EXTENT OF GOVERNMENT'S INVOLVEMENT IN PROMOTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION FOR BASIC EDUCATION DELIVERY IN OWEERI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, IMO STATE.

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent of government's involvement in promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery in Owerri municipality, Imo state. A descriptive survey design was adopted. Three research questions guided the study. All the 142 pre-primary school teachers in the 24 government owned pre-primary schools in Owerri Municipality were used for the study, hence there was no sampling because all the participants were used due to the small number of the population. A 30 item Questionnaire titled "Extent of Government's Involvement in Promoting Inclusive Education for Basic Education Delivery" (EGIPIEBED) was used to collect the data. The instrument was validated by 3 research experts. The data collected were analysed using mean. A gross reliability coefficient of 0.67 was obtained using Cronbach-Alpha method. The major findings of the study were that extent of government's involvement in providing human and material resources for promoting inclusive education is of low extent. Also, the government is lagging behind in rendering some services that are deemed fit for effective inclusive education. Based on the findings, it was recommended that government should endeavour to employ adequate and qualified human resources needed for effective inclusive education. Also government should provide the necessary material resources needed for promoting inclusive education.

Keywords: Education, Inclusive education, Basic education.

Introduction

A new born child is just a helpless being whose growth, development and wellbeing solely depends on his parents and care-givers. There are factors which are essential for the growth and development of the child. Love, belongingness, food, shelter, clothing, education constitute the major factors needed for the growth, development and wellbeing of the child. If a child is denied any of these needs, he will be found wanting in his physical, cognitive, emotional and social development. Love, food, shelter and clothing are the basic needs of man; and they are prerequisite for an individual to thrive and adapt to the society.

Education is the engine that drives the cognitive and intellectual development of man. It is the process of learning and training in order to develop knowledge and to acquire skills. According to Parankimalil (2012), education is a systematic process through which a child or an

adult acquires knowledge, experience, skill and sound attitude which makes an individual civilized, refined, cultured, and educated. Oando and Akinyi (2019), emphasized that education is a fundamental right of the child with or without disability. It is presumed to be the key to a better childhood and a better future for all children. The general objective of education is to equip an individual with appropriate skills, values and knowledge to function effectively and contribute meaningfully to his or her dynamic society. Education is a pivotal tool in the development of a nation, and it is a responsibility of the state and core element of any developmental policy committed to social justice. Hence, it is the sole duty and the responsibility of the government of a nation to provide and promote a sound quality education for its citizens. However, it is so sad to think and much more to say that people with disabilities are provided with little or less of these needs. They seem not to receive sound quality education, neither are they given equal and fair treatment in the society. Masud and Jahirul (2013), observed that there is continuous discrimination towards children with special needs and exclusion of them from schools. This will automatically, result to the questioning of the essence of Education for All (EFA) as proposed by the government, which will ensure that all receive basic education.

Basic education is a veritable tool needed for the advancement of a developing nation like country Nigeria. It is fundamental to human and national development, and the foundation upon which other levels of education are built. It is also an indispensable priority for human and national progress. Every individual is entitled to this basic education, because it is through it that the skills of literacy and numeracy will be inculcated in the individual. Yoloye in Obiunu, (2011) opined that the concept of basic education is not a relatively new concept to the Nigerian education system. The provision of basic education for all citizens, according to Ochoyi and Danladi in Anaduaka and Okafor (2013), has been a global objective which Nigeria like some other nations set out to achieve through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. The need for such intervention scheme in the nation's educational system is borne out of the realization of the role of education in an individual's life and in the promotion of social, political and economic development in every nation. The UBE scheme provides free, Universal and compulsory Basic Education (UBE) to all children regardless of sex, age, ethnic or religious inclinations, language or status. It is also to accommodate comprehensive adult literacy programme. The scheme is therefore designed to ensure adequate and qualitative education that is directed towards the achievement of the nation's

goals and objectives. The goals of the nation according to the National Policy on Education (2014), are the building of; a free and democratic society, a just and egalitarian society, a united, strong and self-reliant nation, a great and dynamic economy and a land full of opportunities for all citizens.

However, the educational activities and practices of the nation Nigeria, are not in tandem with the stated philosophy and goals of the country. Over the years, there has been a gap between educational policies and goal attainment due to inadequate implementation of these policies (Okoroma 2006). The disabled persons in the society barely have the freedom to participate actively in the various activities of human endeavours. They are being downgraded, disparaged and undervalued which adversely affects their self-esteem. One of the goals of the nation is to build a just and an egalitarian society; but the disabled persons are neither given a fair nor just treatment in the society. They barely have the freedom to partake in the political affairs of the nation, they do not have a voice in the society, they are not given a due consideration in promulgation of the laws of the nation, even in the midst of people, they are painfully isolated. They do not have the opportunity to secure a gainful employment in the workforce and labour market. Garuba in Sambo and Gambo (2015), lamented that there is also the usual problem of attitude towards persons with handicap, which in most cases is far from being favourable. The local culture is a great influence on perception of disability and the resulting attitude towards it. Parents and other family members may be ashamed of exposing their children with disabilities, as these children might 'tarnish their image', especially in African societies where the common way of explaining phenomena are unscientific. With these unjust treatment being meted out to the disabled persons in the society, one, doubts the efficacy of one of the nation's goals that says to build bright opportunities for all citizens. The current National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) states that the children with disabilities whose educational needs should be addressed are those with a visual impairment, a hearing impairment, a physical or health impairment, mental retardation, an emotional disturbance, a speech impairment, a learning disability, or multiple handicapping conditions. These disabled persons are subjected to only attend the school known as special school which is specifically established for them by the government. This is the base of the social discrimination which they face in the society. They seem to have been written off that they cannot partake in the regular classroom together with those without disabilities. It was as a result

of the need and urge to shun these discriminatory and segregationally attitudes encountered by the disabled persons in respect to socialization and education that developed the concept of inclusive education.

Inclusive education calls for integration and inclusion despite the disability or impairment. According to Offem, Bosah and Asiegbu (2017), the emergence of inclusive education is the need to respond to the diversity of students in the light of social, justice, equity, and democratic participation and as part of a wider interest in an inclusive society. Inclusive education is an approach that ensures the presence, participation and achievement of all students in education. This may be in formal schools, or in non-formal places of learning, such as extra-curricular clubs and humanitarian camps. It often involves working to change the structures, systems, policies, practices and cultures in schools and other institutions responsible for education, so that they can respond to the diversity of students in their locality. Inclusion emphasizes opportunities for equal participation, but with options for special assistance and facilities as needed, and for differentiation, within a common learning framework. (Sightsavers, 2011). Omede (2016), further explained that inclusion differs from previously held notions of integration and mainstreaming which tended to be concerned principally with disability and special educational needs and implied learners changing or becoming ready for or deserving of accommodation by the mainstream. By contrast, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities.

Inclusive education will help to eradicate discriminatory attitudes meted out to persons with disabilities. Garuba (2003), elaborated that inclusion is based on the assumption that:

a. The original place of the child with special needs is in the regular classroom. Therefore, no condition should be allowed to remove him/her from that environment.
b. All children have the right to learn and play together. Inclusion is thus a fundamental human right. For instance, the Nigerian constitution makes a provision for suitable education for all children.
c. Denying opportunity to children to learn under the same roof with other children, is devaluing and discriminatory.
d. Exclusion is inhuman and indefensible.

Inclusivity is generally promoted worldwide. Taiwo (2015), reported that the international community (represented by various heads of governments from across the world) in 1990 agreed on the need to provide Education for All - EFA (UNESCO, 1990). The EFA declarations made provisions for all children, focusing on various causes of marginalization such as gender, family income (poverty), ethnicity and location. Disability was also mentioned as a source of marginalization, and thus a need for education for children (and adults) with disabilities was identified. Peter in Dreyer (2017), opined that the Dakar Framework for Action adopted a World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 2000, which established the goal to provide every girl and boy with primary school education by 2015. It also clearly identified Inclusive Education as a key strategy for the development of EFA. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action endorsed by 92 governments and 25 international organizations at the World Conference on Special Needs Education, June 1994 in Salamanca, Spain proclaims that every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities, and learning needs and that those with special education needs must have access to regular schools which should accommodate them with a child-centered pedagogy capable of meeting those needs. Ashirun (2010), stated that inclusive education is a system whereby the disabled and non-disabled children are educated together in one classroom with modifications in physical structures, equipment and methods to suit the conditions of diverse special needs learners.

The practice of inclusive education anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. In other words, children with disabilities benefit from learning in a regular classroom, while their peers without disabilities gain from being exposed to children with diverse characteristics, talents and temperaments. Supporters of inclusion use the term to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he/she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the ancillary services to the child, and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). This is a salient aspect of inclusion, and requires a commitment to move essential resources to the child with a disability rather than placing the child in an isolated setting where services are located (Smith in Ajuwon, 2008). Inclusive education is the best way for proper and judicious use of scarce educational human, material and financial resources; ensuring that such resources are properly deployed to give all children equal access to qualitative

functional and effective education where they learn, play and grow together in same classes and school environment.

Statement of the Problem

The discriminatory attitude which is being faced by persons with disability is quite alarming. This really affects them academically, emotionally, socially and psychologically. Education for all is purely disability free. By implication, every individual is expected to have and experience Basic education, entitled to enjoy his or her fundamental human rights and freedom, equal, fair and just treatment in the society. Regrettably, the persons with special needs are left out, left behind and seem to be relegated in the background. They have been subjected to conditions unworthy of human wants. It is against this backdrop that the researcher embarked on this study to actually examine the extent of government's involvement in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery.

Research Questions

The following research questions were generated which guided the study.

1. To what extent are Imo state government involved in providing human resources needed in promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery?
2. To what extent are Imo state government involved in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery?
3. To what extent are Imo state government involved in rendering the services necessary for promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery?

Method

The research adopted a descriptive survey design. Descriptive survey is the design which aims at collecting data and describing in a systematic manner the characteristics, features or facts about a given population (Nworgu 2015). The design was adopted for the study because data was collected from a given population to ascertain Imo state government's involvement in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery. The area of study is Owerri Municipal Council of Imo State The population of the study comprised all the teachers in the government owned pre-primary school in Owerri Municipal Council. There are 142 teachers in the 24 government owned

pre-primary schools. All the 142 teachers were used because the number is not large and could be conveniently used for the study; hence there was no sampling. A 29 item questionnaire developed by the researcher titled "Extent of Government's Involvement in Promoting Inclusive Education for Basic Education Delivery (EGIPIEBED) was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument was trial tested using 40 pre-primary teachers in public primary schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra state. A gross reliability coefficient of 0.67 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha method. This showed that the instrument was reliable. The instrument was validated by three experts. One from Educational Foundations Department, and two in Early Childhood and Primary Education Department from faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. The experts made some corrections which formed the basis for modifying the items. Arithmetic Mean was used as the statistical tool for data analysis. A mean rating that falls within the range of 3.50-4.00,2.50-3.49, 1.50-2.49 and 1.00-1.49 above were taken to be Very High Extent (4), High Extent (3), Low Extent (2), and Very Low Extent (1) respectively. Mean responses above 2.5 were accepted, and those below 2.5 were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1: To what extent is Imo state government involved in providing human resources for Basic education delivery?

Table 1: Mean response on the extent of Imo state government's involvement in providing human resources needed for promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery.

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	DECISION
1.	Special education teachers are sufficient.	2.1	Low extent
2.	Well trained specialists in education are large in numbers.	2.3	Low extent
3.	Qualified care givers are proportional to pupils' ratio.	2.4	Low extent
4.	The administrative staff are pretty good for their daily tasks.	2.6	High extent
5.	Consultants are always seen when needed.	2.2	Low extent
6.	Guidance Counsellors are sufficient in number.	2.5	High extent
7.	Medical Practitioners are always available when need be.	2.1	Low extent
8.	Clinical Psychologist is attached to each school.	1.9	Low extent
9.	Security guards are capable and adequate.	2.7	High extent
10.	Janitors are employed with respect to schools' demands.	2.4	Low extent
	Cluster Mean	**2.3**	**Low Extent**

Table 1 above showed that with mean scores of 2.6; 2.5; and 2.7; government's involvement in providing human resources needed for inclusive education is of high extent. This indicates that the

administrative staff are pretty good for their daily tasks, guidance counsellors are sufficient in number and also security guards are adequate. Whereas with the mean scores of 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.2, 2.1, 1.9, and 2.4, government's involvement in promoting inclusive education is of low extent. This also points out that special education teachers are not sufficient, well trained specialists in education are highly needed, qualified care givers are not proportional to the ratio of the pupils, consultants are not seen when the need arises, medical practitioners are not always available, clinical psychologists are not attached to each school, and the janitors are also not employed with respect to the demands of the school. Government's involvement in providing human resources needed in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of low extent.

Research question 2: To what extent is Imo state government involved in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery?

Table 2: Mean response on the extent of government's involvement in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery.

S/N	ITEMS	$\bar{x}$	DECISION
11.	Finance and funds are always released to schools.	2.2	Low extent
12.	Classrooms are well equipped to suit children's individual learning needs.	2.4	Low extent
13.	Accommodative teaching and learning aids are adequately provided.	2.3	Low extent
14.	Water runs consistently.	2.6	High extent
15.	Transport and good road for accessibility are made available	2.8	High extent
16.	Effective and accommodative furniture are provided for the students.	2.5	High extent
17.	Rehabilitation aids are provided and utilized	2.1	Low extent
18.	Pupils' Individualized Education Plan (IEP) are utilized by the teachers,	2.2	Low extent
19.	ICT tools are available in sufficient quantities.	2,4	Low extent
20.	Accommodative sports and play facilities are not lacking in schools.	2.5	High extent
	Cluster Mean	**2.4**	**Low Extent**

Data in Table 2 above showed that with mean response of 2.6, 2.8, 2.5, and 2.5; government's involvement in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of high extent. This indicates that water runs consistently, there is availability

of transport and good road for accessibility, effective and accommodative furniture are provided for the pupils, also accommodative sports and play facilities are not lacking in schools. Moreover, with the mean response of 2.2, 2.4, 2.3, 2.1, 2.2, and 2.4; government's involvement in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of low extent. This implies that finance and funds are not always released to schools, classrooms are not well equipped to suit children's individual learning needs, accommodative teaching and learning aids are not adequately provided, rehabilitation aids are not well provided and utilized, pupils' individualized education plans are not utilized by the teachers, and ICT tools are not available in sufficient quantities. Government's involvement in providing material resources needed in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of low extent.

Research question 3: To what extent is Imo state government involved in rendering services necessary for promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery?

Table 3: Mean response on the Imo state government's extent of rendering services necessary for promoting inclusive education for Basic education delivery.

S/N	services rendered by the government includes	$\bar{x}$	DECISION
21	Training teachers on inclusive education.	1.7	Low extent
22	Organizing cultural activities and ethos that promotes inclusion.	2.3	Low extent
23	Widening participation to increase educational opportunities for all learners.	2.1	Low extent
24	Organizing conferences and seminars for both parents and teachers.	2.2	Low extent
25	Ensuring consistent remuneration of staff when due.	2.6	High extent
26	Enacting and implementing legislation that promotes inclusion.	1.5	Low extent
27	Providing equal and just opportunities for participation in the social and political affairs of the country.	1.4	Low extent
28	Carrying out thorough and constant supervision to ensure standard and effective teaching method	2.8	High extent
29	Ensuring flexible resourcing system to promote inclusion	2.1	Low extent
Cluster Mean		**2.1**	**Low Extent**

Data in Table 3 above showed that with mean response of 2.6; and 2.8; respectively, government's involvement in the rendering of services needed for promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of high extent. This explains that government ensures the consistent remuneration of staff when due, and also carries out thorough and constant supervision to ensure standard and effective teaching method. More so, with the mean response of 1.7, 2.3, 2.1, 2.2, 1.5,

1.4. 2.1 and 2.4; government's involvement in rendering the services needed in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery is of low extent. This indicates that government rarely train teachers on inclusive education, organize cultural activities and ethos that will promote inclusion, widen participation to increase educational opportunities for all learners, organize conferences and seminars for both parents and teachers. Also, there is poor enactment and implementation of legislation that promotes inclusion, poor provision of equal and just opportunities for participation in social and political affairs of the country. Government hardly ensures flexible resourcing system to promote inclusion, and rarely organizes social and academic activities that will help the pupils to easily bond with one another. Government's involvement in rendering the services needed for promoting inclusive education is of low extent.

Discussion

Findings revealed that the extent of government's involvement in promoting inclusive education for basic education delivery was low extent. This is in line with the study of Ezra (2018), who observed that government seem to have done little in meeting up to solving problems and barriers of inclusive education. With the results obtained, there are still a lot and many more to be done by the government as regards to inclusive education. It is not all about signing treaties and attending world leaders' forum regarding inclusive education, but it entails taking immediate and prompt action from the outcome of the treaties, and forums which will automatically result to full implementation of inclusion.

The findings further revealed that government's involvement in provision of material resources for inclusion was low extent. There is a great loophole in the areas of provision of material resources for inclusive education. Eskay and Oboegbunam (2013), observed that there is lack of adequate provision of materials and finance needed for the running of education and maintenance of education centers. There are, nevertheless, still countries where inclusive education is not considered a priority, or where they are challenged by a shortage of teachers, inadequate resources, oversized classes and a national curriculum that is inflexible and didactic, as they struggle to implement education reform that will enable all learners to access schooling (Kalyanpur, Sharma, Forlin, Guang-xue, & Deppeler, in Forlin 2013). All these are one of the major needs for inclusion. If these are in place, the teachers and the pupils will be so glad to and

motivated to learn with ease and without worries. The government really need to invest more in education, because sound and quality education will help move our country forward.

Findings also revealed that government's extent in rendering the services necessary for inclusion is of low extent. The findings revealed that government is not measuring up to this need. The failure of government in taking up this measure has cost the victims a lot, both the special needs pupils and their parents, the teachers and the normal pupils too are also not left out. This is evident in the words of Adera and Asimeng-Boahene, (2011) which expresses that government's failure to render some services that will promote inclusion has caused students with disabilities to continue to experience exclusion from any form of education in too many regions, which is entrenched within a failure by society to recognize their capabilities and rights. The government being the driver of this nation need to wake up from their slumber, else accident will be inevitable in our nation's journey to development and progress. The necessary services for promoting inclusive education include; creating awareness on organizational culture and ethos that promotes inclusion, widening participation to increase educational opportunities for all learners, organizing conferences and seminars for both parents and teachers, enacting legislation that promotes inclusion, equal, just and fair treatment to all and sundry not minding the disability or impairment, flexible resourcing system to promote inclusion, and organizing social and academic activities that will help the pupils to easily bond with one another.

Conclusion

Everyone is entitled to basic education because education is one of the major aspect human development. Inclusion is a means through which the foundation for peace and unity in the entire nation will be laid. Inclusion will help ensure that everyone is carried along without prejudice, bias nor sentiment. Also, much effort has to be put in place as regards to the implementation of the national philosophy and national policy on education. This will go a great way to the attainment of the educational goals and objective. Inclusion will be very effective if these measures are put in place.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was recommended that

1. The government really need to invest more in education, because sound and quality education will help move our country forward.
2. Imo state government should endeavour to recruit and make available the required human resources needed for inclusive education. These human resources include; special education teachers, well trained specialists in education, qualified care givers, consultants, medical practicioners, clinical psychologists and janitors.
3. Imo state government should provide the material resources needed for promoting inclusive education. The material resources include; funds, well equipped classroom, accommodative teaching and learning aids, rehabilitation aids and ICT tools.
4. Imo state government should also endeavour to checkmate the teachers to ensure that they are really utilizing those resources efficiently and effectively. This can be done by frequently paying visits to schools and monitoring the teachers on how often and effective they utilize the resources.
5. Imo state government should frequently render the required services that will help promote and boost inclusive education. These services include; training teachers on inclusive education, organizing cultural activities and ethos that promote inclusion, widening educational opportunities for participation, organizing conferences and seminars for both parents and teachers, enacting and implementing legislation that promotes inclusion, and organizing social and academic activities that will help the pupils to easily bond together.

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