

The Influence of Safety School Environment on Inclusive Education for Sustainable Development.

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ABSTRACT: This study investigated the influence of safety school environment on inclusive education for sustainable development. Students and teachers of Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education were the main population for the study while the sample for the study comprised only 500 respondents randomly selected from students and teachers from the seven schools in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri. Four research questions guided the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled school safety and inclusive education questionnaire (SSIEQ). The instrument was validated by experts in special education, measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-re-test method of an interval of two weeks using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Statistics; a coefficient "r" of 0.87 was obtained. Data collected were analyzed using mean statistics. It was found out that, safety school environment promote inclusive education. It was also found, that use of diversified teaching methods making meaningful and interesting and encouraging interaction among students are some classroom practices that can promote inclusive education. It was also agreed that inclusive education promotes sustainable development. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made that school administrators and teachers should make sure that school environments are free and safe from violence to bring about high level of enrolment and retention in schools. Teachers should also adopt different forms of classroom practices such as diversified teaching methods, use of reinforcement, thus, making lessons meaningful and interesting.

KEYWORDS: safety, school environment, inclusive education, sustainable development.

I. INTRODUCTION

Education is the anchor for national development and sustainability, and any nation working toward sustainable development must recognize the equality of education for all citizens. It therefore becomes imperative that every member of the society notwithstanding the physical condition should be given equal opportunity to benefit maximally from the education system. The development of the concept of safety and security education in the context of sustainability is very important from both a scientific and practical point of view due to the fact that schools play a key role in society constituting the basic source of education for future generations of citizens, shaping awareness, competence and skills of future generations and thus creating a society that is able to analyse the opportunities and threats arising from the changing economic, social, environmental, technological, political and legal environment (Wysokinska-Senkus 2020). However in Nigeria, the case is different because it is clear that many children are denied rights for education, even after the UN declaration on the eradication of extreme poverty through equal education for all citizens. The right to education is clearly defined in international policy and human rights frameworks. For instance, the UN General Assembly in 2000 promulgated the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) which Emphasized Education for All (EFA). Countries all over the world emphasized the need for education for all citizens no matter the state of disability. As such, a number of international conventions including the Sahamanca statement special need education, UN convention on the right of the child, the UN international convention on the right of a person with disability 2016 come into play.

Despite the above conventions and international declarations, it has been found that Nigeria has the most out-of-school children world-wide about 8.7 million who are excluded from the school system because of poverty, gender, disability, geography, language and nomadism (UNESCO, 2005). In Nigeria, teaching is not differentiated for children's diverse learning needs, no consideration for disabled children, for instance in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education no special consideration is given to the blind, the hard of hearing, the albinos and the cripples. They are allowed to compete with the normal students in tests, assignments and examinations. Communities and teachers are not helping matters; instead they worsen their problems. More so,

children in different part of Nigeria are still identified as vulnerable, disadvantaged and disabled. They faced the barriers to learning and participation which deprived them from going to school like any other normal child.

In most cases, the school environments are not safe (UNESCO, 2017). For instance, some experience punishment of all kinds, sexual harassment, conflict and inferiority complex. With this, learning will never go down well for them. At this juncture, sustainable development remains the modern parameter for measuring development. Thus to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria, there is need for a system education, where all citizens regardless of sex, socio-economic status, cultural background, ethnicity, as well as disabilities will be favourably considered. Inclusive education at this point, becomes an important instrument in the hand of every nation to make sure that those children regarded as vulnerable, disable and disadvantaged, are given equal education with their age mates in education environment. According to McGeown (2017) quality inclusive education is at the heart of sustainable development goals.

Inclusive education according to Uchem, Ngwa and Asogwa (2014) is an innovative approach to education by which all children, youths and adults on the global have equal opportunity to learn comfortably regardless their intellectual and physical ability or disability and irrespective of their political, ethnic and socio-economic background. Inclusive education is related to the participation of the disabled or those with special education needs in the mainstream schools (UNESCO, 2005). Inclusive education is when students, regardless of any challenges they may have, are placed in age appropriate for general education classes that are their own neighbourhood schools to receive high quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan & Valenti, 2010; Alquiranini & Gut, 2012). UNESCO (2005) also described inclusive education as a process intended to respond to students' diversity by increasing their participation and reducing exclusion within and from education.

Inclusive education has been described by UNESCO (2000) as a key to Sustainable Development Goal 4; Education 2030 Agenda is also a window of opportunity for inclusive education. This according to UNESCO will help take care of human rights and common good, pay attention for groups with special needs, take care of exclusive and marginalization. According to Inclusive Design Research Centre (2015), quality inclusive education is a fundamental part of the new sustainable development Goal Agenda where children receive quality basic education and most vulnerable are taken care of. This could promote sustainable development in the country. Successful inclusive education happens by accepting, understanding, and attending to students' difference and diversity, which include: the physical, cognitive, academic, social and emotional spheres of live (Alquiranini & Gut, 2012). The driving principle is to make all students feel welcomed, appropriately challenged, and supported in their efforts. There is a definite need for teachers to be supportive in implementing inclusive classroom. Students' found that most teachers had either neutral or negative attitude about inclusive education (De Boer, Pijl & Minnaert, 2011). According to them, it was found that most of the teachers were not knowledgeable, competent or confident about how to educate. Savage & Erten (2015), stated that to be affective, and supportive, teachers need an understanding of best practices in teaching adapted instruction for students with disability (SWD) Morningstar, Shogren, Lee & Born (2015), suggested the use of variety of instructional formats ie starting with whole group instruction and transition to flexible groupings which could be small groups and pared learning. They also valued the use of interactive boards to highly engage students in the lesson. Alquiranini & Gut (2012), suggests the application of universal design for learning. This involves multiple ways of representing content to students and for students to represent learning back. Such methods as modelling, images, objectives, manipulative, graphic organizers oral, written responses, and technology.

Promoting inclusive education is necessary if we must achieve sustainable national development. To promote inclusive classroom, Kristin (2016) identified 15 strategies for inclusive that students with special and exceptional needs to be placed in inclusive learning environment. Giving them preferential seating by keeping them next to the peer they feel comfortable with, seating them away from distractions such as windows or doors is quite helpful. Adapting universal design for learning an approach to curriculum planning and mapping that makes learning engaging and accessible to wider range of learners with different strengths and needs; use of multiple modalities in teaching and allowing students to respond to learning with a variety of assessment tools. Engaging students in collaborative planning and teaching Developing strong classroom management and control such as posting daily schedules, displaying classroom rules and expectations encouraging peer to peer instruction and leadership checking in with students which at work (Kristin, 2016). Kahlleen (2018) also identified five ways of promoting inclusive classroom as: Promoting positive classroom climate, embracing students' diversity, increasing our cultural competence, encourage student interactions and fostering a community of learners within the classes. Ajuwom 2012 was also in support the above. Tim (2007) states that for inclusive education to be successful, educators need to work toward an educational climate and set of practices

which elude the adoption of positive attitude, supportive policy and leadership, school and classroom processes grounded in research-based practice, flexible curriculum and pedagogy; community involvement, meaningful reflection, necessary training and resources.

According to Uchem Ngwa & Asogwa, (2014), inclusive education is the sure means of attaining optimum integral development and sustainable development in Africa the present researchers, argued that the ambition goals on education should be essential to the success of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS) and therefore should address not only the need for universal education but also substantially to improve overall efficiency of education through a quality turn in framing education to provide sustainable well-being for all section. Sian, Won, Robert and Paul (2017) noted that quality learning for sustainability can have a transformative effect in terms of promoting empowerment, leadership and wise investments in individual and collective lives. It can also regenerate the local economics of cities, making them more inclusive, safe, reliant and sustainable through inclusive education, cities can move towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGS).

At this juncture, it is important to note that if the school is not safe, both students and teachers will be in trouble. If the students do not feel safe inside the school, there is serious consequence to the school and the staff. School-environment becomes unsafe as a result of vandalism, cultism conflict among peers, abusive words, insurgencies kidnapping rapes robbery and unconducive classroom. If the school does not convey a feeling of welcome to the students, young people also respond accordingly knowing full well that they are not safe. They will avoid school and prefer to stay in protective bubble- Mayer.

Safety school environment promotes and provide conducive environment in which all students and staff feel safe. In a safe and welcoming environment, an academically or emotionally troubled student needs quick attention, as much as the physically ill (Silver Rocio & CAMPOS 2018) student can also be made safe by preventing and stopping physical aggression. Putting in place strict rules and regulations showed that the school should respond immediately to aggressive situations because a child's perception of time is unique. When there is school discipline, it addresses school wide safety, classroom safety and self discipline among students and teachers (David, George, Jeffrey & Walter 2010). Developing and promoting active travel route to schools will help to achieve safe environment. According to active travel Newsletter insert (2018) active travel route with designated pick up/drops off points are safe and accessible routes that children and families can use to safely walk and ride along to get to and come from school.

Statement of Problem : Exclusion is assumed to be inhuman and indefensible. It is not out of point to say that before a nation can talk about inclusion, exclusion has existed. In Nigeria, not all children seem to be included in the education system. Though Education for All (EFA) has been in existence for long, yet many children are not given the opportunity to education, even when it is their right to be educated. Many children are out of school, as some schools seem not to be safe and conducive for the physically challenged and disabled persons. Many practices in the school system are assumed to portray segregation and manipulation. This segregation is assumed to stem from the teachers, students and environmental factors that do not recognize these differences in individual students. The problem is that though inclusive education has been at the central point of the 21st century issues, scholars have not been able to consider the extent to which inclusive education can be promoted through safety school environment to bring about sustainable development in Nigeria. This is the gap these researchers tried to fill. To investigate the extent to which inclusive education can be promoted through safety school environment to bring about sustainable development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Purpose of the Study : The main purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which school safety environment can promote inclusive education can be promoted for sustainable development among undergraduates in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri.

Specifically, the Study tried to:

1. Investigate the extent to which safety school environment can promote inclusive education in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education.
2. Examine the various forms of classroom practices that can promote inclusive education in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education.
3. Ascertain the extent to which inclusive education can promote sustainable development in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
4. Identify factors that militate against inclusive education in Nigeria.

Research Questions : The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does safety school environment promote inclusive education in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education?
2. What are the various forms of classroom practices that can promote improve inclusive education in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education?
3. What are the various factors that militate against inclusive education in Nigerian tertiary institutions?
4. To what extent does inclusive education promote sustainable development in Nigeria?
- 5.

II. METHODOLOGY

The researchers adopted a descriptive survey design because it involves the assessment of public opinion on the influence of safety school environment on inclusive education for sustainable development. There are seven Schools in Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education (AIFCE); giving a total population of 4,505 students and teachers at Alvan as at the time of study 2018/2019 session and 780 academic staff. The sample for the study comprised only 500 respondents randomly selected from the students and teachers in Alvan. These include the special education teachers. The researchers decided to carry out this research using AIFCE because they have special students who learn together with the normal students. Four research questions guided the study.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled School Safety and Inclusive Education Questionnaire (SSIEQ) with a four point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA) Agree (A) Disagree (D) Strongly Disagree (SD) and also of Very Large Extent (VLE) Large Extent (LE) Small Extent(SE) and Very Small Extent (VSE). The decision point was 2.50. This implies that any item that scores from 2.50 and above was accepted while any item that scores below 2.50 was rejected. Instrument was made up of six sections. Section ‘A’ takes care of the demographic data; section B elicits information the possible ways of promoting inclusive education in Nigeria tertiary institution. Section C elicits information on forms of classroom practices that can promote inclusive education. Section D elicits information on the extent to which safety school environment can promote inclusive education. Section ‘E’ was on the extent to when inclusive education can promote sustainable development and section F was on the factors militating against inclusive education in tertiary institutions.

The instrument was validated by experts in special education and measurement and evaluation all in AIFCE Owerri and the reliability of the instrument was tested using test- retest method of an interval of two (2) weeks. The instrument SSIEQ was first given to fifty students in Imo state University who did not participate in the real study. The two sets of scores obtained were correlated using Pearson’s Product Moment Correlation Statistics and a coefficient ‘r’ of 0.87 was obtained. Data collected was analysed using mean statistics.

III. RESULTS

Research Question1: In what various ways can safety school environment promote inclusive education?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the respondents on the possible ways of promoting inclusive education through safety school environment.

S/N	Items	No of Resp.	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
1.	Safety school environment provides a learning environment in which students and teachers feel safe and secured.	500	320	160	18	2	3.6	Agreed
2.	In a safe school environment, emotionally and physically handicapped students are given quick attention.		1280	480	36	4		Agreed
			320	90	3	2	3.8	
			620	270	6	4		
3.	When the school environment is safe it reduces fear, tension anxiety and stress among students and teachers.		450	47	3		3.9	Agreed
			1800	141	6			
4.	Safety school environment prevents physical aggression and indiscipline among students.		400	98	1	1	3.8	Agreed
			1600	294	2	1		
5.	When access routes to school are safe, inclusive education can be promoted.		430	68	2		3.9	Agreed
			1720	204	4			
Grand mean							3.8	Agreed

Results on table1 revealed a grand mean of 3.8, which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that the respondents agreed that safety school environment provides a conducive atmosphere where teachers and students feel safe and secured physically and emotionally unstable children are properly given attention and it prevents indiscipline and aggressive behaviour in Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What forms of classroom practices can be used to promote inclusive education in higher institutions?

Table 2: Mean ratings of the respondents on classroom practices that can be used to promote inclusive education.

S/N	Items	No of Resp.	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
	The following are classroom practices that can be used to promote inclusive education:							
1.	Use of diversified teaching methods in teaching.	500	420	231	6		3.8	Agreed
2.	Use of reinforcement/interactive chalkboard to properly engage students in active learning.		360	100	37	3	3.6	Agreed
3.	Considering the differences among individuals by giving preferential treatment to the vulnerable.		300	192	6	2	3.6	Agreed
4.	Making learning more interesting and meaningful can promote inclusive classroom.		482	6	1	1	3.9	Agreed
5.	Providing conducive classroom environment with good sitting arrangement, good ventilation and moderate light.		490	8	2		4.1	Agreed
6.	Encouraging students/teachers interactions could improve classroom practices.		385	13	2		3.2	Agreed
	Grand mean						3.7	Agreed

Result on table 2, shows that the respondents agreed that use of diversified teaching methods, interactive chalkboards, making lesson more interesting and meaningful, providing a conducive classroom environment and encouraging students interaction with one another are some of the classroom practices that can promote inclusive education. This is clearly shown in the grand mean of 3.7 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50.

Research Question 3: To what extent can inclusive education promote sustainable development in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent to which inclusive education can promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

S/N	Items	No of Resp.	VLE	LE	SE	VSE	X	Decision
1.	Inclusive education can bring about wise investment by individuals.	500	1808	129	8	1		Agreed
			452	43	4	1	3.9	
2.	Inclusive education can generate local economics of cities and make them more inclusive.		400	98	2			Agreed
			1600	294	4		3.8	
3.	Inclusive education can bring about empowerment and good leadership.		380	115	4	1		Agreed
			1520	345	8	1	3.7	

4.	Inclusive education if given serious consideration can bring about reliant and sustainability.	415	72	10	3		Agreed	
						3.7		
5.	It can help achieve the features of SDGS by the UN.	1660	216	20	3		Agreed	
		370	100	20	10		3.7	
		1480	300	40	10			
Grand mean							3.7	Agreed

Result on table 3, shows a grand mean of 3.7 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This revealed that to a large extent, respondents agreed that inclusive education can help promote sustainable development in Nigeria. For instance it is believed that inclusive education can bring about wise investments, generate local economies for cities, empower leadership, bring about reliance in nation building and help in the achievement of SDGS.

Research Question 4: What are the factors militating against inclusive education in Nigerian tertiary institution?

Table 4: Mean ratings of the respondents on the factors militating against inclusive education.

S/N	Items	No of Resp.	SA	A	SD	D	X	Decision
1.	Inadequate funding is one of the major factors militating against inclusive education.	500	400	98	2		3.8	Agreed
2.	When experts/specialists in inclusive education are not included in the curriculum planning it could be a serious constraint to successful inclusive education.		450	44	6		3.9	Agreed
3.	Non-challant attitude of the teachers towards inclusion could be a serious problem.		410	89	1		3.8	Agreed
4.	Uncondusive school environment can make effective inclusion very impossible.		490	10			4.0	Agreed
5.	Segregation and stereotyping of the disabled students could be a serious constraint to effective inclusive education.		393	107			3.8	Agreed
Grand mean							3.9	Agreed

Results on table 4, revealed a grand mean of 3.9 which is greater than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that the respondents agreed that inadequate funding, non inclusion of inclusive expert in curriculum planning, non-challant attitude of the teachers, uncondusive environment, segregation and stereotyping of disabled children are factors that militates against inclusive education in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that safety school environment promotes inclusive education. For instance a safety school environment promotes and provides a learning environment in which students and teachers feel safe. This is in line with Silvia, Rocio and Campos (2018) who noted that in a safe and welcoming environment, an individual who is academically, emotionally. Physically ill and troubled are quickly attended to. Also, Davi, George, Jeffrey and Walter (2010) noted that when school is prevented from aggression and discipline maintained, there will be school and classroom safety and this promotes retention. In consonance with the funding is the active Travel Newsletter insert (2018) who states that when the rout to school is free and safe it will promote inclusive education because it will reduce fear, stress and anxiety in students and teachers. The finding of this study also revealed the forms of classroom practices that promote inclusive education as a classroom where teacher uses diversified teaching methods. A research-based and flexible classroom that makes lesson interesting and meaningful where there is cordial relationship between teachers and students. This finding

is in agreement with the Tim (2007) who identified positive attitude of the teacher and a supportive classroom that is grounded in good leadership and flexible curriculum. Also, in agreement is Kahlleen (2018) who identified conducive classroom climate and student/teacher interaction.

It was also the finding of this study that enforcing Education for All, eradication of poorly sensitization, introduction of universal designs that will accommodate all and sundry and adopting supportive practice are possible ways of promoting inclusive education in tertiary institution. This finding is in corroboration with Alquraini and Gut (2012) who identified the application of universal designs for learning and supportive practices like modeling as ways of promoting inclusive education.

The findings of this study revealed that to a large extent inclusive education can promote sustainable development. This is because inclusive education can help achieve the features of SDGS; it can bring about reliant and sustainable nation, improvement and generate local economy. This finding is in line with Uchem, Ngwa and Asogwa (2014) who found that inclusive education is a sure means of attaining optimal integral development and sustainability. Also in consonance was Sian, Won Robert and Paul (2017) who noted that quality learning for sustainability have transformative effect in terms of empowerment, leadership wise investment in individuals.

The findings of this study also revealed possible factors that militates against inclusive education as; lack of sufficient funds, inadequate trained teachers, attitude of the teachers, segregation and stereotypy and rigid nature of the curriculum. This finding is in agreement with Majda (2015) who identified the negative attitude of teachers and para-educators, funding and inadequate specialist for inclusive education as the barrier for inclusive education.

V. CONCLUSION

Considering all learners in its area of fully belonging to the school and all of its varied activities, every child has the same right to access education. Education is a fundamental human right as declared by the United Nations and as such every child no matter the status should be given the opportunity to participate in school. For this reason, school and classroom environment should be made safe to bring about high level of enrolment and retention of students in school. This will promote sustainable development in the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were drawn:

- School administrators and teachers make sure that school environment is free and safe and students' routes to school should also be passable and safe.
- Teachers should adopt different forms of classroom practices that promote inclusive education. For instance, used of diversified teaching methods, use of reinforcement, maintaining cordial relationship with their students making lesson meaningful interesting.
- To promote inclusive education, all hands must be on deck. For instance, parents, governments, stakeholders, curriculum planners, teachers and school managements should try as much as possible to promote safety and effective teaching and learning.
- Government and other stakeholders in education should push enough funds in education to provide equipment and other facilities that will improve inclusive education. This can only be possible if proper understanding of factors militating against inclusion could be addressed for sustainability in the local government state and federal government levels. The government and the legislature should try as much as possible to reinforce education for all citizens.

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