities	1	4.8
Children with disabilities have right to education	1	4.8
The disability can be corrected overtime	1	4.8
The disability is not severe	11	52.4
Parents insisted	1	4.8
To avoid administrators being perceived as discriminatory	2	9.4
To give children with disabilities proper education	1	4.8
To integrate children with disabilities into normal system	2	9.4
We felt children with disabilities can be helped and we do not regret admitting	1	4.8
Reasons for non-admission		
Stigmatization of school by other school owners		
Yes	2	6.5
No	29	93.5
Fear that parents of other children might withdraw their children from the school		
Yes	1	9.1
No	10	90.9
The school is not physically accessible to children with disability		
Yes	7	63.6
No	4	36.4
Children with disability requires special equipment/facilities and training for teachers		
Yes	3	27.3
No	8	72.7
Other reasons		

Other reasons (None has ever come to enroll)	6	22.2
Other reasons (This is not a special school)	21	78.8
Opinion/idea on inclusive education		
Children with disabilities should be admitted into special school	10	62.4
Children with disabilities should not be isolated	3	18.8
Children with disabilities should be helped to learn within the normal school	3	18.8

To calculate and interpret the total attitude score, every responses such as “strongly agree” and “agree” for items 2,4,7,10, “neutral”, “disagree” and “strongly “ for items 1,3,5,6,8 and 9 was assigned 1. The reverse response to these items as listed above was assigned 0. Maximum score obtainable was 10. The total score was obtained and the mean score calculated for each respondent. . A mean score of 7 and above indicates positive attitude while a mean score of below 7 indicates negative attitude. The percentage of the total number of the respondents who had a score of 7 and above was calculated to obtain the overall percentage positive attitude score while the percentage of the respondents who had a score below 7 was calculated to obtain the overall percentage negative attitude score. A higher percentage of the administrators (66.7%; n=58;) had a negative attitude to inclusive education. This is presented in Table 4

Table 4: Summary of the Attitude and Perception of School Administrators on Inclusive Education (N=87)

Variables	%	n
Attitude		
Negative	66.7	58
Positive	33.7	29

DISCUSSION

The majority of the schools where this survey took place were public-funded schools, a pattern that reflects the preponderance of public funded schools in the Local Government Area. The World Health Organization (2011) indicates that about 40% of Africa’s population consists of people with disabilities, including 10-15% of school-age children. It is also reported that school enrolment for the disabled is estimated at no more than 5-10%. However in this present study, CWD constituted a very small proportion (less than one percent) of the students’ population in the schools where this survey took place. This means that an infinitesimal proportion of CWD were being admitted into regular schools in Ibadan North LGA compared to their counterparts without disabilities. Several factors could be responsible for this abysmally low enrolment including poverty, lack of access, challenges of mobility and several others that were outside the scope of this study. The negative attitude and perception towards inclusive education shown by the school administrators as reflected by their responses may have accounted in part for the low enrolment. Another possible contributing factor is the disposition of the school administrators as stated in their responses that their schools are not special schools that could cope with the challenges of the CWD.

The study also showed that children with visual disability accounts for the most enrolled CWD in the schools surveyed and while the least common type of disability among those children was hearing difficulty. This trend may be because visual disability is considered a mild disability that may be easily corrected since most of the children in the schools involved in the study had eye defects that necessitated medicated glasses and not total blindness. Conversely, hearing disability may be considered a severe disability that would hinder the participation of the students in regular schools. The

findings of the present study on pattern of disabilities among those who were enrolled in schools is similar to that reported in a study on dominant disability found in regular classrooms in Ghana where majority also had visual problems (Obeng, 2007), but contrasts with the report by Charles (2011) which showed learning disability as the most dominant disability found in regular classrooms in Ghana. The difference between these two studies may be attributed to the facts that in the study by Charles (2011) learning disability was considered as specific learning difficulties in writing and mathematics while learning disability is described as intellectual disability in this study.

Majority of the school administrators in this study had poor attitude toward inclusive education. They further indicated that children with disabilities should only be admitted into special schools. Their poor attitude and their opinion on the type of schools this group of students should attend could have influenced the low percentage of children with disabilities in the schools where those administrators were surveyed. Majority of the administrators were also of the view that children with disability learn best in their own special education classes where they have specially trained teachers. The participants believed that admitting children with disabilities into regular school would increase the workload of the school. This finding is similar to a study on the attitude of basic school teachers towards inclusive education in Ghana (Charles 2011) and Zimbabwe (Magumise 2020) respectively where the teachers were found to have a negative attitude towards inclusive education. Mayaba (2008) and Chhabra et al (2010) also found that teachers had negative attitude towards inclusive education in South Africa and Botswana respectively. However, this result contradicts the findings of Yazbeck et al (2004) and Manisah et al (2006) who studied attitude of teachers towards inclusive education in The Gambia and Malaysia respectively and reported that the teachers had a positive attitude to inclusive education. The difference in the previous studies and that of this present study may be due to the facts that the participants in the Malaysian and Gambian studies were specially trained teachers who already had a good knowledge of inclusive education.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that the proportion of children with disabilities enrolled into regular schools is very small compared to children without disability. This observed pattern may be due to the negative attitude of the school administrators to inclusion of children with disability in the community where the study was carried out. These findings suggest the need for enlightening programs and reorientation of the preschool school and primary school administrators on the concept of inclusive education. In addition policies on education should include creating the enabling environments that would facilitate uptake of inclusive education in regular schools.

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