

Evaluation of Parents and Peers without Special Needs Roles in Sustaining Inclusive Practices in Enugu State, Nigeria

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Abstract. This study evaluated the impact of roles of parents and peers without special needs (PWSN) in sustaining inclusive practices in Enugu state Nigeria: A pilot study report on “Evaluation of inclusive education practices for learners with special needs in primary schools in Enugu state of Nigeria”. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design. Two research questions and one hypothesis guided the study. The population of the study comprised 351 teachers and 278 learners. A questionnaire named (IPPQ) was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Cronbach’s Alpha method yielded a reliability index of 0.80. The research questions were analyzed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation. The study found that (PWSN) to a moderate level, help and support their peers with special needs while mostly it is parents of learners with special needs who help and support inclusion. The study recommended along with others, the need to create awareness for inclusion among parents of learner without special needs.

Keywords: Evaluation; inclusive practices, parents, peers without special needs; and primary schools.

1. Introduction

Evaluation implies assessing whether or not one is doing the right things in order to achieve a stated goal. Evaluation is a systematic collection and analysis of data in order to assess the strength and weakness of programs, policies, and organizations to improve their effectiveness (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NADC, 2011). Evaluation in an education program, in this instance, provides feedback to help guide the implementation of the program, and demonstrates whether or not the program is achieving its goals and objectives. Evaluation is a Science of providing information for decision making, it includes measurement, assessment and testing, it is a process that involves: Information gathering, Information processing, Judgment forming and Decision making.

The history of learners with special needs is not a subject for celebration in view of the inherent violation of human rights as are known today. The Dakar Framework of Action adopted a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 2000, which established the goal to provide every child with primary school education by 2015. It clearly identified

Inclusive Education (IE) as a key strategy for the development of EFA. Inclusive education is a new model in education which advocates that all learners irrespective of any disadvantage, should be educated in the same classroom. All necessary aid to enhance learning are to be provided in the classroom. Nigeria government has formulated policies aimed at giving learners with disabilities adequate education. These policies are expressed in the 2004 National Policy on Education (NPE).

In Enugu state, Inclusive schools emerged as a result of intervention of State Advocacy and Voice Initiative (SAVI) a program of the Department for International Development (DFID) Nigeria (SAVI, 2012). Their efforts in collaboration with an organization designated Inclusive Education Advocacy Partnership culminated into the state government signing a policy on inclusive education in 2014. Furthermore, Inclusive education practices mean the expected ways in which inclusive education is carried out, for this study, in Enugu State. There are components involved in inclusive education practices to ensure that learners with special needs develop skills in many different areas, as well as obtain the same educational rights as their peers, these include: Modification and Accommodation; instructional strategies; assistive technology; infrastructural facilities; collaboration among professionals and para-educators; administrative support; academic qualification; professional qualification in special education; role of peers without special needs, and parents or family support. This study focuses on the last two components: the role of peers without special needs and parents or family support. Inclusive education may not thrive nor succeed in absence of roles played by peers without special needs and the support of parents or family members. Since 2014 when inclusive education practices began in primary schools in Enugu state for learners with special needs, no study is known to the researcher on evaluation of inclusive education practices neither in the state nor in the area of role of peers and parent or family support.

Evaluation means the assessment of all activities being undertaken in a program or project in

other to arrive at stated objectives. It is focused towards decision making. Evaluation is a concept that has emerged as a prominent process of assessing, testing and measuring. Its main objective is Qualitative Improvement. Evaluation implies a critical assessment of educative process and its outcome in the light of the objectives. Evaluation is a process that critically examines a program. It involves collecting and analyzing information about a program's activities, characteristics, and outcomes (WikiEducator (2009). This study employed Stufflebeam's Concept Input, Process and Product evaluation model (CIPP), these are considered within the framework of formative and summative evaluation (Stufflebeam, 2003)

Inclusion on the other hand, is understood generally to mean a move to educate learners with disabilities to the maximum degree possible in regular education setting. The concept of inclusive education has been broadened to encompass not only learners with disabilities, but also all learners who may be disadvantaged (Mitchell 2010). Mitchell, citing Christensen argued that exclusion or segregation of students with special needs is a violation of their human rights and represents an unfair distribution of educational resources. A place or classroom where teaching and learning take place is known as a learning environment. An inclusive learning environment is a school or classroom where learners of every ability level receive teaching in the same place. Parents of both learners with and without disabilities are very important in the inclusion of learners with disabilities in regular education classroom. Childre (2004), states that parents are important allies in the successful inclusion of their children. Salend (2005) outlines some of the strategies that include: (a) the learner's relatives can describe the child in ways that help and are good for the child, by telling what they are skilled at and what they have accomplished while avoiding any negative or harmful descriptions, and (b) families of peers without special needs can help their child learn different and more effective ways of interacting with learners with special needs. Downing and Peckham-Hardin (2007) interviewed parents of students with moderate to severe disabilities, the parents claimed that their children were

"happier, more independent, and more motivated to go to school and participate in class" when included in the general education classroom. Parents expressed concern that learners with moderate to severe disabilities need to observe general education learners as role models for social and academic behaviors. In another study, Peck, Staub, Gallucci, and Schwartz (2004) found that parents of learners without disabilities who were not supportive of inclusion expressed concerns in two areas: (a) the perception that the teacher focused more on the children with disabilities than on the children without disabilities, and (b) behavioral disruptions by the children with disabilities. According to Afolabi (2014), school-family partnership in inclusive education is very limited. The reason for this exclusionary practice of educating learners with disabilities is linked to: parents' negative perception of inclusive practice, socio-cultural and religious beliefs about disabilities.

Role of Peers without Disabilities: The general education setting allows learners with special needs to interact with peers without disabilities and to observe them so that they might further their own development (Grubbs & Niemeyer, 1999). The positive effect of peers without disabilities on learners with any level of disabilities has been the focus of many studies (Downing, 2008). Peers without disabilities can fulfill many roles such as those of tutors, helpers, readers, and guides. They can help by providing role models or by actively guiding learners with special needs to develop coordination, social, and communication skills (Downing & Peckham-Hardin, 2007). Studies suggest peer strategies that can provide support for learners with special needs in the general education setting. Carter and Kennedy (2006) recommend: (a) adapting class activities to facilitate their participation; (b) contributing to the attainment of IEP goals; (c) supporting behavior intervention plans, when appropriate; (d) providing frequent, positive feedback; (e) modeling age-appropriate and contextually relevant communication skills; and (f) facilitating interactions with other learners in the class.

2. Statement of the problem.

Parents of learners with and without special needs are important allies in the successful inclusion of their children. Family members can help improve how learners with special needs are viewed and help others to understand and include them in the classroom. Specific strategies for families of learners with special needs to support their children in general education settings include collaborative problem solving and education plans. On the other hand, Peers without disabilities can fulfill many roles such as those of tutors, helpers, readers, and guides. They can help by providing role models or by actively guiding learners with special needs to develop coordination, social, and communication skills. The interaction of these learners and their peers' without disabilities helps them manage the general education curriculum and develop social skills they might not develop in a less inclusive setting. There are some individuals who have positive attitude towards learners with disabilities in Nigeria, but there is undeniable fact that predominantly, attitude towards learners with disabilities are negative. Enugu state, Nigeria has keyed into global progress in the expansion of access to education to all learners irrespective of status, by allowing learners with disabilities access to regular schools. One wonders, how parents and peers without disabilities view this development. There is also no study carried out on impact of parents and peers without special needs known to the researcher since inclusion started in Enugu state. Against this back drop, the researchers set out to evaluate the impact of parents and peers without disabilities in achieving inclusive learning environment in primary schools in Enugu state.

3. Aims and Objectives of the Study.

The main purpose of the study is to evaluate the impact of roles of parents and peers without special needs in achieving inclusive learning environment in Enugu state, Nigeria. Specifically, the study is designed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To ascertain the kind of support given by parents or families of both learners with and without special needs in the inclusive primary schools in the state, and
- To find out the level of interactions between learners with and without special needs in the inclusive schools.

4. Research Questions.

The following research questions were raised in view of the problem to be investigated in this research:

- What kinds of support does inclusive school receive from parents or families of learners with and without special needs?
- What is the level of interactions between learners with and without special needs in the inclusive schools?

5. Methodology

This research employed descriptive cross-sectional survey design. A descriptive survey design is generally used where the study population is large and getting everyone to be involved in the study will be very difficult to carry out, a representation of the research target audience can be used to represent the entire population. The study was conducted in three inclusive schools, one each from LGAs which represented three zones out of 6 education zones of the state. The population of this study was taken from 3 out of the 6 Education Zones and comprised 351 teacher and 278 learners in 39 inclusive schools in 3 Local Government Areas (LGA) used for the study. Random, purposive

and stratified sampling technique were employed in this study, the names of the 6 education zones in the state were written, folded and placed in a basket, the researcher picked 3 which were used for the study. The researcher used the same technique to select one LGA each from the education zones and also one school each from the selected LGAs. Only Primary 4 to 6 classes were involved due to the possibility of learners being able to read and write in English language. Seven Primary 4 to 6 teachers who have learners with special needs in their classes were chosen for the study. Twenty four (24) learners were used for the study, representing twelve (12) learners each with and without special needs. The 3 local government areas are Obollo represented as Education Zone 1, Agwu as Education Zone 2 and Agbani as education zone 3. Both regular and special educators were included. A questionnaire named (IPPQ) was used to elicit responses from the respondents, which was developed by the researcher, interviews and observation. The instrument was meant for teachers and learners with and without special needs. The content validity and instruments relevance were assessed by experts in Research Measurement and Evaluation, Department of Educational Foundations, Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences and the researcher's supervisor at the University of Jos Nigeria. A trial test was conducted using teachers at Uwani Primary School 1(One) in Enugu South LGA. The reliability of the instruments obtained using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient indexes was 0.78. The data that were obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using mean score, ranking scale and simple percentages.

6. Results

Research Question One: What kind of support does inclusive school receive from both parents of learners with and without special needs?

Table 1: Parental Support in Education of Learners with and without Special Needs

S/N	STATEMENT		SA	A	D	SD	Total 1	MEAN	SD	Rank
1	Provide teaching /learning materials for learners with special needs.	2	2	2	1	7	2.71	1.11		4
2	Support behavior modification of learners with special needs.		2	3	1	1	7	3.29	1.11	1
3	Contribute in fund raising to support provision of infrastructural facilities.		1	1	3	1	7	3.00	1.15	2
4	Support enlightenment campaign for inclusive education.	0	2	3	2	7	2.00	0.82		5
5	Come in from time to time to help in teaching learners with special needs	0	1	4	2	7	2.00	1.00		6
6	Only parents of learners with special needs support the school as it concerns learners with special needs.	1	4	1	1	7	1.86	1.07		7
7	Parents of learners without special needs complain about their children learning in the same classroom as learners with special needs.	1	2	2	2	7	2.9	1.11		3

Source: Field Data, 2018

Table 1 revealed the responses of 7 teachers on supports received from parents of learners with and without special needs in inclusive school. Based on the mean, standard deviation, and ranking, ranked first was that parents supported behavior modification of learners with special needs, secondly, parents contributed in fund raising to support provision of infrastructural facilities. Thirdly ranked was that parents of learners without special needs complained about their children learning in the same classroom as learners with special needs. Fourthly ranked was that parents provided teaching/learning materials for learners with special needs. Fifthly ranked was that parents supported enlightenment campaign for inclusive education. Sixthly ranked was that parents came in from time to time to help in teaching learners with special needs, and lastly ranked was that only parents of learners with special needs supported the school as it concerns learners with special needs. This result showed that mostly parents of learners with special needs supported the inclusive school by creating awareness, emotional support, provision of instructional/learning materials and the least supports came from parents of learners without special needs.

Research Question Two: What was the level of interactions between learners with and without special needs in the inclusive schools?

Table 2 A and B: Level of Interactions between Learners with and without Special Needs in the Inclusive Schools. Research Question One

A: Learners without Special Needs

S/N	STATEMENT	Yes	No	TOTAL
1	Do you play with your class-mate with special need?	6(50.00)	6(50.00)	12(100)
2	Do you help your class-mate with special need to copy note?	8(66.67)	4(33.33)	12(100)
3	Do you help your class-mate with special need to learn?	8(66.67)	4(33.33)	12(100)
4	Do you feel that a learner with special need should be in the same class as you?	5(41.67)	7(58.33)	12(100)
5	Does the class room have big space for learners with special needs?	9(75.00)	3(66.67)	12(100)
6	Do learners with special needs get bullied in the class?	5(41.67)	7(58.33)	12(100)
7	Do learners with special needs get bullied in the school?	4(33.33)	8(66.67)	12(100)
TOTAL		45(53.57)	39(46.43)	84(100)

Source: field data 2018

B: Learners with Special Needs

S/N	STATEMENT	Yes	No	TOTAL
1	Do you play with your classmate?	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	12(100)
2	Do you have a friend in the class?	9(75.0)	3(25.0)	12(100)
3	Do you like the school?	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	12(100)
4	Are you comfortable in the class?	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	12(100)
5	Do you like your teacher?	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	12(100)
6	Does your teacher give you special attention?	10(83.3)	2(16.7)	12(100)
7	The school gives me good opportunity to read and write?	9(75.0)	3(25.0)	12(100)
8	Are you bullied by other learners in the school?	9(75.0)	3(25.0)	12(100)
TOTAL		77(80.2)	23(19.8)	96(100)

Source: Field Data 2018

Table 2 revealed the level of interactions between learners with and without special needs in the inclusive schools. Majority of the learners without special needs agreed with 50% of the responses that they play with their classmate with special needs, while to a moderate level of interaction, learners without special needs in the inclusive schools helped their class-mate with special needs to copy note. Fifty-eight percent (58.33%) of the learners do not feel that a learner with special need should be in the same class with them even though they do not get bullied in the class. Seventy-five (75%) of the learners without special needs agreed that the class room has big space for learners with special needs. This implied that the learners without special needs to a moderate

level interacted with learners with special needs and rendered assistance in copying notes. Although learners with special need were bullied, it was not by majority of the learners without special needs.

7. Discussion

The study reveals that the aim of Enugu state government is to provide access to learners with disabilities to study side by side with their peers without disabilities in an environment free from barriers and discrimination in order to achieve their maximum potential in life. The research revealed that it is mostly parents of learners with special needs who support inclusive education in inclusive schools in Enugu state

this falls in line with findings of Downing and Peckham-Hardin (2007) that parents of students with moderate to severe disabilities claimed that their children were "happier, more independent, and more motivated to go to school and participate in class" when included in the general education classroom.

They also expressed concern that learners with moderate to severe disabilities need to observe general education learners as role models for social and academic behaviors. On the other hand, parents of learners' without special needs aversion to support inclusion may be in line with their fear that teachers may pay less attention to learners without disabilities and fear of disruption of the class by learners with disabilities as was found in a study carried out by Peck, Staub, Gallucci, and Schwartz (2004).

The study also found out that although learners without disabilities help those with disabilities in learning and copying notes, play with them and do not bully them, which falls in line with Downing & Peckham-Hardin, (2007) findings, that Peers without disabilities can fulfill many roles such as those of tutors, helpers, readers, and guides. Nevertheless, they express concern to having to learn in the same class with learners with disabilities, this may be linked to socio-cultural and religious beliefs about disabilities (Afolabi 2014).

8. Recommendations

- Encourage parents of learners without disabilities to be involved through promoting more awareness programs in the community.
- Involve learners with and without disabilities in programs and projects that will diminish cultural and religious negative beliefs about disabilities.

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