

THE PLACE OF PSYCHOLOGY IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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Abstract

This study considered the place of psychology in inclusive education in Nigeria: issues and challenges. The study employed survey research design. A sample of 150 secondary school students from 20 public schools in Jos city was selected using simple random sampling technique from a target population of 2000 students. The primary aim of the study is to examine the place of psychology in inclusive education in Nigeria. An instrument titled "Psychology in Inclusive Education, Issues and Challenges (PIEIC)" was used to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using frequencies and percentages. The study identified some issues in inclusive education to include societal attitude, funding, teacher's preparations and effective parental involvement. Also, benefits of inclusive education are socialization, friendship and employed opportunities. Furthermore, some challenges identified were administrative bottle neck, inadequate funding, manpower development and societal attitude. Recommendations made include provision of enabling laws and employment and that adequate funding should be made available.

Keywords: Place, Psychology, Inclusive Education, Issues, Challenges, Nigeria.

Introduction

Psychology as a discipline is the study of human behaviour and the study is usually based on experimentation and research. Psychologists are concerned with finding out the intellectual functioning of pupils through the use of psychological or intelligence test. Thus, it is usually defined as the scientific study of behaviour. Psychology contributes to mental health, education, business and industry. It also contributes to wellbeing of government and communities.

Inclusive education is the new concept of education in which the disabled children are taught with the normal children in the regular classrooms. It also involves removing barriers in the environment, communication, curriculum, teaching, socialization, and assessment at all levels (Gunthey, 2017). Inclusive education as initiated by UNESCO (1994) wishes to reverse the demands of mainstreaming to favour special needs children. Its intention is to admit not just special needs children but in fact all learners whether or not they have disabilities. Its cardinal principle is that all must benefit from the education and social activities without disparity. Inclusive education as conceived during the Salamanca Conference (UNESCO, 1994) has thus become an international issue with a goal and

philosophy devoid of discrimination. Its philosophy is to accept all school children in the regular school.

The Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE, 2002) defines inclusive education as the education of all children and young people with or without disabilities or difficulties learning together in ordinary pre-school provisions, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support. An inclusive educational system as adopted by Alberta education is one where all students belong and are given equal opportunity to learn, no matter what their differences. This does not mean that all students will be placed in the regular classroom all the time, but that their educational need must be met no matter where they are placed. It is an educational setting where everyone belongs, is accepted and supported by his/her peers and other members of the community in the course of having his/her educational needs met.

The components of inclusive education as stated by Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis and Edelman (1994) in Okuyere and Adams (2003) are:

- i. Heterogeneous grouping: That is, special needs persons with different categories of disability and different degree of loss and some without disability are grouped together.
- ii. A sense of belonging to a group: All students including those with disabilities are considered active members of the class.
- iii. Shared activities with individualized outcomes: The learning objectives for the students are individualized to meet each student's learning need.
- iv. Use of environments frequented by individuals without disabilities: The learning experience takes place in general education classrooms and community work sites.
- iv. A balance educational experience: That is a balance between the academic/functional and social/personal aspects of schooling.

It is clearly shown that schools practicing inclusive education are those with planned educational programme for all children irrespective of their physical, social, intellectual, emotional and linguistic needs.

Other features of inclusive education according to Adeniyi and Egunjobi (2003) include:

- a. Enlarge scope of identification: That an ideal inclusive education programme will identify all educational needs and develop goals and programmes to address them. And that these programmes and goals should be based on regular educational goals.
- b. Programme adjustment/curriculum adjustment: The exclusive class placement has made it difficult to individualized instructions. It also lacks the richness of general education curriculum. According to them, a good feature of inclusive education is individualization. That, it should be noted that inclusive education allows for modification, expansion and adjustment of regular education to meet the needs of all students. It also allows the child to make a choice and have a sense of control rather than being controlled.

- c. Teachers collaboration/team work: That, for inclusive education to be successful, parents, teachers, students, peers and specialists in the education of special needs children must work together in order to address the students' problems.

According to Pambot (2006) and Ozoji (2003) some of the issues that need to be addressed for a successful and fruitful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria are:

- i. Societal attitude;
- ii. Teacher's preparations;
- iii. Funding;
- iv. Role of the special educators and teamwork;
- iv. Support for staff;
- v. Refocus the use of assessment and curriculum adaptation;
- vi. Effective parental involvement;
- vii. Census/statistics of special needs children;
- ix. Facilities and equipment;
- x. Manpower development;

Therefore, for the inclusive education to be successful in Nigeria, the above issues should be looked into.

Mohammed and Musa (2003) and Abang (2005) outlined some benefits of inclusive education to include:

1. Development of individual strengths and gifts.
2. Working on individual goals.
3. Development of friendships.
4. Fostering of school culture of respect and belonging.
5. Increment in self-esteem and confidence.
6. Learning of important academic skills.
7. Equal employment opportunities.
8. Increased parental involvement in education.
9. Academic achievements, and
10. Eradication of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours.

Nigerians value their diverse communities because communities start at school, where all students learn to live alongside peers. They learn, play, grow, and are nurtured together. Inclusive education means ensuring that all students are educated with their peers, have equitable access to learning and achievement and are welcomed, valued and supported in the public school system. It promotes participation, friendship and interaction.

The term 'inclusion' originated from educational research carried out in the USA and has steadily spread throughout the western world. The Salamanca statement and frame work for action on SNE (1994) recognized inclusion not only for children with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND), but also other disadvantaged children, such as those coming from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds. However, it is very important to recognize

that the inclusion of individuals with special education needs and/or disabilities does not simply stop when they leave education, but goes beyond schools and into society in general. Inclusive education is one dimension of a rights-based quality education which emphasizes equity in access and participation, and responds positively to the individual learning needs and competencies of all children. Inclusive education is child-centered and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than the individual child. Together with other sectors and the wider community, it actively works to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics, is supported to meaningfully participate and learn alongside his/her peers, and develop to his/her full potential.

Rationale for inclusion, include that in 1994, the Salamanca statement and frame work for Action on Special Needs Education argued that regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all (UNESCO,1994). Ensuring that different children are able to learn together not only defend their individual rights to access education, but also protect their rights to receive education that is directed to the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, natural and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin (UNICEF, 2012). Studies show that inclusion is more cost effective and academically and socially effective than segregated schooling (UNICEF, 2012). Enabling children to learn together benefits all children, not just those with special needs, and has been linked to better learning outcomes.

Furthermore, while the most effective inclusive education systems and programmes require additional resources, this support is cost-effective and might be less than expected, since according to UNICEF (2012), 80-90% (of children with special educational needs) can be educated with minor adaptations such as teaching strategy training, child-to-child support and environmental adaptations. An inclusive approach therefore promotes an equitable access to education opportunities and strengthens the quality of teaching, which benefits all children, not only the most vulnerable. In this way education systems can ensure that no child is left behind and all children realize their right to education, reaching their full potential in terms of cognitive, emotional, social and creative capacities (EFA, 2005).

School psychologists are educational specialists who are often trained in faculties of education. These professionals have expertise in both mental health and education. The place of psychology in inclusive education cannot be over-emphasized. It provides a variety of services such as learning strategy suggestions, program development, implementation support and problem-solving consultation to teachers, parents, and school staff. Psychology takes steps to prevent problems, and deliver direct services. Furthermore, it educates parents and teachers about teaching strategies and interventions, parenting and discipline methods, and classroom and behaviour management techniques. School psychologists' are dedicated to advocacy, including appropriate educational programs and placements, funding for adequate resources, and education reform. They also have behaviour assessment techniques, counsel parents on the need to bring their children to mainstream of society, and improve social interaction. Also, psychologists create awareness about misconceptions, initiating to establish

special schools in reference to inclusive education and application of behaviour modification techniques (Mitchell, 2015; Mohangi, 2015; Engelbrecht, 2004; Forlin, 2010). Psychology therefore helps learners succeed academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally. It is against this background that this study considered the place of psychology in inclusive education in Nigeria: issues and challenges.

Objectives of the study

This study examined the following:

1. Objectives of inclusive education
2. Components of inclusive education
3. Benefits of inclusive education
4. Issues in inclusive education
5. Challenges in inclusive education in Nigeria.
6. Role of psychology in inclusive education
7. Way forward for inclusive education in Nigeria.

Research Questions

Based on the above objectives, this study poses the following research questions:

1. What are the objectives of inclusive education in Nigeria?
2. What are the benefits of inclusive education?
3. What are the issues in inclusive education?
4. What are the challenges in inclusive education?
5. What are the roles of psychologist in inclusive education in Nigeria?
6. What are the ways forward in inclusive education in Nigeria?

Methodology

The study employed the descriptive survey research design. This is because the study variables are not subjected to manipulation and can be generalized to larger population. The population of the study comprised 2000 secondary school students. A sample of 150 secondary school students from 20 public schools in Jos city was obtained using simple random sampling technique and the process was through Research Advisors (2010). An instrument titled “Questionnaire for the Place of Psychology in Inclusive Education, Issues and Challenges in Nigeria (QPPIEICN)” was designed by the researcher for data collection. The questionnaire was validated by experts in Measurement and Evaluation and Guidance and Counselling from the Department of Educational Foundation University of Jos. The reliability was obtained by using Cronbach alpha which yields 0.78 which was adjusted appropriately for the study. Descriptive statistics of simple percentage and frequency counts were used in analyzing the data. The statistical tools used in data analysis were appropriate considering the nature of the data collection which is on a nominal scale and also descriptive in nature.

Findings

Research Question One: What are the Objectives of Inclusive Education in Nigeria?

Table 1: Percentage Scores of objectives of Inclusive Education in Nigeria

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Provisions made at the World Conference on Special Needs Education	150	145	96.7%
2	Regular school to accommodate the special needs child regardless of his ability	150	148	98.7%
3	For parents to maintain close contacts with disabled children	150	146	97.3%
4	The handicapped child is prepared early to adapt to the realities of life by moving them away from the sheltered environment of the special schools	150	135	90%
5	Parents of moderately handicapped children resent the stigma associated with special schools	150	120	80%
6	To promote a healthy attitude towards disabled individuals since they interact with other members of the community	150	148	98.7%
7	It provides opportunity for people to know that handicapped children are not as useless as they are assumed to be	150	145	96.7%
8	To make the school day experience for the persons with special needs to be as similar as possible to that experienced by typical student's as both progress in regular classrooms	150	147	98%
9	Provision of free, functional qualitative education for all	150	140	93.3%
10	To address disparities in the country's educational sector	150	142	94.7%

Table 1 above shows that 98.7%, of the respondent indicates that regular school should accommodate the special needs child regardless of his ability as an objectives of inclusive education in Nigeria. 98.7 % indicated that the objective of inclusive education is to promote a healthy attitude towards disabled individuals since they interact with other members of the community and to make the school day experience for the persons with special needs to be similar to that of regular classrooms 98%. Others include for parents to maintain close contacts with disabled children 97.3, while the provisions made at the World Conference on special needs education and to provide opportunity for people to know the importance of disabled children was 96.7% respectively.

Research Question Two: What are the Benefits of Inclusive Education in Nigeria?

Table 2: Percentage Scores of Benefits of Inclusive Education

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Avoiding negative effect of low self-esteem	150	140	93.3%
2	Increased self-confidence	150	135	90%
3	Provision of employment opportunities	150	142	94.7%
4	Development of friendship	150	147	98%
5	Reduction of inferiority complex	150	135	90%
6	Acceptance of individual differences	150	145	96.7%
7	Reduction of emotional problems	150	138	92%
8	Reduction of the cost of education	150	140	93.3%
9	Enhanced skill acquisition	150	145	96.7%
10	Important academic skills are learnt	150	147	98%

Table 2 indicates that development of friendship and learning of academic skills with 98% each are the most benefits of inclusive education. Others are acceptance of individual differences with 96.7%, enhancement of skill acquisition with 96.7% and provision of employment opportunities with 94.7% respectively. However, avoiding negative effects of low self-esteem, and reduction of the cost effect of education are with 93.3% each. Others include reduction of emotional problems, 92%, increased self-confidence 90% and reduction of inferiority complex 90%.

Research Question Three: What are the Issues in Inclusive Education in Nigeria?

Table 3: Percentage Scores of Issues in Inclusive Education.

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Societal attitude	150	145	96.7%
2	Funding	150	147	98%
3	Teacher's preparation	150	130	86.7%
4	Role of the special educators	150	141	95%
5	Team work	150	136	90.7%
6	Support for staff	150	143	95.3%
7	Effective parental involvement	150	140	97.3%
8	Facilities	150	147	98%
9	Census of special needs children	150	142	94.7%
10	Curriculum adaptation	150	128	85.3%

Table 3 reveals that the commonest issues in inclusive education are funding and facilities with 98% each. Others include effective parental involvement 97.3%, societal attitude 96.7%, support for staff 95.3% and census of special needs children 94.4%. The least rated by the respondents was curriculum adaptation with 85.3%.

Research Question Four: What are the challenges in Inclusive Education?

Table 4: Percentage Scores of Challenges in Inclusive Education.

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Administrative rigidity	150	145	96.7%
2	Inadequate funding	150	148	98.7%
3	Societal attitude	150	136	90.7%
4	Government attitude	150	146	97.3%
5	Manpower development	150	142	94.7%
6	Inadequate structure	150	141	94%
7	Inflexibility of location	150	138	92%
8	Distribution of educational resources	150	143	95.3%
9	Lack of experienced teachers	150	140	93.3%
10	Lack of individualized lesson plans	150	130	86.7%

Table 4 indicates that the commonest challenge of inclusive education in Nigeria is inadequate funding with 98.7%. Closely rated is government attitude 97.3%, while administrative rigidity 96.7%. Others include distribution of educational resources 95.3%, manpower development 94.7% and inadequate structure in the curriculum 94% respectively. Research Question Five: What are the Roles of Psychologist in Inclusive Education in Nigeria?

Table 5: Percentage Scores of Roles of School Psychologists in Inclusive Education in Nigeria

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Consultation-support others to help students			
	i. Work with parents so that they can assist their children at home and school	150	148	98.7%
	ii. Collaborate with teachers to identify problems and implement solutions	150	145	96.7%
2	Prevention-take steps to prevent problems			
	i. Help school staff to identify early academic skill deficits so they can respond	150	146	97.3%
	ii. Help to create safe, healthy and supportive learning environments.	150	143	95.3%
3	Intervention-deliver direct services			
	i. Develop individual and classroom learning interventions	150	147	98%
	ii. Deliver academic and behavioural interventions	150	141	94%
4	Education-educate parents and teachers about			
	i. Teaching strategies and interventions	150	140	93.3%
	ii. Parenting and discipline methods	150	142	94.7%
5	Advocacy-school psychologists are dedicated to advocacy, including			
	i. Funding for adequate resources	150	138	92%
	ii. Education reform	150	135	90%

Table 5 shows the roles of psychology in inclusive education to include work with parents so that they can assist their children at home and school 98.7%, develop individual and classroom interventions 98% and help school staff to identify early academic skill deficits 97.3%. While collaborate with teachers to identify problems 96.7% and help to create safe, healthy learning environment 95.3%.

Research Question Six: What are the Way Forward in Inclusive Education in Nigeria?

Table 6: Percentage Scores of way Forward in Inclusive Education in Nigeria.

S/No	Items	N	F	%
1	Provision of enabling law	150	146	97.3%
2	Adequate funding should be made available	150	148	98.7%
3	There should be regular census of the special needs children	150	147	98%
4	Negative attitude towards the special needs persons should be changed	150	145	96.7%
5	Employment opportunity should be created for all those special needs persons qualified for the jobs	150	148	98.7%

Table 6 reveals that ways forward for inclusive education include adequate funding with 98.7%, provision of employment opportunities 98.7%, regular census 98% and provision of enabling laws 97.3%. Also change of negative attitude towards the special needs persons 96.7%.

Discussions of Findings

The findings of this study showed that regular school's accommodation of the special needs children, promotion of healthy attitude towards disabled individuals, making the school day experience for the special needs persons and parental maintenance of close contacts with their disabled children among others are the main causes of inclusive education in Nigeria. Other unanimous agreements were the provisions made at the World Conference and provision of opportunity for people to know the importance of the disabled children. The findings agreed with Okyere and Adams (2004), and Adeniyi and Egunjobi (2003) who gave components of inclusive education to include heterogeneous grouping, enlarged scope of identification and curriculum adjustment among others.

The findings further agreed with that of UNESCO (1994) who organized the World Conference on Special Needs Education. The conference agreed on a dynamic new statement on the education of all children with special needs. It also called especially upon all governments to give the highest policy and budgetary policy to improve education so that all children could be included, regardless of their difficulties.

The study also discovered development of friendship learning of academic skills, acceptance of individual differences, enhancement of skill acquisition and increased self-esteem and confidence as the commonest benefits of inclusive education. This is supported by the findings of Mohammed and Musa (2003), and Abang (2005) who identified increased self-

esteem and confidence, academic achievement and provision of employment opportunities as benefits of inclusive education.

The findings further revealed that inadequate funding, administrative rigidity, government attitude and manpower development among others as the challenges facing inclusive education in Nigeria. This is in line with the studies of Mohammed and Musa (2003), and Ozoji (2003) who affirmed that administrative rigidity and government attitude are the major barriers to inclusive education in Nigeria.

Furthermore, the study showed the importance of psychology in inclusive education as working with parents and teachers, development of individual and classroom interventions and creation of safe and healthy learning environment. Others include identification of early academic skill deficits and collaborating with teachers to identify problems. These facts were corroborated by Mitchell (2010), Forlin (2010) and Mahangi (2015) who maintained that psychology contributes to the objectives of inclusive education through individual assessment of learners, consultancy, intervention and training. They further agreed that psychology contributes to promoting learner's physical, mental, emotional and sexual health, assisting learners and young people in being safe from neglect, violence, maltreatment and discrimination.

Conclusion

Inclusive education is a new concept of education in which the special needs children are taught with the normal children in the regular classrooms. It also involves removing barriers in the environment, communication, curriculum, teaching, socialization and assessment at all levels. Inclusive education is child-centered and places the responsibility of adaptation on the education system rather than the individual child. It therefore contributes to the eradication of discriminatory attitudes and behaviours. Thus, further strengthening social cohesion and peace.

The role of psychology in inclusive education cannot overemphasize. This is because it helps to ensure learners are ready for school, attend and participate meaningfully in school, achieve their potential, and are able to engage in decision-making and support their communities and environments, as well as achieve economic wellbeing once they leave school. Furthermore, it's aimed to make a difference to individual learners; and support the teacher in effectively delivering quality education in an inclusive learning setting.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be more massive awareness programmes especially in the rural areas that would sensitize people on the need to send their special need children to school.
 2. Adequate funding should be made available.
 3. There should be an enabling law on the making and implementation of policies.
 4. Regular census of the special needs children should be carried out always.
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5. Employment opportunities should be created for all these special needs persons qualified for the jobs.
6. Negative attitude towards the special need persons should be changed.
7. Psychologists to participate meaningfully in an inclusive schooling system, there will be a need for preparatory work and research that will help to understand some of the dynamics that unintentionally create barriers.
8. There should be increased manpower development and collaboration work.

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