



Inclusive Education in Tertiary Education in Nigeria: Problems and Way Forward

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Abstract:

Purpose: This paper discussed the problems facing Inclusive Education in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Method: Secondary data were employed to provide empirical facts for the paper. The secondary data were sourced from print materials and online resources.

Finding: The paper concluded that poor funding, poor capacity building, shortage of instructional resources, shortage of personnel with specialization on special needs education, inadequate infrastructure facilities, brain-drain, corruption, inadequate data, poor implementation of inclusive education policies are the problems facing the implementation of inclusive education programme in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Recommendations: The paper recommended that the federal and state government should increase investment in tertiary education. This will help to develop and implement policies and programme of inclusive Education across the various tertiary institutions in the country.

Key words: Inclusive Education, Tertiary institutions.

In Nigeria, inclusive education for all level of education is anchored on the 2013 six edition of the National Policy on Education advocated for access to inclusive education along with integration and special education provision which led to the approval of the National Policy on Inclusive Education in 2017.

Informed by the principle of inclusive education as a human right, the National Policy on Inclusive Education plans to engage relevant actors, raising awareness, building capacity and service delivery with the purpose of providing 'standardized, qualitative and accessible education' for all, regardless of age, nationality, ethnicity, sex or disability. Among its eight strategies, it aims to ensure adequate accessibility, create a safe and appropriate learning environment, improve teacher training, adapt curricula and learning materials and rehabilitate and upgrade special schools to serve as resource centres. It also contains implementation guidelines for federal and state stakeholders for proper planning and monitoring (Educationafri 2021).

The 2017 National Policy on Inclusive Education went further, expanding inclusive education to a wide range of learners, including learners without disabilities, and encouraging closer collaboration between teachers in special schools and those in regular ones. In its strategic action plan, it further outlines details for the creation of appropriate teaching and learning conditions. The poor

implementation of the policy on inclusive education in the tertiary institutions have hampered the development of inclusion education in the tertiary education in Nigeria (Educationafri 2021).

Based on the national policy on education 2013 and 2017 National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria. Inclusive Education have been integrated into the tertiary education in Nigeria. It is expected that all programme and policies in the administration and management of tertiary education in Nigeria must recognize the provision of the act of 2017 National Policy on Inclusive Education

Tertiary education is the education that covers teaching, research and community service provision. (Ogunode and Mcbrown 2022) views tertiary education as an educational system that advances the implementation of teaching programme, research programme and community service programme for the socio-economic and technological development of the country. (Ogunode, Akinjobi and Musa 2022) noted that higher education is an organized educational system designed for global community of people with the aims of carrying out teaching, research and community service activities. (Ogunode, 2020) defined tertiary education as the post-secondary school education designed for the production of manpower. Higher education is an education that awards certificates after the completion of the programme. Higher education is the education that deals with teaching programme, research programme and community service programme. Higher education is the peak of educational institutions and it is an organized educational system that is meant to support the social, economic and political development of the country (Ogunode, 2020). According (Federal Republic of Nigeria national policy on education 2013) observed tertiary education as an education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). For (Adeyemi 2001), higher education is a system which embraces much of the country's research capacity and reproduces majority of the skilled professionals that are required in the labour market.

Tertiary education is an educational system that include all other aspects of education such as inclusive education. Inclusive Education according to (2017 National Policy on Inclusive education endorses the UNESCO) is 'the process of addressing all barriers and providing access to quality education to meet the diverse needs of all learners in the same learning environment.' According to the document, inclusive education addresses vulnerable and marginalized groups, such as learners who are excluded from or within education; living in the streets; involved in child labour; from minority cultures and/or religions, including those speaking minority languages; physically and/or psychologically abused; growing up in economic and/or cultural poverty; with health challenges, including learners affected by HIV or AIDS; or from families who are addicted to or abusing drugs; as well as those with temporary learning challenges, those who have dropped out of school, learners who learn differently – slower or faster – than the average learner, those with impairments/disabilities, learners experiencing barriers to learning caused by factors other than impairments, and learners with social or emotional challenges, including girls who are pregnant or have given birth. Also, (United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO, 2009) defines inclusive education as to mean a process of transforming schools and other centers of learning to accommodate all learners including boys and girls, learners from ethnic and linguistic minorities, rural populations, those infected and affected by HIV and AIDS, those with disabilities and difficulties in learning and as well provide opportunities for all. (Smith 2007) defined inclusion as 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).

For, (Allen and Schwartze 2000), inclusive education is all students attend and are welcome by their neighbourhood schools in the appropriate age, into regular classes and are supported to learn, to

contribute and participate in all aspect of life of the school. Inclusive education is about how we develop and design our schools, classrooms, programmes and activities so that all students learn and participate together. It 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 from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil and educational rights. Full inclusion does not distinguish between special education and general education programmes, instead the school is restructured so that all students learn together. It is a new approach in the provision of services for learners with special needs. It is also the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, of creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all as they provide an effective education for the majority of children. (Ekeh and Oladayo 2010) defines inclusion as a new approach to education with several challenges which behoove the school authorities and teachers to ensure that meaningful and international engagement of regular and students with special needs is done in a way that provides learning opportunities/activities and ensure that the environment is conducive to all students. In addition, (Okoye & Adirika (2019) submits that inclusion should also ensure equal participation of regular and special needs students geared towards progress in the differentiated curriculum which is very essential for success in an inclusive level of education.

There are three two of Inclusive Education at the implementation level. Full and partial inclusion. (Adedokun et al 2014), inclusion may be partial or full. Full inclusion is the integration of all students, even those that require substantial educational and behavioural supports and services to be successful in regular classes and the elimination of segregated special classes. In full inclusion, special education is considered a service not a place and those services are integrated into daily routines and classroom structure, environment, curriculum and strategies and brought to the student instead of removing the student to meet his/her individual needs. Partial inclusion on the other hand represents a situation where students with special needs are educated in regular classes but when there is need for any special service like speech therapy, these students with special needs are pulled out of the regular classroom for these special services. It is therefore imminent that what is in practice now is more of integrated/mainstreaming type of education and not full inclusive education. (Strully et al 1996) asserts that inclusive education is important in the development of Nigerian communities because bringing students with and without special needs together show the younger generation that a diverse group of people make up a community and that no one type of student is better than another. Inclusive education will thus remove barrier to friendship among students with and without special needs, imbining in them the spirit of cooperation and team work which is the essential ingredient germane to community development.

The introduction and implementation of inclusive education in the Nigeria educational system came with a lot of challenges since the various educational institutions were not designed to operate and function with such policies and programme. In the tertiary institutions, the implementation of the inclusive education seem to face some challenges. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the various challenges facing the inclusive education in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Problems Facing Inclusive Education Programme in Tertiary Institutions

In this paper presentation, the following; poor funding, poor capacity building, shortage of instructional resources, shortage of personnel with specialization on special needs education, inadequate infrastructure facilities, brain-drain, corruption, inadequate data to plan, poor implementation of inclusive education policies would be considered as problems facing Inclusive Education in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Poor Funding

Poor funding of tertiary institutions in Nigeria have affected the development of inclusive Education at the tertiary institution level. Inclusive education at the level of tertiary education is capital intensive because more advanced resources are needed to be installed in lecture halls, libraries and

hotels to enable special students and lecturers have access to teaching and learning in the institutions. The poor funding of tertiary institution made it impossible for school administrators to procure needed special needs facilities and install the institutions (Olowonefa, Ogunode, & Ohibime 2022; Ogunode, Ezema & Olugbenga, 2022). (Oladejo and Oladejo 2011) posits that span through inadequacy of educational funding, high cost of educational materials and equipment, lack of specialists and paraprofessionals among others are the problems facing Inclusive Education in Nigeria. Also, (Ogunode 2020) supported the submission when he laments about the poor budgetary allocation for the administration of public higher institutions in Nigeria and concluded that the funding is not adequate to implement the programme and policies for inclusive education. The poor funding of higher institutions in Nigeria is responsible for the poor development of inclusive education according to (Olabis 2015). The factors responsible for inadequate funding of public universities in Nigeria according to (Ogunode, Abubakar & Ajape (2021; Ogunode & Onyekachi, 2021; Ogunode 2020) include lack of political will, corruption, increase in population, inflation, fall in national revenue and poor financial planning. The implications of underfunding of the public universities include; inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of academics staff, poor quality of education, brain-drain and strike action.

Poor Capacity Building

Poor capacity building for implementer of inclusive education in all levels of education especially in the tertiary institutions have militated against development of inclusion education in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. (Isah, 2010) notes that personnel preparation is a critical factor which planners of inclusive project must give adequate attention if the goals of inclusive education are to be realized for the success of inclusive education. There is need for training of personnel to handle an inclusive programme with able and disabled persons such teachers must have a special and collaboration of the teachers with other supporting personnel, there is need to train technicians to handle the special equipment installed in regular schools for the use of exceptional children. It is not just enough for government to embark on massive recruitment of teachers to handle the rise in pupils enrolment as a result of inclusive practices. Inclusion bring together, in the same classroom children with mixed abilities as well as children with disabilities, efforts should be made to bring in teachers who would be able to respond appropriately to the challenges posed by the children in the classroom. Capacity building in support of inclusive education should therefore involve the training of regular teachers to acquire at least basic skills in special need education, in order to make the pre-service training effective, the enrolment figures for students training in special need education should be increased in institutions. (Carter, 2019) observes that most personnel meant for the implementation of inclusive education in the Nigerian educational institutions have not been properly trained to carry out the programme.

Shortage of Instructional Resources

The school system is designed to function with the application and deployment of instructional materials. Instructional materials are very essential to the development of education. Instructional materials are one of the critical components of the educational system. Instructional materials are used in all forms of educational institutions. The resources are influencing the implementation of teaching, research and community service in the various tertiary institutions. In secondary schools, instructional materials are supporting teaching and learning. Teachers in educational institutions teach well with the deployment of instructional materials. Instructional materials serve as a channel between the teacher and the students in delivering instructions. They may also serve as the motivation for the teaching-learning process (Ogunode & Josiah). It is used to get the attention of the students and eliminate boredom. It has been observed that many tertiary institutions seems not to have the instructional resources for special needs students and lecturers adequate. (Okoye, & Adirika 2019) did a study on the challenges of implementing Inclusive Education for Visually Impaired Undergraduates In Nigerian Tertiary Institutions and discovered that most undergraduate students were not provided with perking braille, braille books, software for braille, white cane, guide dog, tapes for lecture taking, talking calculator, typewriter or writing guide, standard accessible web-site, audio taped textbooks, closed circuit or scanner that changes prints to synthesized speech, overheads and these pose myriad challenges for implementation of inclusive education for the visually impaired

students. Also, (Salisbury 2008) and (Meyer 2001) added other challenges like, access to general and specialist support services, best practices for staff development, best practices for teaching and learning, examination and assessment, access to physical resources, physical environment facilities and equipment among others cause variety of challenging situation for visually impaired students. The inadequacy of these instructional resources in tertiary institutions in Nigeria will hampered the development of inclusive education. (Oluremi, 2015) conducted a study and found out that hand railings, hearing aids, instructional materials, Braille and lower toilets were not available in the sample institutions, while the few materials and facilities (type writer, resource rooms, textbooks) available were in poor condition

Shortage of Personnel with Specialization on Special Needs Education

Many academic staff in the various higher institutions in the country are not trained on how to handle the special needs students in their mist. Many lecturers do not consider the special needs students in their classrooms because of lack of knowledge and skills. The inadequate academic staff with professional knowledge and qualifications on special education in the higher institutions is affecting the development of Inclusive education (Olabis 2015). (Okoye & Adirika 2019) did a study and discovered that that visually impaired students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are faced with myriad of educational challenges such as: lack of trained personnel and poor facilities. The understaffing of universities in Nigeria has serious implications for quality instruction and academic productivity in the institutions (Ogunode & Ndayebom, 2022; Ogunode, Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran 2022). (Olabis 2015) laments that many tertiary institutions do not have adequate staff that can handle special needs students in the country while (Ogunode & Okwelogu 2022; Ogunode 2020; NEEDS, 2014, Federal Ministry of Education, 2012) most tertiary institutions in Nigeria are faced shortage of lecturers. Underfunding of the universities, corruptions, brain-drain, poor motivation, unconducive working environment and lack of manpower planning have been identified by (Ogunode 2020) as factors responsible for shortage of lecturers in the respective institutions.

Inadequate Infrastructure Facilities

Majorities of Nigerian higher institutions do not have adequate infrastructure facilities that can support the full implementation of inclusion education in Nigeria. (Ogunode 2020) defined infrastructural facilities as all facilities aiding delivery of academic and non-academic services in educational institutions. Infrastructural facilities include; libraries, laboratories, halls, offices, administrative blocks, hostels, roads facilities, water, electricity, internet etc. (Ojo 2019) observes that most tertiary institutions were built when there was nothing like inclusive education. This makes it difficult for the tertiary institutions to adjust their structure to consider the special need students and lecturers. The school infrastructure and other public building should be designed in cognizance of the handicapped, easy accessibility to classrooms, hostels and offices should be made available with the provision of pavements along the road, flat terrains, and broad corridors for wheel chairs, ramps, elevators and escalators. This gives special needs children opportunities to improve their worth. The more time is spent in regular school the more special needs children achieve academically [Abang, 2003]. Even the available facilities according to (Olabis 2015) are not serving the educational needs of the special needs students. He observed that many public universities in Nigeria do not have adequate lectures halls, laboratories and offices for both students and academic staff designed to accommodate special needs students. Also, (Okoye, & Adirika 2019) did a study and discovered that that visually impaired students in Nigerian tertiary institutions are faced with myriad of educational challenges such as: inadequate facilities and unfriendly environment. (Oluremi, 2015) did a study and discovered that the materials and facilities that were not available some tertiary institutions in Nigeria include a counselling office, resource rooms, lower toilets, hearing aids, instructional materials, Braille typewriters and special textbooks. (Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia 2014); Adeniran 1998; Akinpelu 1999) point out that many students enrolled into the colleges and universities in Nigeria were frustrated out of their programmes or perform poorly because of the nonexistence of support services. The inability of the school management to provide adequate infrastructural facilities that cover inclusive education have affected the administration of the special needs education in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The factors responsible for inadequate

infrastructural facilities in Nigerian public universities according to (Ogunode & Jegede 2021; Ogunode 2020) include; underfunding, increased in students population, corruption, poor infrastructural facilities planning, poor supervision and inflation. The implication of inadequate infrastructural facilities in the Nigerian public universities include; poor quality of education, poor teaching and learning, low productivities, brain-drain and overcrowdings of lecture halls.

Brain-Drain

Few academic staff with professional qualifications and skills in the teaching of special needs students are leaving the country due to poor motivation and unconducive work environment. (Ogunode & Atobauka, 2021; Ogunode 2020) many lecturers and researchers are leaving public universities in Nigeria to other part of African countries and Europe for a better job offer and conducive working environment. The mass movement of academicians from the Nigerian public universities is affecting the development of Inclusive education in the Nigerian higher education. Factors responsible for Brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities according to (Ogunode 2020) include; poor motivation, unconducive working environment, insecurity, underfunding and political interferences. The implication of brain-drain in the Nigerian public universities include; shortage of lecturers, poor quality of education and high student-teacher ratio.

Corruption

Corruption in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria have affected the development of inclusive education in Nigeria. (Ogunode 2020) submits that funds provided for implementation of programme, provision of infrastructural facilities, employment of staff and programme development ended up been looted or diverted into private account. (Punch 2020) submitted that much of the little funds that go into the universities are stolen. In the course of the face-off, the government claimed “the fraud in the universities is amazing and you will be shocked. ICPC did a system check recently, and it was so shocking. In fact, the worst two organizations they mentioned are the Teaching Hospitals and our universities.” In 2018, the Socio-Economic Rights and Accountability Project claimed that there were allegations of corruption in several federal universities relating to the unfair allocation of grades; contract inflation; truncation of staff’s salary on the payroll; employment of unqualified staff; certificate scandal; examination malpractice; sexual harassment; and issuance of results for expelled students to graduate. No effective university administration can take place under corrupt system. (Ogunode, Josiah, & Ajape 2021; Ogunode & Ohunene, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022) identify the reasons for high financial corruption in the public universities in Nigeria to include corrupt school administrators, lecturers and students; weak monitoring and evaluation system; weak trade unions; political interference; weak educational system; and poor accountability system. Also, they identified the implication of financial corruption on the public universities in Nigeria to include: reduction in the volume of funds, inadequate facilities, shortage of staff, and poor quality of university education, poor academic programme accreditation status, strike actions, and bad international image.

Inadequate Data to Plan

Inadequate data on special needs students in every levels of education have affected the planning of Inclusive Education at the tertiary institutions level. There is limited data on special needs students that are presently in the higher institutions across the country and this is affecting the development of Inclusive Education at the tertiary education level. Administration and planning needs data to plan and take decision concerning Inclusive Education programme in public higher institutions. (Olabisi 2015) asserts that there are shortage of data on special needs students in the higher institutions in Nigeria. (Prnigeria, 2016) submits that one of the greatest problems facing the educational system in Nigeria is the problem of accessing reliable and current educational data to plan the education and to design policy and take decision for the development of the sector. The Nigerian educational system lacks accurate and reliable data to realize the objectives of education. The Federal Government is to reinforce her collaboration with the Institute of Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) with a view to addressing the challenges of data collection and analysis in the Education sector in Nigeria according to the Minister of Education. The factors responsible for inadequate data on university education include; poor funding of data

generating agencies in the country, inadequate staff, insecurity, weak institution and poor supervision. (Ogunode, Adah, Audu, Musa 2021) did a study and discovered that inadequate funding, shortage of professional data collection officers, inadequate working materials, institutional corruption, poor capacity development programme of data collection officers, poor methods and approaches used for collecting data, poor supervision and inspection and political influence are the problems hindering effective data collection and distribution in educational institutions.

Poor Implementation of Inclusive Education Policies

There is poor implementation of the policies on inclusion education in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. (Okoye, & Adirika 2019) noted that the tertiary education implementation of inclusive education for the vision impaired appeared a herculean task due to non-provision of the needed facilities such as perking brailler, talking calculator with an earplug, white cane or guide dog for mobility purposes, brailled text books, talking watch, synthesized computer, closed circuit reading system or a scanner that changes prints to synthesized speech, audio taped, text books, tapes for lecture taking over heads and notes or accessing volunteer note takers, typewriter or writing guide, visual aids to be accompanied by description of evacuation for vision impaired from buildings and fire drills. Giving the scenario of what obtains in Nigerian tertiary institutions where some visually impaired students seem to lack friendly environment, inaccessibility to classrooms, challenges of who reads the question papers for them during examinations, who leads them to various classrooms for lectures, teaching practice exercises in facilities without ramps, working on assignments, term papers, research projects among others pose serious academic challenges. Consequently there seem to be inadequate educational provisions for the implementation of inclusive services for the visually impaired undergraduates in Nigeria tertiary institutions. Also, (Ogunode, Solomon, Jegede 2020) points out that inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional lectures, institutional corruption, lack of political will, insecurity challenge, political instability, poor policy formulation, strike actions, weak regulatory agencies and political influence are the challenges that has hindered effective implementation of Universities education policies in Nigeria.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper looked at the problems facing Inclusive Education in Nigeria Tertiary institutions. The paper concluded that poor funding, poor capacity building, shortage of instructional resources, shortage of personnel with specialization on special needs education, inadequate infrastructure facilities, brain-drain, corruption, inadequate data, poor implementation of inclusive education policies as the problems facing the implementation of inclusive education programme in the tertiary institutions in Nigeria. To solve the challenges, the paper recommended: that government should increase investment on tertiary institutions in Nigeria to make it possible for provision of infrastructure facilities, instructional materials, training and retraining of lecturers for easy usage of inclusion education resources, employment of more personnel with qualifications on special needs. The government should ensure timely generation of data on special needs students, increase the salaries of lecturers to prevent brain-drain in the tertiary institutions and anti-corruption agencies should be used to fight corruption in the tertiary institutions across the country.

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