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Inclusive Education and the Development of Nigerian Communities

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Abstract

Education is an important tool in the development of any nation as it makes for upward mobility. This paper examined the growth of our communities in the light of inclusive education. Education is an important social service meant for everybody in the community whether the person is able bodied or suffers some disabilities. It is a right for everybody both young and old to be educated because the purpose is for all to gain access to knowledge, skills and information that will prepare them to contribute to their the development of their communities. In this wise, inclusive education becomes important so that human resources would not be wasted. The paper examined what effect inclusive education would have on the growth of Nigerian communities at large. The population for the study consisted of men and women both educated and illiterates in Ibadan North L.G.A. of Oyo State with sample totaling two hundred and Seventeen (217). The data collected were subjected to simple percentages, frequencies and chi-square analysis. Among the recommendations made was that education should be for all with adequate equipment to cater for children with and without special needs through formal and non-formal education in an attempt to foster the growth of our communities.

Keywords: Community, Community Development, Community Education, Poverty Reduction, Marginalized, Growth

Introduction

Inclusive education as a concept in education is gaining wide publicity by the day. It is becoming very popular in education because inclusion is the most effective means of fighting discriminatory attitudes towards persons with one special need or the other. Inclusive education remains a factor for building strong and self-reliant inclusive communities throughout the country. This is because a well-educated individual will avoid the shame of street begging. Products of inclusive education will be able to make a living and thus will not be nuisance to their communities but assets capable of making their contributions to the development of their communities. It is therefore through inclusive education that effective education can be made to reach majority of the children if not all (UNESCO, 1994). This study aims at examining what impact inclusive education would have on individuals in their communities to the extent that they would

be involved in making living better for themselves. The importance of this study lies in the fact that community members would see individuals within it whether having special needs or not as people capable of solving problems not facing them as individuals but problems facing the community as a whole.

Education and Community Development

The World Declaration on Education For All (EFA) 1990 saw education not only as a social service but a transformative act which is fundamental to social development. For any community to attain a high level of development education cannot be side tracked and this simply calls for universalization and equity of access to education. This is because education is a powerful instrument not only for societal growth but also for personal growth and for liberation of minds from poverty, stagnation and oppression of all forms (Adedokun, 1998). Education is an investment in people and one that is necessary for achieving progress; it is therefore the community's means of nurturing personal growth which culminates into the development of our communities. In this light, inclusive education becomes important for every community member to access education as this will lead to an increase in social and political awareness, heightened aspirations, self-assurance and assertiveness.

The Community Development Challenge Report ([www.col.org /resource/publication 10/11/ 11](http://www.col.org/resource/publication/10/11/11)) sees community development as a set of values and practices, which plays a special role in overcoming poverty while at the same time, fostering democratic values. In this way, community development is portrayed as a democratic practice at the root of which lies:

- a. ultimate control by the people
- b. a substantial degree of freedom by individuals and groups and
- c. widespread citizen participation (Adedokun, 2011)

All these elements are directly or indirectly linked with inclusive education. Inclusive education caters for the educational needs of everybody in the community so as to empower individuals whether with special needs or not to have a say in the development of their communities. Another point of identity in inclusive education and community development lies in the fact that the ultimate aim of inclusive education and community development is the development of human person who becomes resourceful in contributing to national development.

A point to be made clear is the fact that inclusive education protects even the marginalized group. This issue is made clearer by UNESCO (UNESCO,1994) that inclusive education represents the right of all learners to quality education and it meets the basic learning needs as well as enriches lives of the participants it focuses on vulnerable and marginalized groups seeking to develop their potentials.

UNESCO gave the data of those who are excluded from education to be 75 million and that seven out of ten live in Sub-Saharan Africa or South and West Asia, 60% of them are girls living in Arab states and 60% in South and West Asia. (Source UNESCO- www.unesco.org/new/ accessed-23-10-11). Reasons for exclusion are given as poverty, gender inequity, and disability, child labour, speaking a minority language, belonging to an indigenous people and living nomadic and rural lifestyles. The terms used to describe these categories of people are vulnerable and marginalized people. These are people deprived of their rights to education. This implies that for

total growth to be experienced in our communities both rural and urban, inclusive education should be planned in a way that accommodates vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Ms. Irena Bokova, Director General of UNESCO, at the opening of the consultative meeting on “Promoting the right to Quality Education for Roma Children indicated that exclusion and marginalization prevail to different degrees everywhere including the heart of Europe and she explained that “it is not only in Africa that we experience problem on the issue of inclusive, quality education, but also in Europe. The Roma people, one of the Europe’s heart minorities with an estimated population of six million face the great challenge of access to quality education (Education for All not just for developing countries 23-10-11).

Garuba (2003) summed it up when he pointed out that “education cannot be for all until it is received by all. A system that excludes some people cannot be for all and should therefore give way to one that is accommodating of all”. It thus means that a system that serves only a minority of children while denying attention to a majority who need assistance need not prosper in the 21st century (Obani, 2002). Others who are denied education include the street children, children with special needs whose estimate is given at over 650 million people all around the world and with 150 million being children as revealed by the 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report (www.unesco.org). Others who belong to the marginalized groups usually excluded from education include indigenous people an estimate of which is given at 370 million around the world population, the rural people which represents 70% of the world’s population and the world’s child soldiers (where such exist). All these have no access to basic social services including health care and so live in precarious conditions (Soodak and Erwin accessed 22-10-11).

All the above listed groups suffering exclusion belong to the communities of the world. They deserve to live well by not being excluded from social services so as to make them active participants in the world’s socio-economic and political development. Nigeria as a country must therefore ensure that every child whether with special needs or not should be given the right to quality education by putting them in the inclusive schools where they can learn about the societal norms and values and learn how to relate with other community members bearing in mind that a key pillar of education for all is the fundamental principle of non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities (Miles and Ahuja, 2007). Quality education should therefore be made accessible to all without discrimination or exclusion and in doing this; efforts should be made to reach all, for proper development to take place in individuals and communities.

Making education available to all will lead to economic growth because education will enable poor people to develop their skills and enhance productivity thus, providing essential underpinning for economic growth. (What it means to be inclusive www.pbs.org/parent).

From the layman’s point of view, inclusive education as the name suggests is that education that caters for the need of every person whether with or without special needs (UNESCO, 2009). Inclusive education is premised on the fact that if the right to education for all is to be upheld, all learners must have access to quality education that meets basic learning needs and enriches lives because education is not only about making schools available to those who are already able to access them but it is about being proactive in identifying barriers and obstacles learners encounter in attempting to access opportunities for quality education as well as removing those barriers that lead to exclusion (www.unesco.org). In inclusive education setting, students with special needs spend their time with students without special needs. It is of note

that many people are yet to have a firm grasp of the concept of inclusive education as it is often misinterpreted for integration or mainstreaming. Allen and Schwatz (2000) see integration or mainstreaming as being concerned principally with disability and special educational needs. To them, it implies learners, changing or becoming ready for or desiring of accommodation by the mainstream. Mainstreaming or integration appropriates supports and services. This is in opposition to the concept of inclusion which is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. This concept rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with special needs based upon respect for the social, civil and educational rights because inclusion gives students with special needs skill they can use in and out of the classroom.

Inclusion may be partial or full. Full inclusion is the integration of all students, even those that require substantial educational and behavioral 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.

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, imbuing in them the spirit of cooperation and team work (Strully and Strully, 1996) which is the essential ingredient germane to community development.

Inclusive education welcomes diversity among all learners; it removes segregation of any kind from educational practices, caters for the unique needs and learning styles of individuals and provides all students with community membership and greater opportunities for academic and social achievement (<http://nvpie.org/inclusive.html>).

Statement of the Problem

This paper is set to answer the question, will inclusive education help people to participate in the issue of community development with the result that growth is recorded in Nigerian communities?

Research Questions

1. What is the importance of inclusive education?
2. Will inclusive education affect community development?
3. Will there be challenges to teachers in the process of teaching students with and without special needs?
4. Will inclusive education erase discriminatory practices in schools?

Research Hypotheses

1. There is no relationship between inclusive education and community development?
2. There is no impact of inclusive education on discriminatory practices among students with and without special needs
3. There is no challenging relationship between teaching children with and without special needs.

Purpose of the Study

The study is aimed at finding out the impact of inclusive education on the development of Nigerian communities.

Methodology

Descriptive research design was used for the study.

Population

The population consisted of all men and women in Ibadan North Local Government area of Oyo State. The population includes people of various occupations like teachers, civil servants, artisans and traders parents of students and students alike..

Sample and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to choose subjects for the study. The sample consisted of teachers, parents and students in Ibadan North local Government area of Oyo state. The sample was chosen from people of various vocations and professions because they constitute community members and so as to discover whether they are in an understanding of the phrase ‘inclusive education’ and its importance in the development of any given community.

Instrumentation

Questionnaire items tagged ‘Inclusive education for the growth of communities (IEGC) was used to collect information from the subjects of the study.

Table 1: Samples for the study

Teacher	54
Artisan	11
Students	50
Students (post Secondary)	50
Traders	52

Reliability

The questionnaire was pretested on twenty-five respondents (25) at an interval of two weeks and this yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.73 which was deemed fit for the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were subjected to frequency counts and percentages while the hypotheses were subjected to chi-square statistical analysis.

Results and Analysis

Research Question 1: What is the importance of inclusive education?

Table 2: Importance of Inclusive Education.

S/No	Item	SA	A	D	SD
1.	Inclusive education is meant to fight school discriminatory practices	107 49.3%	73 33.7%	32 14.7%	5 2.3%
2.	The aim of inclusive education is to make each and every student feel loved and cared for.	76 35.0%	89 41.0%	18 8.3%	34 15.7%
3.	Inclusive education is the right of all learners to quality education	69 31.8%	104 47.9%	21 9.7%	23 10.6%
4.	Inclusive education provides all students with community membership and greater opportunity for academic and social achievement.	64 29.5%	88 40.6%	30 13.8%	35 16.1%

Table 2 shows that a total of 83.0% agreed that inclusive education are meant to fight school discriminatory practices. A total of 76% indicated that the aim of inclusive education is to make each and every student feel loved and cared for while a total of 24.0% had contrary opinion. 79.7% of the respondents indicated that inclusive education is the right of all learners to quality education, while a total of 90.1% of the respondents agreed that inclusive education provides all students with community membership and greater opportunity for academic and social achievement.

Research Question 2: Will inclusive education give every community member the opportunity to participate in community issue?

Table 3: Inclusive education and participation in community issue

S/No	Items	SA	A	D	SD
1.	With inclusive education, people with special needs will have warm and caring companionship and communication will improve among people with special needs and those without.	74 79.3%	98 45.2%	26 11.98%	19 8.75%
2.	Children without special needs will be less fearful of people who look differently if educated in an inclusive setting thus preparing them for community life	92 42.4%	88 39.6%	26 12.0%	13 6.0%
3.	Participation in community issues must involve every community member whether with special needs or without	63 29.0%	97 44.7%	21 9.7%	36 16.6%
4.	Inclusion welcomes and supports diversity among all learners (a prerequisite for community living and participation)	93 42.9%	59 27.1%	36 16.6%	29 13.4%

As shown on Table 3, a total of 172 respondents believed that inclusive education will make people with special need to be welcome, loved and cared for thus improving the

communication among those with and without special needs while 45 respondents disagreed. A total of 82.0% agreed that students without special needs will be less fearful of those who look differently from them and thus will be more accommodating towards them while a total of 18% had contrary opinion. 73.7% agreed that participation in community issues must involve every community member; disabled or not while 26.3% had contrary view. 70% of the respondents believed that inclusion welcomes and supports diversity among all learners and this is seen as a prerequisite for community development while 30% of the respondents had a contrary view. The above implies that inclusive education will help every community member to participate in community development issues be it those with special needs or those without.

Research Hypothesis 1: There is no relationship between inclusive education and community development.

Table 4: Relationship between inclusive education and community development

Item	SA	A	D	SD	X ² Cal	df	X ² tab	P
Inclusive education prepares all children with or without special needs for the development of communities	101 46.5%	61 28.2%	32 14.7%	23 14.7%	8.75	3	7.815	0.000

As shown above, $X^2_{Cal} = 8.75 > X^2_{tab} = 7.815$ at 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between inclusive education and community development is rejected while the alternative hypothesis that there is significant relationship between inclusive education and community development is upheld.

Research Hypothesis 2: There is no impact of inclusive education on discriminatory practices among students with and without special needs.

Table 5: Impact of inclusive education on discriminatory practices among students with special needs and those without

S/No.	Item	SA	A	D	SD	X ² cal	df	X ² tab	P
1.	Inclusive education is meant to fight school's discriminatory practices	107 49.3	73 33.7	32 14.7	6 14.7				
2.	Inclusive education will pave way for cooperation and friendship among students with and without special needs	92 42.1	68 31.4	32 14.7	25 11.5	18.92	6	12.59	0.000
3.	Inclusive education will help students to look for ways of helping each other.	31 14.3	33 15.2	94 43.3	59 27.2				

On the above table 5, $X^2_{cal} = 18.92 > X^2_{tab} = 12.59$ at 0.05 level of significance hence the rejection of the null hypothesis that inclusive education will not have any impact on discriminatory practices in schools and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that inclusive education will have impact on schools' discriminatory practices.

Hypothesis 3: There is no challenging relationship between teaching children with and without special needs.

Table 6: Challenges of teaching children with or without special needs

Item	SA	A	D	SD	X^2_{cal}	df	X^2_{tab}	P
Teachers can cope with teaching children with and without special needs	82	91	21	23	12.94	3	7.815	0.000

Table 6 shows $X^2_{cal} = 12.94 > X^2_{tab} = 7.815$ at 0.05 level of significance. The above shows that a well-trained teacher will be able to cope with the challenges emanating from teaching with and without special needs.

Discussion

The study revealed that inclusive education is important to the extent that it leads to improved communication and development of social skills among students who have special needs and those without. It is important because it increases positive peer interactions, positive attitudes and perception of people with special needs and it also enhances the social status of people with special needs. This view is supported by Bennet, Delug and Bruns (1997); Sale and Carey (1995); Banergi and Dailey (1995) that when there is inclusion, students with special needs show improvement in self esteem, social skill development and they have positive attitude and perceptions of people around them not only in the schools but later in life in their relationships within their communities. It is discovered that if inclusive education is put into full practice (as opposed to mainstreaming), it will fight schools' discriminatory practices as full inclusion accommodates students with and without special needs and it eliminates special segregation and special classes thus paving way for full community participation by every community member. (<http://www.inclusivebc.org/our-priority-areas/inclusive-educational-what-inclusive-education>). To the extent that education is about giving access to all and not only the privileged few, inclusive education becomes important in making efforts to forge ahead in developing Nigerian communities.

It is discovered that there is a relationship between inclusive education (when put into practice) and community development. It was discovered that inclusive education would make community members understand each other better and this will foster participation in the process of community development. "The essence of community development lies in participation. When people whether with or without special needs are united in strength and purpose, they will be committed to the course of change" (Adedokun, 1998).

In inclusive environment, students with and without special needs are placed side by side thereby encouraging a sense of belonging. This helps in building up a unified and wholesome

community. Bringing these students together goes to show them that a diverse group of people make up a community and that no one person is better than the other (Strully and Strully, 1996). Inclusive classroom facilitates kindness, consideration, empathy and compassion for others thus encouraging students with and without special needs to respect each other's opinion and this will help in contributing to the development of their communities.

It is also discovered that when put into proper practice, inclusive education will have a lot of impact on schools' discriminatory practices because in inclusive education, all students attend and are welcome by their neighbourhood schools and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school. As the mission of education is to empower people with desirable knowledge, skills, attributes and values that will enable them to think critically and act innovatively to bring about changes in their environment and lives, education must be made available to all and in a non discriminatory environment (Commonwealth of learning www.col.org/resource/publication). With inclusive education, a culture of respect and belonging is thus cultivated in all learners.

The study revealed that teachers would not really face much challenges teaching students with and without special needs if only they are prepared for such function. Challenges can be overcome if there is appropriate strategies and rich general education curriculum (<http://nvpie.org/inclusive.html>). Teachers must provide individualize supports and services to all students, make them feel welcome and make sure that their unique needs and learning styles are attended to. When children attend classes that reflect the similarities and differences of people in the real world, they learn to appreciate diversity. Respect and understanding grow when children of differing abilities play and learn together". This can be fostered through the efforts of the untiring and loving teacher (Benefits of Inclusive Education. (<http://www.pbs.org/parents/inclusivecommunities-accessed20-10-11>

It is however discovered that inclusive education has not yet been put into practice in the area under study.

The study discovered that a lot of benefits are embedded in inclusive education. That through inclusive education:

- a. Inclusive education develops individual's strengths and gifts.
- b. Inclusive education fosters a school culture of respect and belonging. It provides opportunities to learn about and accept individual differences, lessening the impact of harassment and bullying.
- c. Inclusive education positively affects both school and community to appreciate diversity and inclusion on a broader level. (www.inclusionbc.org/our-priority-areas/inclusive-education/what-inclusive-education 7/5/13)

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

Based on the discussed importance of inclusive education government should make sure that inclusive education should not be a matter of policy alone but put into actual practice.

Necessary facilities should be put in place for the take off of inclusive educational practice and classroom structure well designed should be made available to students with special needs. Teachers should teach students in an inclusive classroom of the necessity for friendship and the

teacher should not discriminate against any student but with his /her professional methods, carry all of them along irrespective of their individual differences.

Parents should realize that their children are important asset to the development of their communities and the nation at large, so they must help their children with special needs to develop friendships with classmates and other neighbourhood children.

Community members should not downplay the roles of students with special needs in the process of community growth. There are cases of people with special needs attaining the post of commissioners, principals of schools and holding many important posts. Every community member should see people with special needs as being able and so encouragement should be given to them through inclusive education.

Children without special needs should be taught by both parents at home and teachers in the school to see those with special needs as their friends. This will help them in coping with their studies and help these people see themselves as being acceptable in the community.

Teachers should put to use full ethics of their profession when teaching in inclusive schools. They should display the knowledge of psychology and use appropriate methods that would help all the students learn.

Teachers should learn to be kind, patient but firm with all groups of learners. They should discipline them when there is need for it and they should view all learners as being equal in class and so none should be pitied.

The teacher should put to use the principle of individual differences in the course of teaching so that each person ends up learning something worthwhile because inclusive classrooms are places where children with or without special needs are expected to learn to read, write and do mathematics and with this they can become functional in their communities and subsequently self-reliant. When teachers are professionally prepared for their job, challenges in the course of teaching will be surmounted.

Every community member should join hands with the government to spread the good news of inclusive education to the nooks and crannies of this country because when everyone is educated, they will contribute to the development of the nation.

Special designed materials, technologies and equipment that will help everyone learn should be provided in the inclusive classroom. (Inclusive education: www.inclusiveeducation.uk/org 18-10-11).

Adult and non-formal education should be strengthened to accommodate inclusive education since it is not everyone that has the opportunity of being educated in a formal setting.

People should be sensitized about inclusive education through community education so that people will be made aware that the ultimate goal of inclusive education is for personal, group and the development of the nation at large.

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