

Impact of Mentoring Regular Teachers' Attitude on the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of mentoring regular teachers' attitude on the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study was premised on 2 research questions and 2 hypotheses. The design of the study was quasi-experimental while the population of the study was 539 regular teachers at Basic Education level in Lafia metropolis. The sample size of the population was 42 (26 male and 16 female) regular teachers drawn from 2 schools using purposive sample technique. A 28-item instrument used for data collection was Teachers' Attitude Scale (TAS) developed by the researchers. TAS was validated by 3 lecturers who were not below Senior Lecturer from Federal University Lafia, Nigeria. A pilot study was conducted at Akwangwa, a neighbouring district to the study area. The responses of the respondents were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha. Meanwhile, TAS was polytomously scored and reliability estimate of 0.86 was obtained. TAS was administered to the regular teachers in both the experimental and control groups at both pre-test and post-test stages by the researchers. Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used in testing the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The findings of the study revealed that mentorship significantly improved regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education and gender was not found to be a significant factor on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

Keywords: Mentoring, gender, inclusive education, attitude, regular teachers

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1. Introduction

With social justice at the international forefront of the educational agenda, the inclusion of students with exceptionalities in the general education classroom has propelled a worldwide political and philosophical movement. Subsequently, the international commitment to an inclusive model was made explicit in the Salamanca World Statement on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 2003), which recognized the diversity of needs but, at the same time, the need for accommodation within regular schools. According to Andzayi (2012), inclusive education is a program for children with special needs that stipulates that all children and young people with or without disabilities learn together in ordinary pre-schools, schools, colleges, and universities with an appropriate network of support. Inclusion, therefore, implies a radical reform of the school in terms of educational policy and curricular frameworks such as subject content, assessment, pedagogy, and the systemic grouping of pupils within regular institutional and curricular structures.

In compliance with the social justice movement, Nigeria adopted and launched the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme and enacted the UBE Act of 2004 (National Teachers' Institute (NTI), 2011). The scheme provides the enabling legal framework through which the government supports states towards the delivery and achievement of uninterrupted basic education within the context of inclusion for the Nigerian child. Basic education is seen as the formal education deemed necessary for somebody to function properly in society. Accordingly, FRN (2004) in its NPE defines basic education as a type of education comprising 6 years of primary education and 3 years of junior secondary school.

Inclusive education has become the norm rather than the exception for the education of children with special needs at the basic education level in Nigeria (FRN, 2004). The NPE specifically provides for equal educational opportunities to all Nigerian children, irrespective of disabilities. The ideological justification for the emergence of inclusive education is the need to respond to the diversity of students in ordinary classroom settings, irrespective of their differences in intellectual, physical, sensory, or other characteristics (Tsafi & Neil, n.d).

Studies, however, have shown that, most teachers express their belief that inclusion of children with special needs is possible (Unachukwu, Ozoji & Ifelunni, 2008 and Maika, 2012). At the same time, Unachukwu et al (2008) reported that many scholars express reservations if children with disabilities must be included in regular classes. Such scholars consider that celebrations, sports events, and sightseeing are the best ways to include children with disabilities in school or class activities. This is why Obi (2006) identified one of the most common arguments against the inclusion of children with special needs in the general classroom as the lack of knowledge and skills for teaching them. This is why the study of Unachukwu et al (2008) stressed the need for inclusion to be directly connected not only with teachers' beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and skills but also with their continuous professional development and mentorship, particularly for regular teachers.

In an inclusive school setting, teachers' professional development needs cannot be realized based only on in-service opportunities but also on mentorship. This explains why, Wang and Odell (2002) opine that, the best staff development is not when "experts" teach "novices", but much more when continuous sharing and dialogue happens. Under the prevailing pertinent need to prepare teachers to handle instruction in inclusive classrooms on one hand, and on the other hand, the limited financial resources for teacher in-service training, teachers' mentorship becomes even more crucial. This is why Wang and Odell (2002) conclude that one of the successful ways to enhance inclusive education and improve teacher competence is through mentorship.

Meanwhile, mentoring is seen as a relationship between a mentor and a mentee where "Mentors are advisers, educators, counsellors and role models who pass their experience on to less experienced people who are referred to as mentees" (Momi, 2016: 386). In the teaching context, mentors are seen as experienced educators who actively assist less skilled educators to achieve expected abilities and experience (Michael, 2013). Research indicates that mentoring is an effective solution for teacher retention problems and helping newly-qualified teachers increase their confidence, ability and development as educators (Michael, 2013).

Through mentoring process, the 'mentee' gains confidence which is vital to the proper delivery of instruction and adoption of inclusive practices by regular teachers (Mohono-Mahlatsi & Tonder in Michael, 2013). It can be inferred that mentoring is a capacity development approach that provides opportunity to bridge regular teachers' competence in handling instructions in inclusive classes.

It is obvious that under inclusion regular (or general) teachers have indispensable role in meeting the learning needs of students with disabilities. According to Obiyo and Adaka (2014), regular teachers refer to those teachers who do not receive specialized training in handling instruction for students with disabilities. This means that regular teachers are expected to demonstrate mastery of curricular and extracurricular content in handling instruction under inclusive classroom settings.

This study is therefore interested in determining the impact of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Attitude is defined as a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon an individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related (Latif, 2012).

Regular teachers' attitudes may impact several classroom factors including classroom management, peer acceptance, reinforcement and overall academic success of all students. Studies have shown that positive teacher attitudes and support for inclusion are keys to the success of inclusive schools (Barco, 2007; Karla, 2009). Smith in Karla (2009) asserts that the acceptance and successful implementation of inclusion will only come about with changes in attitude of regular teachers.

This study is also interested in determining the influence of gender on regular teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of inclusive education. Shikden (2009) conducted a study to establish the relationship between the attitudes of male and female teachers towards the inclusion of learners with visual impairment. The

study revealed that female professional teachers are better disposed to inclusion of persons with visual impairment than their male professional counter-parts. This means female teachers have a more positive attitude towards inclusion as compared to their male counterpart. On the contrary, the study of Barco (2007) reveals that teachers' self-efficacy and instruction in relation to gender has no statistical significance.

Furthermore, in spite of the obvious effects that are derivable from mentoring on teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education, related studies carried out in the area of inclusion tend to be focused on other aspects of inclusive education like curriculum modification, attitude of teachers/community towards inclusion and the roles of para-professionals in the implementation of inclusive education as well as teacher preparation. It is against this back drop that, this study intends to ascertain the impact of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education level in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

2. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine the impact of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of Inclusive Education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. effect of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.
2. influence of gender on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

2.1. Research Questions

To guide this study, the following research questions were posed:

1. What is the effect of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?
2. What is the influence of gender on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

2.2 Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of regular teachers' attitude exposed to mentoring and those not exposed.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female regular teachers' attitude to the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

3. Methodology

The study employed quasi-experimental design. Specifically, pre-test post-test non-equivalent control group design was employed for the study. Quasi-experimental design according to Nworgu (2006) is an experiment where random assignment of study to both experimental and control group is not possible. The design was considered appropriate because there was no randomization of subjects into experimental and control groups respectively. This study was carried out in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study was carried out in Lafia metropolis because it is the state capital. The population of the study comprised of all the 539 regular teachers at Basic Education level in Lafia metropolis. The sample size for this study was 42 (26 male and 16 female) regular teachers. The population from 2 schools was drawn using purposive sample technique. The instrument used for data collection in this study was Teachers' Attitude Scale (TAS). The TAS was developed by the researchers. It was a 28-item instrument structured on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). TAS focused on measuring teachers' attitude towards inclusive education implementation. The instrument was subjected to face validity. It was given to 3 lecturers who were not below Senior Lecturer from Federal University Lafia, Nigeria. The experts were specifically requested to scrutinize the instruments with respect to the clarity of the item statements and whether the items are in line with the purpose of the study, research questions, comments and suggestions helped in modifying the items to suit the problem under investigation.

Reliability of the Instruments: The reliability of the instrument was determined by administering copies of the instruments to twenty (20) regular teachers in Akwanga who were not part of the sample. The responses of the

respondents were subjected to reliability analysis using Cronbach Alpha to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The choice of Cronbach Alpha was because the instruments were polytomously scored and reliability estimate of 0.86 was obtained.

3.1 Experimental Procedure: The study involved two groups of subjects. Before the commencement of the experiment, a pre-test was administered to both the treatment and control groups by the researchers. The responses obtained by the subjects at this stage served as a pre-test. For the teachers in the experimental group, the researcher engaged an expert in the field of Special Needs Education (SNE) to mentor the group on the implementation of inclusive education at basic education. The choice of an expert in the field of SNE was because he is well versed in Inclusive Education. This was guided by Mentoring Program Schedule developed by the researchers for the program. However, teachers in the control group received no mentoring from the expert.

At the end of the experiment, the researchers again administered the instrument to both the experimental and control groups. At this stage, the responses obtained served as the post-test score.

3.2 Method of Data Collection: The instrument for data collection for this study was administered to the regular teachers in both the experimental and control groups at both pre-test and post-test stages by the researchers.

4. Method of Data Analysis:

Research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used in testing the formulated null hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The pre-test scores was used as a covariate to the post-test scores. The ANCOVA served as a control for the initial differences across groups as well as increasing the precision due to the extraneous variable thus reducing the error variance.

5. Result and discussion

5.1 Research Question 1

What is the impact of mentoring on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation of regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia Metropolis

<i>Groups</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pretest</i>		<i>Posttest</i>		<i>Gain Score</i>	<i>Gain Score Difference</i>
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>		
Experimental	20	2.69	.18	3.37	.33	.68	.42
Control	22	2.74	.32	3.00	.34	.26	

Table 1 shows the mean attitude scores of teachers in both the experimental and control groups. Teachers in the experimental group had attitude mean scores of 2.69 with standard deviation of .18 at the pre-interest and mean attitude scores of 3.37 with standard deviation of .33 at the post-test. On the other hand, teachers who were in the control group had attitude mean score of 2.74 with standard deviation of .32 at the pre-test. At the post test, mean attitude score of 3.00 with standard deviation of .34 was recorded for teachers in the control group. The result indicated that the use of mentorship increases regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

5.2 Research Question 2

What is the influence of gender on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation of male and female regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>		<i>Post-test</i>		<i>Gain Score</i>	<i>Gain Score Difference</i>
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.dev</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std.dev</i>		
Males	26	2.74	.31	3.16	.39	.42	.11
Females	16	2.68	.15	3.21	.38	.53	

Table 2 shows that male teacher had mean attitude score of 2.74 with standard deviation of .31 while their female counterpart had mean attitude scores of 2.68 with standard deviation of .15 at the pre-test. At the post-test, male teachers had mean attitude score of 3.16 and a standard deviation of .39 while their female counterpart had an attitude mean score of 3.21 with standard deviation of .38. The results show that female teachers had more attitude than their male counterpart in implementation of inclusive education. This can be seen from slight mean difference of .11 recorded from gain score difference. Therefore, gender had influence on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

5.3 Hypothesis 1

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of regular teachers' attitude exposed to mentoring and those not exposed.

Table 3: Analysis of covariance of regular teachers' attitude exposed to mentoring and those not exposed

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	1.696 ^a	2	.848	7.611	.002
Intercept	2.123	1	2.123	19.060	.000
Pre-test	.240	1	.240	2.156	.150
Method	1.555	1	1.555	13.956	.001
Error	4.344	39	.111		
Total	430.269	42			
Corrected Total	6.040	41			

a. R Squared = .281 (Adjusted R Squared = .244)

Result in Table 3 revealed that mentoring is a significant factor on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at UB education in Gombe State; $F(1, 39) = 13.956, P = .001$. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of regular teachers' attitude is rejected since the exact probability value (.001) is less than level of significance set at 0.05. Consequently, the researcher concludes that there is significant difference in the mean ratings of regular teachers' attitude exposed to mentoring and those not exposed.

5.4 Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

Table 4: Analysis of covariance of the influence of gender on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	.515 ^a	4	.129	.862	.496
Intercept	2.417	1	2.417	16.188	.000
Pretest	.146	1	.146	.976	.330
Gender	.044	1	.044	.294	.591
Gender *	.118	1	.118	.790	.380
Error	5.525	37	.149		
Total	430.269	42			
Corrected Total	6.040	41			

a. R Squared = .085 (Adjusted R Squared = -.014)

Result in Table 4 revealed that gender is not a significant factor on regular teachers' self-efficacy in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria; $F(1, 37)$

= .294, $P = .591$). Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female regular teachers' attitude was upheld since the exact probability value of .591 is greater than 0.05 level of significance. Therefore, the researchers conclude that there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result indicates that gender is not a significant factor as far as regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at basic education in Lafia metropolis is concerned.

Discussion of Findings

5.5 Effect of Mentoring on Regular Teachers' Attitude in the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

The findings of this study in Table 5 shows that mentorship is effective and increases regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The result was further strengthened by analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) in Table 11 which shows a significant difference in the mean ratings of regular teachers' attitude exposed to mentoring and those not exposed. This implies that mentoring significantly increases regular teachers' attitude compared to teachers that was not exposed to mentorship. The implication is that, mentorship when used in mentoring regular teachers is capable of increasing their attitude in the implementation of inclusive education in Lafia metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The finding is in consonance with Bērziņa (2011) who reported that mentoring and collaboration are pre-conditions for successful teachers' professional development, which creates, in its turn, a favorable basis for enhancement of inclusive education programs. This favourable basis will as well create positive attitude to teachers in the implementation of inclusive education in Lafia metropolis. In support of the findings also is the study of Samir (2013) who reported that teachers showed positive attitudes towards educational inclusion. The result of the study also support the findings of Miller and Burdete (2012) who reported that mentoring programs appear to offer possible solution to the growing problem of attitudinal change among regular teachers in the implementation of inclusive education.

5.6 Influence of Gender on Regular Teachers' Attitude in the Implementation of Inclusive Education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

The findings of this study show that gender is not a significant factor on regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. Although female regular teachers had a higher attitude mean score than their male counterpart, but the difference in mean score was not significant. The result was further strengthened by analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) which showed no significant difference in the mean attitude score of male and female regular teachers in the implementation of inclusive education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. This implies that the higher mean attitude score obtained by female teachers was as a result of chance factor and insignificant. The finding of the study supports the study of Hashim, Ghani, Suzana and Wan (2014) who reported no significant differences between male and female teachers on their self-efficacy and attitudes towards inclusive education. The finding of the study however, disagrees with the findings of Chopra (2008) whose study revealed significant difference in the between male and female elementary school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. The study also disagrees with Samir's (2013) study that revealed that, in general, teachers showed positive attitudes towards educational inclusion but male teachers showed more positive attitude than females did.

6. Conclusion

The study, concluded that mentorship significantly improved regular teachers' attitudes in the implementation of inclusive education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Nigeria. In addition, gender was not a significant factor in regular teachers' attitudes in the implementation of inclusive education at Basic Education in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State, Niger. The study has proved that mentorship increases regular teachers' attitude in the implementation of inclusive education, therefore, recommends that the government should endeavor to organize a mentorship exercise for regular teachers for the successful implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. Teacher preparation institutions should organize mentorship programs for pre-service teachers on the implementation of inclusive education in their institutions. This exposure will help pre-service teachers develop a more positive attitude toward inclusive education. For the successful implementation of inclusive education, the government should institutionalize mentorship at the school level for regular teachers. Teacher preparation institutions should organize mentorship programs for pre-service teachers on the implementation of inclusive education in their institutions. Federal and state education ministries, as well as local

governments, should institutionalize mentorship at the school level for regular teachers for the successful implementation of inclusive education.

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