

Enhancing Inclusivity in Fundamental Skills Development at Basic Education in Nigeria

AKEKE, M. N. G.

Business Education Department, Faculty of Vocational and Entrepreneurial Education, University of Calabar
mercyakeke@unical.edu.ng

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Chapter Description

All students, regardless of aptitude or disability, ought to be provided with basic education, which is the foundational level of formal education. Globally, inclusive education aims to provide all pupils with regardless of the variety present in the system or society, an equitable and easily accessible high-quality education. As a result, the kind or extent of the learning experiences that students at this level receive greatly influences the future characteristics of those students as well as the kind of development that such a nation will achieve. All children should receive basic education, regardless of their circumstances. It is clear that the general skills taught in Basic Education programs would improve everyone in the nation.

Key words: Inclusivity, Enhancing Inclusivity, Fundamental Skills, Development. Fundamental Skills Development & Basic Education

Inclusive Education and teacher's preparedness

There are many people currently living with disabilities in Nigeria, especially in the northern part of the country. This condition seems quite challenging, both for the victims, their families, and society at large. Out the estimated 25 million impaired individuals in Nigeria. Ode (2020) estimates that one in every eight of those people has at least one type of disability. The most prevalent types of disabilities are those related to the eyes, ears, body, and mind. Inclusive education is a programme for all children and young people with or without disabilities or difficulties learning together in regular pre-school programs, educational institutions, colleges, and universities with the right infrastructure. Considering this number, inclusive education it becomes imperative,

All kids and teens, whether they have impairments or challenges, learn together in schools, colleges, universities, and ordinary pre-primary settings with the use of inclusive education. networks; it is about adjusting school policies, practices and cultures to meet the diversity of students in the community (Akeke, M.N.G. & Kolo, I, 2023). According to UNESCO (2017),

inclusive education is defined as "a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education." , similarly, Renato Oportti (2017) view inclusion as the procedure to guarantee that the educational system gives each child, adolescent, and young person equitable treatment. It is about ensuring that everyone has access to equitable and high-quality learning environments, procedures, and results. One educational approach is Regardless of each student's unique demands, inclusive education aims to meet them in a mainstream setting. educational settings. Recent definitions emphasize the importance of creating environments where every student feels accepted and valued.

The process of reorganising schools or learning environments to accommodate rural populations, individuals living with HIV/AIDS, people with disabilities, and people who struggle with learning is known as inclusive education. It also aims to provide learning opportunities for everyone, regardless of physical or cognitive disabilities, to receive instruction in the same educational setting. It represents a significant shift from the conventional segregation strategy of educating children with disabilities in separate and special schools. Inclusive education is a full integration of learners with or without special needs into the same classrooms and schools, exposing them to the same opportunities. It could also be seen as the accommodation of learners to help in developing their self-esteem and thereby overcome the difficulty posed by disability to them.

To achieve this, teachers need to be equipped adequately. Equipping teachers with effective strategies enhances inclusion through better skill development for all learners (Francis, et al, 2023). Similarly, Ubani and Bobmanuel, (2024), viewed that positive attitudes and adequate knowledge among teachers are key to successful inclusive teaching, which fosters fundamental skills development for diverse learners. Understanding how early interventions and inclusive approaches support fundamental skill development (Taiwo and Oluwafemi, 2025). Inclusion enhances engagement and learning outcomes for language skills critical components of foundational skill development (Nwashili, 2025). Emphasized that teacher training and technology use is crucial for supporting inclusive practice and fundamental skills development in basic education classrooms (Mbaba et al, 2024). Planning data, qualified personnel, infrastructure, and funding factors influences how foundational skills are developed inclusively (Cornelius-Ukpepi & Opuwari 2019). Lecturer readiness is a multi-faceted construct that encompasses pedagogical knowledge, confidence, values, and willingness to adapt teaching practices (Atah et al, 2025). This readiness is further influenced by external variables such as access to professional development opportunities, institutional policy frameworks, and the availability of inclusive teaching resources

Inclusivity is also the accommodation of students with various learning styles and physical capabilities coexisting in the same classroom to study alongside each other According to UNESCO (2021), inclusive education is all about:

1. Acknowledging the nondiscriminatory provision of education and the right to it.

2. A shared vision that encompasses everyone.
3. The conviction that educational institutions, including schools, have an obligation to educate everyone youngsters (and adults) in accordance with the ideals of human rights.
4. A constant process of acknowledging that everyone can learn and meeting the many requirements of all students, irrespective of their gender, age, race, language, handicap, HIV status, location, or sexual orientation.

Universal Basic Education

Primary school through junior secondary education is referred to as universal basic education, or UBE. Other educational levels are constructed upon the foundation of UBE. This nine-course curriculum aims to promote national development while eradicating poverty, ignorance, and illiteracy. Ensuring that every Nigerian child receives at least nine years of basic education was the main goal of the UBE policy. Six years of elementary education and three years of junior secondary education make up the nine-year period of universal basic education. This is a crucial stage in education, hence, Francis, et al (2023) highlighted the importance of instructional strategies specifically, multigrade instructional strategies to improve teaching effectiveness in basic education, which is a foundational aspect of inclusive practice by catering to diverse classroom needs. maintain that Adult and non-formal education programs are also included at primary and junior secondary education levels to take care of those who dropped out of school. The philosophies behind the introduction of UBE in Nigeria are three-fold thus:

1. The transformation of the person into a capable and accountable citizen;
2. The individual's full assimilation into the community; and
3. Ensuring that every person of the country has equal access to primary, intermediate, and postsecondary educational options in the nation, both within and outside of the official educational system. This will energize the creative energies of the country to guarantee that everyone takes responsibility for education. Working together with all stakeholders, the goal of Universal Basic Education is to be a major force behind the national movement to realize the country's UBE vision.

The Universal Basic Education Commission Annual Report of 2015 outlined the following goals ensuring unfettered access to nine years of formal basic education,

1. All Nigerian children of school age should get free universal basic education.
2. Significantly lowering the rate of formal school dropouts through increased efficiency, quality, and relevance.
3. Ensuring that the necessary levels of literacy, numeracy, communication, manipulation, and life skills are acquired, together with the civic, moral, and ethical ideals required to establish a strong basis for lifelong learning.

Types of Inclusive Education

The subsequent are four types of inclusions in practice.

1. **Full Inclusion:** Full inclusive education entails that every child, including those with severe disabilities, are enrolled in same school with those without disabilities and are allowed to learn side by side in the same classroom without any form of segregation or exclusion.
2. **Partial Inclusion:** This has to do with allowing special needs students to engage socially and academically with their peers is emphasized by proponents of the partial inclusion paradigm. However, it is not necessary or pupils who require special need and disabilities to attend all of the lessons in a regular classroom. This implies that to prevent interfering with the regular classroom activities, In a separate class, pupils will meet with a speech therapist or special education instructor.
3. **Educational Inclusion:** In this type, there is chance for education specialization for everyone and disabled children, irrespective of their linguistic, intellectual, social, emotional, physical, or other impairments.
4. **Social Inclusion:** This does not actually refer to school settings rather the process that provides opportunities for persons with special needs to participate in social activities. Where learners with special needs can feel accepted in sports, musical entertainment, debate, quizzes and many other activities that are socially driven. This include the freedom and dignity to vote and be voted for in an election
5. **Economic Inclusion:** This involves training in vocation and employment of services. It should involve development of specific jobs, skills, trade and vocational schools, colleges apprenticeship programmes, rehabilitation centres, sheltered workshop among others that should enhances the employability of abilities of SNE and disabilities learners in any field of their endeavours.

Models of inclusion

There are different models used in this direction, some of it are discussed below.

1. **Teaming model:** This model emphasizes the use of special education teacher is in charge of modifying assignment ideas and offering instructional methodologies.

The second style is collaborative, co-teaching, which involves regular instructors and special education teachers working together to instruct all of the pupils in the classroom. Both are in charge of discipline, assessment, student growth, and lesson planning and delivery. Both teachers provide age-appropriate customised instruction and the required support services to students with disabilities in the classroom. The special education teacher may spend all or a segment of the academic day teaching.

3. Consultant Model: The special education instructor is ready to help the student practise a newly learnt skill or conduct research on challenging skills. Students who just need occasional help benefit the most from this technique. Regular team meetings are necessary for successful implementation, just like with other models.

Policy Framework of Nigerian Inclusive Education

According to the National Policy on Education (2013), Children with special needs must get free education at all levels, and all necessary facilities must be provided to ensure that convenient access to education must be provided. These facilities include:

- i. Inclusive education, which involves integrating special classes and units into regular public schools as part of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program.
- ii. To guarantee proper welfare and educational planning, a regular census and monitoring of individuals with special needs is necessary.
- iii. Examples of special education tools and resources include Perkins Braille, white/mobility care, brailed textbooks, talking watches, abacuses, audiometers, speech trainers, hearing aids, ear moulders, educational toys, callipers, crutches, wheel chairs, artificial limbs, audio-visual equipment, and internet access.
- iv. Special education instruction in speech signs, typewriter operation, Braille reading and writing, and everyday living skills.
- v. To keep staff members up to date on the newest teaching methods for gifted and talented students as well as various disability categories, they should receive special training and retraining on capacity building.

Importance of inclusive education in Nigeria

Some reasons why inclusive education is important in Nigeria are:

1. Including Special education pupils in the classroom allows them to develop their latent skills and influence their surroundings, which benefits their own development as well as the development of the society to which they belong by instilling some fundamental knowledge and abilities in them.
2. By fostering an environment where students perceive and embrace their peers for who they are, inclusive education helps to eradicate apathy in the minds of students and society at large. are and learn to associate with them. However, it will also foster an environment that allows people with special needs to actively engage in any event or function
3. Since almost all parastatals in Nigeria do not accommodate people with disabilities, as is evident from the types of structures that have been built, proper harmonisation and putting inclusive education into practice aids in educating society at large as well as pupils about the need of accepting individuals with disabilities as fellow humans. This aids in simplifying and establishing

guidelines for appropriate inclusion in society. As a result, the majority of Nigerian structures do not accommodate sloppy reels, and more than 65% of both public and private facilities, including schools, only have staircases and no lifts. Therefore, if inclusive education is to be implemented in its entirety, how can a physically challenged person utilise these buildings or structures? This has become a significant issue that needs to be addressed right away.

4. Learning alongside others fosters a good view of both themselves and others, as well as an appreciation of their cultures and capabilities. It also helps kids comprehend that people have different skill sets because of social, physical, or other limitations. When they are given the opportunity to learn alongside people with special needs, they will be better able to comprehend and independently discover the potentialities that are innate in these individuals, which will foster a spirit of cooperation and partnership. Meanwhile, the former will learn that these individuals are human beings with potentials that can be realised.

5. A country that adopts and incorporates inclusive education would inevitably incorporate the same inclusivity into its ideas of community ties, employability, and civic engagement. In order for our children to acquire the values, abilities, and information necessary to accept people who are different from them, inclusion is a fundamental component that must be incorporated into their life. Consequently, individuals with exceptional needs can lead the way in public administration, project management, and coordination, and they are also provided equal opportunities to participate in general elections alongside their peers without fear of discrimination or victimisation. People with special needs can lead the way as project managers, public administrators,

Nigerian challenges in implementing inclusive education

The following issues are impeding Nigeria's successful adoption of inclusive education: Poor planning, a lack of qualified staff, subpar facilities for education, corruption, the institution's location, improper sensitisation, etc.

1. Ineffective planning procedure: Planning, which is the process by which the structure and program of every policy are meticulously draughted and expressed, is regarded as the most important stage of any policy. The majority of programs in Nigeria are occasionally meticulously planned but ultimately fail at the planning stage, primarily due to a lack of professionalism. Members of the planning committee are either politically motivated or lack sufficient knowledge, which leads to them

2. Lack of qualified staff: Professionalism and training are essential components of the teaching and learning process. The academic performance of most teachers demonstrates that they lack the knowledge necessary to instruct or manage both children with special needs and those without any kind of deformity in the same class. It is implied that parents of these special needs pupils are likely to send their children to special schools, which will have a detrimental impact on the inclusive education policy and be linked to subpar instruction.

3. Inadequate educational facilities: A number of Nigerian schools struggle with a shortage of basic supplies, such as desks, tables, and sufficient reading materials. By allowing more students to be admitted into the educational system, inclusive education has

made place for more teaching resources and aids, which would otherwise be unavailable. will affect the teaching and learning process. supplies, etc. Because to inclusive education, there is now space for Most parents are unsure about the educational system and whether it will truly include their child because there are insufficient resources to meet the educational needs of special needs students in a regular school setting. As a result, parents may send their children to special schools, which has impacted the inclusive education policy.

4. Corruption is the main issue that almost every sector of Nigeria is dealing with; every public official and political office holder views every task or appointment as a chance to further their own financial interests. These have undoubtedly also had an impact on Nigeria's efforts to implement inclusive education. To prevent financial theft, the government should make sure that those without integrity are not allowed to hold public office and that all policies pertaining to the implementation of inclusive education are properly adhered to.

5. Institutional location: Whether or not a special needs child attends school depends greatly on the institution's (school's) location. It has been found over time that almost all inclusive schools are located in urban areas, which significantly limits the options available to other special needs children who live in more remote areas. The enrolment of children with special needs who live in rural locations has been impacted as a result. The government must work to create inclusive schools in both urban and rural areas because, once more, the financial situation of the majority of parents now plays a significant role in determining whether a child with special needs is sent to school or is used as a means of generating income through street begging. In order to facilitate the inclusion of individuals with special needs in all policy formulations, it is recommended that these individuals be granted a specific role in the policymaking process. This would help ensure appropriate representation and consistency

.6. Inadequate sensitisation: The hallmark of inclusive education for parents, educators, and the general public is sensitisation. To lessen the problem of stigmatisation, mocking, and abuse of any type, the entire society must be sufficiently educated and informed on the importance of viewing and appreciating people with special needs as fellow beings.

Prospect of inclusivity education in Nigeria

1. In accordance with UNESCO's proposal that the education sector receive 26% of the GDP, the government should enhance the budgetary allocation to the sector. Additionally, all levels of government should boost funding for education, particularly for the UBE program.
2. To guarantee coverage, the government should provide sufficient facilities and infrastructure, even at the very lowest levels.
3. The government should only hire instructors who are competent and skilled.
4. The federal government should establish a specific directorate of inclusive education in the federal and state ministries of

education, tasked with organising, planning, directing, and overseeing inclusive education initiatives in Nigerian schools. 5. Initial training and retraining of general and special education teachers to partake in the principles and practices of inclusive education should be put in place by the government prior to their utilization.

Business Education and Fundamental Skills Development

Business education is a programme of study which aims at preparing youths for work in business occupation, preparing people to become better citizens, consumers of goods and services, and preparing business teachers. Business education is a part of the general education system, and a core component of vocational education, that was introduced to meet the national and global yearnings and advocacy for a more functional, practical, skill-oriented and self-reliant type of education (Akeke &Atah, 2022). It provides training for specific type of jobs, developing the ability to use skills in the environment of business and helping learners become intelligent consumers of goods and services. According to Elogbo and Akeke (2019), business education can be viewed as that aspect of education which equips students with marketable skills, knowledge and attitudes needed for initial employment and advancement in business and related occupation. Business Education is concerned with the acquisition of basic practical skills that will enable an individual live a profitable life, be independent, earn a living and be useful to the society and himself.

The underlying abilities that are necessary for success in all aspect of life are known as fundamental skills. Cognitive, physical, and social-emotional skills are the three primary categories into which these abilities fall. Thinking, reasoning, remembering, and understanding are all considered cognitive talents. The ability to move and use the body in a coordinated way is referred to as physical ability. Finally, the ability to identify and control one's own emotions as well as engage with others in a constructive way are referred to as social-emotional abilities (Friedman, 2019). These fundamental skills are real-life practical and transferable skills needed for everyday life; they include; communication skill, planning skills, conflict management skill, srting of goal, self-management, teamwork etc

Conclusion

The principle of inclusiveness should be taken into consideration as far as education is concerned to benefit all individual status and culture notwithstanding. It is imperative that business education should have inclusivity embedded in its planning process to accommodate all kinds of people without prejudice to their physical challenges. This will enable them acquire skills that build their capacity to be profitable to the society and themselves.

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