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## Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Education in Nigeria

\*Alaku, A., Emmanuel, S., & Madaki, J. D.

Department of Educational Psychology, FCT College of Education Zuba, Abuja

\*Corresponding author email: alherialaku30@gmail.com

### Abstract

Inclusive education as a concept emerged from the Salamanca declaration (UNESCO, 1994) the aim is to educate all children with special needs in the same classroom with their non-disabled counterpart regardless of their disabilities. National policy on education stipulates equal opportunity to education by all citizens. Children with special needs are also entitled to equal opportunity for education and employment. Inclusive education will further bring about better understand among children of all categories in Nigeria (disabled and non-disabled) This paper defines the concepts of inclusive education and persons with special needs. It highlights the forms of inclusive education and how children with special needs are excluded from educational opportunities. Furthermore, the paper identified the problems affecting implementation of inclusive in Nigeria and the strategies of managing inclusive education. The paper recommended that Government should ensure that all funds meant for inclusive education are not diverted to other programmes Government and other relevant stakeholders should provide adequate training to special education teachers and personnel on the strategies of inclusion of learners with special needs in regular classrooms settings, and conclusion was drawn,

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### Introduction

The need to ensure that all learners with special needs are not left behind in the attainment of quality education is one of the emphasis of inclusive education system more. Integrating learners with special needs into the society entails their exposure and unhindered access to quality education. This can only be achieved by ensuring that they are educated using same parameters, environment and materials available. Thus, the government's decision to adopt inclusive education as an ideal educational system for learners with special needs is justified in the space of globalization challenges facing developing countries Nigeria inclusive (Danlami, 2020). Ajuwon (2012) in Abdulkareem (2018) stated that inclusive education is the missing gap in the educational and scientific advancement of learners with disabilities as they will be exposed to equal opportunities with other without disabilities. The idea of inclusive education came in June (1994) when representatives of 92 countries and 25 international organizations organized a world conference on special needs education held in Salamanca. The conference adopted and accepted inclusive education as a right of or educating persons with disabilities, the guiding principles is that all ordinary school should accommodate all children, irrespective of their social color, intellectual, physical, emotional and otherwise. Therefore, education as a tool for change and development has dominated the whole existence of men and very important to national growth and development. The formation of contemporary educational programmers like inclusive education is geared towards national development. The national policy on education (NPE, 2004) stipulated the basis for Nigeria's policy of education in section 5 as:

1. The development of individual into sound and effective citizen.
2. The full integration of the individual into the community.
3. Equalization access for educational opportunity for all citizens.

Inclusive education should not be seen in schools' settings alone but also should provide opportunities for lifelong progress inclusive education should not also been seen as an obligation but as a human right issue (Alheir, 2025).

## Concept of Inclusive Education

The educations of persons with special needs initially were either in special schools or center. Later the idea of integration of children in regular schools was introduced. In the recent times when the introduction of inclusive education came on board the education of persons with disabilities has gone beyond the idea of integration or mainstreaming (Danlami, 2020). The United Nations Organization (UNO) held a crusade for inclusive education for persons with special needs with the purpose that inclusive education is the best way for catering for needs and rights of persons with special needs. The Salamanca declaration (1994) gave a legal backup to inclusive education for person with special needs worldwide. Inclusive education is a system of education that allows every child access to be education in the regular neighborhood school environment irrespective of his/her condition (Alheri, 2025) This means that every individual has right to be educated and treated equally without discrimination. Farrell (1997) described inclusive education as the extent to which a school or community accepts all people as full members of the group and valued them for their contribution which they make. This implies that the community admits that persons with special needs also have something meaningful to contribute to the development of the society. A.O. Nwazuokel (2012) viewed inclusion as normalization of learning conditions for learners with disabilities as that they can learn and develop alongside their able-bodied counterparts in schools and communities.

## Forms of Inclusion

There are three forms of inclusive education namely.

Social inclusion. economic inclusion and educational inclusion.

Social inclusion: social inclusion provides opportunities for every individual to participate fully in the development of the community (Agomoh, 2010) persons with special needs have right to live and contribute meaningfully to the development of their communities, but the major problems faced by persons with special needs is societal attitudes of discrimination and prejudice. This makes it difficult for persons with disabilities to socialize well in the community. Social inclusion will provide equal right to social activities such as right to marry and be married, right to freedom of speech and expressive, sports, business and assuming leadership positions both workplace, communities and at places of worship.

Economic inclusion: the economic status of person makes him respected and accepted by other members of the community. Economic inclusion of person with disabilities involves training them in vocational skills and placement in employment opportunities.

Educational inclusion: Education inclusion can be seen as equalization of educational opportunities for persons with disabilities. This is in line with the Salamanca declaration in 1994 that mandates all schools to accommodate all children regardless of their status. Moreover, educational inclusion means ensuring all students, regardless of their background or abilities, have equal access to quality education within the same learning environment (Danlami, 2020).

## Problems facing the Implementation of Inclusive Education Programme for Children with Special Needs

Full inclusion of children with special needs is not an easy task, despite the benefits of inclusive education, there are several problems responsible for slowing down its implementation in Nigeria. The following are some of the problems that may affect full inclusion of persons with special needs in regular classrooms.

- a. Poor funding of education: the problem of educational development in Nigeria is poor funding, particularly education of those with disabilities due to inadequate funding. The funding and policies for person with special needs are not as effective as that for normal children. Government needs to go beyond paper policies on education of persons with disabilities Ozoji, J. (2003)
- b. Problem of qualified trained teachers: Major and Atteng (2007) quoted by Adebowale, and Makinde, stated that often lack of training and experience needed by the teachers lead to lack of understanding the individual needs and abilities of children with disabilities. These teachers claimed often perceive only the differences or disabilities of student rather than the student's ability to learn and actively participate in classroom activities. When these happened with students with special needs, inclusion can be to their greater disadvantage.
- c. Attitudinal Barriers: There is need of policies that will stress the right to education for children with special needs. Steps must be taken to develop positive behaviors in the society which will enhance better inclusion of children with special needs into the regular classrooms. Attitudes can be changed through advocacy and awareness campaigns (ogunleye 2008).
- d. Environmental problem: accessibility of schools and learning environment, resources and approaches may serve as hindrance to inclusive education. The facilities available such as transport, toilet facilities, and infrastructure. Absence of these facilities can affect inclusion of children with special needs negatively.

- e. Inadequate special education teachers: Inclusive education demands that special education teachers should be working alongside with regular teacher; the duty of the special teacher is remediation of instructions at the same time, presentation of special equipment and materials to special learner such as sign language interpretation, and Braille writing to the blind. But unfortunately special education teachers are not enough to work with both children with special needs or so called normal children.
- f. Legal barriers: where there is no law, there will be no orderliness, Government at all level should make sound policies that will lay foundation for effective inclusion, right from primary school to tertiary level. Law should be in place and enforced where necessary for those who do not abide by these policies.

### **Exclusion of Children with Special Needs from Educational Opportunities**

The declaration of inclusive education by Salamanca 1994 is to ensure adequate inclusion of all children with disabilities that is education for all (EFA). There are still many school age children with disabilities who are not attending schools. Many of them are seen roaming about the street begging for aid all because the regular neighborhood school refuses to admit them due to their status.

Exclusion of children with special needs from educational opportunities is a global issue rooted in societal attitudes, inadequate policies, and lack of resources, leading to significant barriers to their access to quality education. Children with disabilities are often denied the equal educational opportunities. There many factors that can contribute to exclusion children with special needs. they include societal stigma, lack of inclusive schools, poverty socioeconomic barriers, inadequate teacher training, weak policy implementation, and discriminatory practices (Danlami, 2020).

### **Strategies for Implementing Inclusive Education in Nigeria**

Implementation of inclusive education requires adequate preparation, planning and establishment of procedures to reduce the above problems to bearest minimum, the following strategies have to be followed considered.

1. Proper funding should be given serious considerations, without fund, no matter which loadable the policies are on the paper, little or no success would be achieved.
2. Public enlightenment and proper information
3. Government should make sound policies that will lay foundation for effective inclusive right from primary level to tertiary level.
4. Awareness campaigns should be largely embarked upon against attitudinal prejudice towards persons with disabilities.
5. Services should be toiled towards specific needs of an individual.
6. Training and re-training of both regular and special teaches should be done periodically.
7. Adequate care (reinforcement) should to special and regular staff to encourage and motivate them to put more effort.
8. Adequate provision of continuous support services.
9. There should be provision of adequate and effective use of technical equipment needed to enhance effective implementation of special needs education.
10. Production of adequate persons, for there is need for employment and collaboration of special needs education teacher with other supporting persons.

Other strategies for implementing inclusive education in Nigeria according to Iftita et al. (2024) are:

- a) Teacher training: Teachers' training for inclusive education is important to ensure the successful implementation of inclusive education. some benefits of teachers' training are providing a deeper understanding of students; diversity and how to supply their needs and learning styles.
- b) Universal Design for Learning (UDL): Universal design for learning (UDL) constitutes an educational frame designed to ensure that learning is accessible to students with diverse needs and abilities. UDL focuses on providing a learning environment, materials, and activities that are accessible for students with special needs.

### **Conclusion**

Inclusive education is still a pipe dream in Nigeria. While the government pays lip service to it by offering support to advocacies for inclusive education and making provisions for the rights of people with disabilities to be protected; it needs to follow up all these laudable actions with a political will to pursue the achievement of inclusive education in Nigeria. Without any appropriate policies, discrimination in learning will persist. Hence government should formulate and enforce policies to achieve inclusive education. Children with special needs are seen roaming on the streets begging for aids. The reason being most of those persons do not have the opportunity to attend school. The regular neighborhood school cannot accommodate them because the lack man power (special education teachers) infrastructures, facilities, resources and what are view. The federal and state Government

should have followed the acceptance of Salamanca declaration (1994) on inclusive education has mandated all persons with special needs be included in all regular schools in Nigeria. This is the fulfillment of education for all (EFA).

### Recommendations

To make inclusive education work in Nigeria, the following Recommendation are made.

1. Government should ensure that all funds meant for inclusive education are not diverted to other programmes
2. Government and other relevant stakeholders should provide adequate training to special education teachers and personnel
3. Experts in different categories should be involved in planning and budgeting of inclusive education.
4. There is need for legislative to ensure full implementation of inclusive education not paper recognitions.
5. There is need for a strong awareness campaign for attitudinal change towards people with special needs in the society.

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