

CHALLENGES AND PREPAREDNESS OF TEACHERS IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL DISTRICT VI AREA OF LAGOS STATE.

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Abstract

This study examined the challenges and preparedness of teachers in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State. A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Fifty teachers were sampled for the study using a purposive sampling technique. One self-designed and validated research instrument titled “Questionnaire on the Challenges and Preparedness of Teachers to Implement Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (QRPTIECID)” was used to collect data for the study. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The results showed that the level of teachers’ preparedness to implement inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools is high. Meanwhile, the factors militating against implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State include: lack of adequately trained inclusive education teachers, insufficient funding for inclusive education, lack of adequate knowledge of inclusion implementation, the inability of teachers to change from their conventional methods of teaching, inadequate infrastructure to support inclusive education, high cost of inclusive education learning materials, lack of adequate preparedness for inclusive education practices, and lack of government intervention on the issue of inclusive education. Hence, it was recommended, among others, that the Lagos State government should allocate more funds to inclusive education to ensure adequate funding for teacher training, infrastructure development, and provision of learning materials. In the same vein, all special education professionals should avail themselves of the opportunities to take professional courses in online platforms like UDEMY, Coursera, LinkedIn, edX, SkillShare, TES Institute, and SpecialEducationResources.com, among others.

Keywords: Challenges; Preparedness; Teachers; Implement; Inclusive Education; Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Introduction

The idea behind inclusive education is that all categories of children should receive a high-quality education that meets their fundamental needs and helps them reach their full potential. Inclusive education fosters a learning atmosphere that is stimulating for all children with and without impairments, which is highly imperative for the success and maximum learning and development of all learners in the classroom. It is worthy of note that over the years, there has been an increase in the number of inclusive classrooms, which give children with disabilities the chance to learn alongside their peers without disabilities (Ahmad & May, 2018; Adibsereshki & Salehpour, 2014). There are 240 million disabled children in the globe, according to UNICEF (UNICEF, 2021). These neurotypical and disabled children share goals and the need for a top-notch education to help them grow and reach their full potential (Hornby & Kauffman, 2021). Special education and inclusive education have evolved over more than 40 years of heated discussion about the best ways to teach children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Goldan, Loreman, & Lambrecht, 2022; Shanjuvigasini, Pitchai, Staten, Devi, 2023). The term "inclusive education" describes a system where children who are neurodiverse and neurotypical attend the same school and share the same classrooms. According to Schwab, Gebhardt, Krammer, and Klecpera (2015), the inclusive education of today creates a learning environment that balances each child's cerebral ability as well as their social and emotional growth. According to UNESCO (2005), inclusive education aims to address the various needs of every student by

promoting student leadership and minimizing exclusion from the educational process. Inclusive education aims to increase knowledge and participation. "Barriers to learning," according to Donald, Lazarus, and Lolwana (2002), refer to factors both internal and external to the learner that hinder that person's ability to advance from school. Concerning diversity and accommodations, inclusive education seeks to ensure that all children, including those with special needs, are free from prejudice and apathy.

At this juncture, it is pertinent to establish that when it comes to inclusive classroom environments, inclusion is broadly understood to mean improving all children's access, involvement, and well-being. This is why Lindqvist and Nilholm (2013) emphasized that each educational leader (teacher) should have a great deal of freedom to plan and create special educational activities that fit the inclusion principle. This implies that the categories of children with intellectual disabilities within the spectrum of inclusive and special education are critical factors. Intellectual disability is defined as "significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning existing concurrently with a deficit in adaptive behaviour and manifested during the developmental period that adversely affects a child's educational performance (American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), 2010). The American Psychiatric Association (2013) asserts that children with intellectual disabilities frequently engage in various activities alongside other children of their age who do not have difficulties, such as play, clay modeling, group dancing, music, and creative art. In addition,

children with intellectual disabilities have fundamental rights to a good life, health, education, employment, and leisure, so they must receive this treatment.

To ensure that all categories of learners learn maximally, teachers' preparation, quality of lesson delivery, and methodological approaches to guiding all categories of learners become highly imperative. This implies that teachers need to work hard and methodically in the teaching and learning process. Omede and Momoh (2016) added that educators must be well-prepared and acquire exceptional inclusive education strategies and abilities. The joint study by Ahmad and May (2018) showed that students with mild learning disabilities were not accompanied by special education teachers, and they were fully taught by mainstream teachers who had never undergone any training on special education. Thomas and Kumar (2020), Omede and Momoh (2016), and Shanjuvigasini, Pitchai, Staten, and Devi (2023) reported that the important challenges faced by teachers in handling students with intellectual disabilities are a lack of competent teachers, insufficient teaching learning resources, lack of proper infrastructural services, discrimination among students, lack of collaboration among parents and teachers, unclear inclusive education policies and attitudinal problems among others. Omede and Momoh (2016) asserted further that the level of preparation of the available intellectual disability teachers was low. This implies the need to take swift, proactive action to remedy this prevailing issue.

In Kenya, a joint study by Gathumbi, Henry, John, and Samson (2015) found that there was a general lack of teacher training on pedagogy and knowledge on how to handle students with special needs. Another study by

Gonzaga, Leonita, Mae, and Aguiro (2024) reported that inadequate resources were identified as significant obstacles that need to be addressed. In the same vein, Osero (2015) found that, among other things, teachers had bad attitudes toward students with disabilities, a lack of understanding about children with intellectual disabilities, and there were excessive workloads that required extra time. Finally, Orodho and Mwangi (2014) reported that the teachers covered in their study were insufficiently trained to manage the curriculum for special education requirements.

Conclusively, the importance of inclusive education, especially educating children with intellectual disabilities, cannot be belittled. Evidence has shown that numerous past studies exist on this issue. However, many of the existing studies were conducted in foreign countries and few in Nigeria, which covered the scope of other states. The reason is that there is no empirical evidence to prove that inclusive education is well implemented with a keen focus on children with intellectual disabilities in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

All children are eligible to have access to a top-notch education that helps to fulfill their basic requirements and enables them to realize their full potential, according to the philosophy of inclusive education. For all children, disabled or not, it creates an engaging learning environment, which is essential to the success and full learning and growth of all students in the classroom. This is why every special education teacher needs to prepare adequately and effectively to teach in an inclusive classroom. However, empirical evidence has shown that teachers face a couple of challenges that are preventing them from

discharging their professional duties. Some of the challenges include a lack of competent teachers, insufficient teaching and learning resources, a lack of proper infrastructural services, a lack of collaboration among parents and teachers, unclear inclusive education policies, and attitudinal problems, among others (Thomas & Kumar, 2020; Omede & Momoh, 2016; Shanjuvigasini, Pitchai, Staten, & Devi, 2023). Also, the level of preparation of teachers sampled in the reviewed studies is low (Omede & Momoh, 2016). Further research shows that more research efforts have been made in foreign scenes, while limited studies exist in Nigeria, especially in Lagos State. Conclusively, none of the accessed studies reported similar challenges within the scope of this study, indicating a huge empirical gap that needs to be addressed. It is against this background that this study examined the challenges and preparedness of teachers in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To examine the level of teachers' preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools;
- ii. To identify the factors militating against the implementation of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of teachers' preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools?

2. What are the factors militating against the implementation of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities?

Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design. This study's population consisted of all special education teachers in inclusive education settings in Educational District VI Area of Lagos State, Nigeria. Special Schools are schools for children with special needs, while inclusive schools are schools for regular and special students. According to the Lagos Eko Project (2023), there are seven (7) inclusive schools and five (5) special schools within the district. Hence, all the inclusive schools were sampled for the study. In each school, a purposive sampling technique was used to select all the special education teachers. Specifically, sixty (60) teachers were initially sampled. However, fifty (50) teachers participated in the study. They were selected based on the criteria that they were all special education professionals and had been teaching in the selected schools for the past five years.

A research instrument was designed by the researcher to collect data for the study. It was titled "Questionnaire on the Challenges and Preparedness of Teachers in Implementing Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities (QRPTIECID)". It was validated by two special education experts and 3 other research experts. The response type and ratings that were used for the instrument include the Renis 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1, Disagree (D) = 2, Agree (A) = 3, and Strongly Agree (SA) = 4. The researcher and two other research assistants collected the data for the study. Descriptive

statistics of frequency count, percentage, mean, data.
and standard deviation were used to analyse the

Results

Answers to the Research Questions

Research Question 1: What is the level of teachers' preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools?

Table 1

The Level of Teachers' Preparedness in Implementing Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Special Schools

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean (\bar{x})	Std.D
I am ready to successfully implement inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools.	5 (10.0)	8 (16.0)	15 (30.0)	22 (44.0)	3.08	1.01
I am ready to embrace and plan inclusive education lesson plans to accommodate children with intellectual challenges.	2 (4.0)	11 (22.0)	16 (32.0)	21 (42.0)	3.12	.90
I am ready to teach children with intellectual challenges in an inclusive classroom.	11 (22.0)	13 (26.0)	13 (36.0)	13 (26.0)	2.56	1.11
Workshops and webinars have well-prepared me for the challenges of teaching children with intellectual disabilities	0 (0.0)	2 (4.0)	22 (44.0)	26 (52.0)	3.38	.58
I am knowledgeable about all the tools and resources that are needed to help children with intellectual disabilities receive an inclusive education optimally.	10 (20.0)	12 (24.0)	28 (56.0)	0 (0.0)	3.30	.80
I am ready to implement the various instructional strategies that can be applied to children with intellectual disabilities in my classroom	16 (32.0)	18 (36.0)	15 (30.0)	1 (2.0)	2.02	.84
I am confident in my ability to adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of children with intellectual disabilities.	15 (30.0)	14 (28.0)	13 (26.0)	8 (16.0)	2.28	1.07
I have received adequate training on inclusive education practices for children with intellectual disabilities.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	21 (42.0)	29 (58.0)	3.38	.50

Weighted average	2.89
N = 50; Key: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Agree, 4 = Strongly Agree	

Decision Value: *Low* = 0.00-2.44, *High* = 2.45-4.00

Note on Decision Value: *Mean values of all the items in the table were added and divided by the number of items in the table. This gave the weighted average mean value of which 4.00 is the maximum value that can be obtained. Any value of the weighted average mean that is between 0.00 and 2.44 was taken to stand for Low, while the one between 2.45 and 4.00 was taken to stand for High*

Table 1 shows the level of teachers’ preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools. It shows that the teachers agreed that: they are ready to successfully implement inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools (\bar{x} = 3.08), ready to embrace and plan inclusive education lesson plans to accommodate children with intellectual challenges (\bar{x} = 3.12), ready to teach children with intellectual challenges in an inclusive classroom (\bar{x} = 2.56), workshops and webinars have well-prepared them for the challenges of teaching children with intellectual disabilities (\bar{x} = 3.38), knowledgeable about all the tools and resources that are needed to help children with intellectual disabilities receive an inclusive education optimally (\bar{x} = 3.30), and received adequate training on inclusive education practices for children with intellectual disabilities (\bar{x} = 3.38). However, they disagreed with the following: I am ready to implement the various instructional strategies that can be applied to children with intellectual disabilities in my classroom (\bar{x} = 2.02), and I am confident in my ability to adapt lesson plans to meet the needs of children with intellectual disabilities (\bar{x} = 2.28). Based on the value of the weighted average (2.89 out of the 4.00 value obtainable), which falls within the decision value for high, it can be inferred that the level of teachers’ preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools is high.

Research Question 2: What are the factors militating against the implementation of inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities?

Table 2

The Factors Militating Against the Implementation of Inclusive Education for Children with Intellectual Disabilities

Items	SD	D	A	SA	Mean (\bar{x})	Std.D	Remark
Lack of adequately trained inclusive education teachers.	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	21 (42.0)	29 (58.0)	3.44	.50	Accepted
Insufficient funding for inclusive education.	0 (0.0)	5 (10.0)	17 (34.0)	28 (56.0)	3.43	.68	Accepted
Lack of adequate knowledge of inclusion implementation.	2 (4.0)	10 (20.0)	16 (32.0)	22 (44.0)	3.16	.89	Accepted
The inability of teachers to change from their conventional methods of teaching	8 (16.0)	17 (34.0)	13 (26.0)	12 (24.0)	2.58	1.03	Accepted
Inadequate infrastructure to support inclusive education.	15 (30.0)	12 (24.0)	13 (26.0)	10 (20.0)	2.56	1.12	Accepted
High cost of inclusive education learning materials	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	20 (40.0)	30 (60.0)	3.40	.50	Accepted
Lack of adequate preparedness for inclusive education practices	2 (4.0)	10 (20.0)	13 (26.0)	25 (50.0)	3.22	.91	Accepted
Lack of government intervention on the issue of inclusive education	0 (0.0)	2 (4.0)	16 (32.0)	32 (64.0)	3.40	.57	Accepted

Decision Value: *Not Accepted* = 0.00-2.44, *Accepted* = 2.45-4.00

Table 2 shows the factors militating against implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State. It shows that the respondents agreed as follows: lack of adequately trained inclusive education teachers (\bar{x} = 3.44), insufficient funding for inclusive education (\bar{x} = 3.43), lack of adequate knowledge of inclusion implementation (\bar{x} = 3.16), the inability of teachers to change from their conventional methods of teaching (\bar{x} = 2.58), inadequate infrastructure to support inclusive education (\bar{x} = 2.56), High cost of

inclusive education learning materials (\bar{x} = 3.40), lack of adequate preparedness for inclusive education practices (\bar{x} = 3.22), and lack of government intervention on the issue of inclusive education (\bar{x} = 3.40). Based on the result from this table and in line with the decision value, it can be inferred that the factors militating against implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State are lack of adequately trained inclusive education teachers, insufficient funding for inclusive education, lack of adequate

knowledge of inclusion implementation, the inability of teachers to change from their conventional methods of teaching, inadequate infrastructure to support inclusive education, high cost of inclusive education learning materials, lack of adequate preparedness for inclusive education practices, and lack of government intervention on the issue of inclusive education.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study showed that the level of teachers' preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in special schools is high. The probable reason for this finding could be attributed to the fact that the teachers covered in this study are special education professionals who have undergone professional training regarding how to effectively teach children with intellectual disabilities. Even though the finding is high, it negates the joint result of the study conducted by Ahmad and May (2018), who found that students with mild learning disabilities were not accompanied by special education teachers, and they were fully taught by mainstream teachers who had never undergone any training on special education. Similarly, the finding contradicts the result of Omede and Momoh (2016), who reported that the level of preparation of the available intellectual disability teachers was low. Again, this finding disagrees with the result of Gathumbi et al. (2015), who found that there was a general lack of teacher training on pedagogy and knowledge on how to handle students with special needs. This implies that the teachers were not prepared, which was also the result of Orodho and Mwangi's (2014) found their joint study that the teachers sampled

in their study were insufficiently trained to manage the curriculum for special education requirements.

This second finding showed that the factors militating against implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities in the Educational District VI Area of Lagos State are lack of adequately trained inclusive education teachers, insufficient funding for inclusive education, lack of adequate knowledge of inclusion implementation, the inability of teachers to change from their conventional methods of teaching, inadequate infrastructure to support inclusive education, high cost of inclusive education learning materials, lack of adequate preparedness for inclusive education practices, and lack of government intervention on the issue of inclusive education. This is finding lend credence to support the finding of Thomas and Kumar (2020), Omede and Momoh (2016), and Shanjuvigasini, Pitchai, Staten, and Devi (2023) who found in their studies that the important challenges faced by teachers in handling students with intellectual disabilities are a lack of competent teachers, insufficient teaching learning resources, lack of proper infrastructural services, discrimination among students, lack of collaboration among parents and teachers, unclear inclusive education policies and attitudinal problems among others. In the same vein, the finding upholds the result of Gonzaga, et al. (2024) that inadequate resources were identified as significant obstacles that need to be addressed.

Implications of the findings

The findings of the study implied that teachers in inclusive schools within the Educational District

VI Area of Lagos State exhibit a high level of preparedness in implementing inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities. This suggests that teachers are prepared to support an inclusive learning environment. However, several factors continue to hinder the full implementation of inclusive education. These include a lack of sufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, and limited government intervention. In light of the above, there is a need to take swift action to address the above factors.

Recommendations

The Lagos State government should allocate more funds to inclusive education to ensure adequate funding for teacher training, infrastructure development, and the provision of learning materials. Training programs organized by the government should be facilitated by special education professors in the Federal College of Education, OYO Special, and professors from other renowned universities with specializations in special and inclusive education, such as the University of Lagos and the University of Ibadan, among others.

In the same vein, all special education professionals should avail themselves of the opportunities to take professional courses on online platforms like UDEMY, Coursera, LinkedIn, edX, SkillShare, TES Institute, and SpecialEducationResources.com, among others. After taking the courses, the teachers must ensure to complete all capstone projects to enable them well well-equipped to cater to the needs of children with intellectual disabilities.

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