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Original Article

Social Inclusion, a Pathway for Educating All Pupils in Mainstream Primary Schools in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Social Inclusion, Education for All, Pupils, Mainstream Primary Schools, Nigeria.

ABSTRACT

This survey investigated whether social inclusion influences education for all pupils in state mainstream schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions, and hypotheses, were posed for the study. 704 pupils were drawn from eight public primary schools located across the education zones of the state to participate in the study. The social inclusion and mainstream schooling questionnaire (SIMSQ) were utilised to generate data. Following the social inclusion theory, data was analysed using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient via SPSS software. Findings revealed that policy on inclusion and learner engagement significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools within the context. It is therefore recommended that: the government of Nigeria should revise the national policy on education to properly emphasise mainstream schooling for inclusion to be effective in general schools; special schools should be abolished to give way to mainstream schools; the idea of parity in education can be broadened to inclusion of all children in education; awareness campaigns should be conducted regularly to educate stakeholders about general schools based on social inclusion, and to get their support; pro inclusion laws should be enacted to give legal backing to mainstream schooling; Nigeria should give force to inclusion to make it compulsory for all pupils to receive education in mainstream schools; substantial empirical studies have to be conducted in Nigeria to spark a policy change in the direction of mainstreaming in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

According to World Bank (2013), social inclusion is an education-for-all formulation (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2008), which serves to help advance mainstream schooling worldwide, including Nigeria. Over time provisions look far from enabling an education that is indeed for all children. Even with the introduction of some pro-inclusion policies and legislations on education, the culture of practice still tilts towards a differentiated approach whereby the placements of children in school are conducted in a manner that is segregatory. Children with different characteristics and backgrounds tend to experience disadvantages in education in general schools in the country. A change in favour of social inclusion tends to be facing resistance from various quarters. Until now Nigeria still allows the establishment of general (or mainstream) primary schools to operate side-by-side with special schools, faith-based schools and international schools, indicating a reluctance to adopt an inclusive pattern. Opposition to mainstreaming occurs probably because the status quo benefits powerful interests in the country. It is a situation that happens in breach of the right of every child to education in regular school settings. Much of the disadvantages in the provisions for primary-aged children exclude a significant portion of them from receiving education in a regular school.

Where there are attempts to include children in school such efforts are marginal in execution wherein integration is considered the best option for practising the mainstream system (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2013). Mainstreaming is an inclusive language, philosophy and strategy of which, in the views of such eminent researchers on inclusion as Ainscow (2005), Dyson et al. (2004) and Peters (2004), suggest the possibility of creating a school environment that accommodates all irrespective of identity, and where their differences are being recognised and valued. Following that, the notion of social inclusion serves as a facilitation, to ease efforts which are directed at tackling inequities within society and ensuring that the provision of a school that is for all is indeed possible. It appears to inform the insertion of the 'universal' aspect of education in the universal basic education (UBE) programme (Universal Basic Education Commission – UBEC, 2004) introduced by the Nigerian government, except that the concept of universality, in the context of the policy, is narrow, focusing just on keeping the number of girls who receive places in school at par with the boys. Social inclusion (Ewa, 2015; World Bank, 2013, Woodcock, 2013) is a catch-it-all term signifying a levelling of opportunities for all the identities of children to freely access a mainstream school located within local communities and to also participate therein.

This challenges the misconceptions that the child is the problem with his education. The medical model of inclusion, for instance, regards the child as having conditions which require medical remediation for the individual to qualify to be placed in a regular school to learn with others. Being shut out of school on account of a medical condition is social exclusion, itself a direct opposite of social inclusion. Social inclusion abhors any issue that has the potential to exclude the child. It relies on the argument that the school is a microcosm of the society. As a social services provider, the school mirrors the diversity in society in pupil population, and for that ought to utilise the diversity as a resource to enhance educational services to benefit all children in a mainstream environment. On that note, those espousing the formulation of social inclusion such as Ewa (2019, 2015), World Bank (2013) Ainscow (2005), Dyson et al. (2004) and Peters (2004) are of the view that it is rather the school, and not the child, which serves as a hindrance to inclusive schooling. A mainstream system that relies on the social inclusion ideology is a rethink of the existing norms, traditions and practices stemming from within and beyond the walls of the community school to deprive some children of education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social inclusion (World Bank 2013) is a construct which emphasises equal access of all children to a

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common educational institution. It is a position taken in view of the deprivation and disadvantages which some children experience due to limited access and engagement in mainstream schools (Ewa and Ewa, 2019). The disadvantages in pupils' education emanate from poor attitudes towards diversity in religion, language, personal characteristics, tribe, gender and ability (Ewa and Ewa, 2019; Gardener and Subrahmanian, 2006). Available provisions tend to make it difficult for general schools to be able to welcome pupils from various identities. It signifies the denial of rights and resources for the children to freely engage in mainstream schools. Or perhaps the children lack the capabilities to be included. Social inclusion is markedly antithetical to exclusion in all its forms. It rather explores opportunities for repositioning the mindset and school to deliver an inclusive kind of education in a mainstream setting. Whatever the issue that may emerge to despise it, social inclusion advances egalitarianism, upholding the entitlements of all children to receive education together in a common environment; not in segregated platforms. Settings that allow for togetherness in education recognise, respect and value the diversity in the background of children and regard such diversity as a resource for education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review is conducted on literature that is relevant to the following variables of social inclusion: policy on inclusion and learner engagement as they affect education for all in mainstream schools:

Policy on Inclusion

Social inclusion is the concept undergirding the international policy on education for all (EFA) (Ewa and Ewa, 2019; UNESCO, 2008) and Nigeria's policy on UBE (Humphreys and Crawfurd, 2014; UBEC, 2004). Governments and relevant agencies agreed upon this policy instrument as a just approach to providing equal opportunities for educating all children in regular schools across the world, including Nigeria. Further to that, the United Nations (UN) made a declaration in Salamanca, Spain on inclusion (Rose, 2008; Ainscow, 2005; Eleweke and Rodda, 2002; UNESCO, 1994). This makes clear the underlying principle of inclusion and frees inclusion from whatever may be hindering its application in a general school setting. Participants at the conference in Salamanca had a unanimous decision that mainstream schooling is the most effective method to tackling discrimination embedded within societies, achieving an education that is genuinely for all and operating a school for all (Ewa, 2015) in local communities. This acknowledges that children are unique in characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. For that, mainstream schools are to be designed in ways that can accommodate all of children with special educational needs within a child-centred pedagogy that is capable of meeting these needs (Ainscow, 2005; Ewa and Ewa, 2019). It implies that all children, including those with disabilities, are entitled to public education in a non-restrictive environment.

Classrooms in Nigeria, however, appear to be in contrast to the actual intention of social inclusion and mainstreaming. Education for all, in the form it is being provisioned currently in the country, portend a self-imposed restriction to include pupils in a multicultural classroom. It focuses majorly on increasing the enrolment of boys and girls often classed as 'normal' children in mainstream schools. EFA seems to be political, indicating a piecemeal pattern of activating social inclusion through policy. Achieving parity in access based on the marker of gender, as can be seen in the work of the EFA, is without a doubt applaudable, but ignores their learning needs. Peters (2004) termed this practice as the 'placement paradigm'. It is a conception which implies that some stakeholders understand inclusion as allowing the presence of a child with disabilities in an ordinary school. Based on the social inclusion perspective, the notion of disability is not just about impairments. It refers to all issues that have the potential to disadvantage the education of all children in a regular school. Building the capacity of the school in terms of resourcing and personnel to be able to cope with challenges associated with special needs children

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and other children is part of what makes EFA inclusive (Rose, 2008). The introduction of social inclusion in mainstream schools aim at enhancing the skill of disabled children, clarifying the policy makers about notion of inclusion, changing the mindsets of educators and parents in favour of inclusion and special education, enhancing the dispositions of other children towards their peers with disabilities, develop positive interactions between the other children and their disabled colleagues (Maciejewski, 2002).

A look at the subsisting education policy of Nigeria shows that efforts have been made to move provisions towards inclusion (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). The way and manner in which the policy is being phrased, nonetheless, indicates that there are contradictions as to the exact intention of the government on the issue. It raises concerns regarding whether the government and policy makers are clear about the notion. Policy, on the one hand, prescribes the inclusion of all children in mainstream schools. At the same time, the document makes reference to integration in the decision to accommodate the children in general classrooms. It can be assumed that 'integration', as it is being mentioned in policy, is the attempt made towards mainstreaming. Inclusion is a holistic way of making general schools welcome all children irrespective of identity to learn together in mainstream classrooms. However, integration involves the placement of children with disabilities to learn in special departments within a mainstream school (Ainscow, 2006, 2005). In other words, integration is a leap in the direction of inclusion; it is not inclusion. May be the stakeholders are comfortable with integration, but not with inclusion.

The choice of integration in the context suggests caution in the way mainstreaming should be operated. Besides, it gives the impression that there is a lack of belief that mainstreaming can work in Nigeria. It is a position which seems to be taken in compliance with the prevailing social order in context (Ajuwon, 2008; Garuba, 2003). Such apprehensions also reflect among parents, teachers, and even children, in practice. The attitudes of these stakeholders give a sense that the policy is not welcome by them, or they do not have the preparation to work with children from various religious affiliations, tribes, those with learning difficulties and impairments in mainstream or they do not know where to start (Mushingwa et al., 2022; Maciejewski, 2002). These behaviours have strong connections to the medical model of inclusion stated previously. As such negative issues persist, they can clog the wheel of progress in the direction of social inclusion to affect mainstream schooling. Social inclusion helps to enhance the teaching profession, thus developing a teacher that is for all children in school.

Learner Engagement

Learner presence alone is insufficient for mainstreaming schooling to thrive. Allowing the children, whatever their backgrounds, to stay in a regular classroom does not reflect inclusion. The engagement of all children (Taylor and Parsons, 2011; Fredricks et al., 2004) in school programmes augments and enhances an inclusive atmosphere for them at school. Engagement has to do with feeling a sense of belonging, making sense of what the child is learning and getting actively involved in classroom lessons and extracurricular activities (Harper and Quaye, 2009). Beyond that, a child feels engaged when there are opportunities for participation in activities in ways that advantage him or her in a mainstream school (Trowler, 2010). Implicitly, you do not expect such involvements of the child to occur in compliance with dictates. Willms (2003) also identifies academic engagement to corroborate the work of Fredricks et al. (2004) on the subject.

Opportunities for engagement, according to Fredricks et al. (2004), enable situations where the mental, emotional and behavioural components of children are positively activated to support learning in general settings. For them children who are cognitively engaged have zeal for learning, accept challenges and endeavour to go beyond expectations (Ewa, 2015). Emotional

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engagement describes affective re/actions such as enjoyment, interest and boredom in relation to how pupils learn in mainstream schools. Those who are behaviourally engaged exhibit disciplined and pro-social behaviour at school. Engagement activates interest in children to learn. It is the medium by which even passive pupils and those with learning difficulties are motivated to participate in school activities in a mainstream environment. As pupils become engaged, for instance in lessons, their sense organs, knowledge and skills move from the dormant to active state.

Creating opportunities for engagement consequently allows for various contributions from pupils during lessons to occur. Also, teachers are able to keep pupils on task and can sustain their commitment to group work on equal terms, rather than in assistive manner (Hanková and Kalenda, 2022). Furthermore, an engaging environment is one which supports learner autonomy and fosters their self-efficacy (Walker and Logan, 2008) to achieve from learning in a mainstream school. Learner inquisitiveness is increased and may remain sustained when the individual is actively involved to culminate in deep learning and intensified retention. An engagement philosophy is learner-centred, placing the needs of the child at the forefront of education. It is opposed to traditional teaching, a practice in which the teacher directs virtually all classroom activities (Isa et al., 2020). Preference for didactic approach perhaps occurs so that teacher authority is not compromised and/or to save teacher time. More so, (cultural) perceptions among adults about childhood regards children as having not developed significant competencies to be able to play an active role in their education (Ewa, 2015). Therefore, the learner remains compliant to teacher views during teaching and learning, doing so sometimes without questioning. It makes it unjustifiable to deprive children, thus defying article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009) which mandates the provision of opportunities for every child to participate in what they are learning in local community school.

However, the learner engagement banner has come as a progressivist initiative to wrestle such teacher-centred and anti-inclusion practices, and rather advance pupil participation for mainstreaming to thrive. It produces an ecosystem of activities in school as well as class-room community. Such provision in education that is engagement-oriented serves as a platform where collaboration thrives and is encouraged. Social inclusion subscribes to a practice where there is a mix of children learning together and sharing ideas in the same school (Okolie et al., 2021). A culture that places value on collaborative learning has a propensity to adopt an engagement strategy that also has potentials to create a feeling of sameness among pupils in mainstream education. Looking at it from a different perspective, learner engagement tends to also have positive impacts on teachers and the school. Increased participation among mainstream pupils can scale back the duties of the teachers. In addition, there is a possibility for many parents and their children to be attracted to a school where children with disabilities are given opportunities to engage other pupils in school programmes, especially in a society where discrimination against disability is prevalent.

Furthermore, engaging pupils in mainstream school means engaging learner voice to foster education for all. Learner voice is a concept that is espoused by Nelson (2015), Shirley (2015), Flynn (2014), Robinson (2014), Fielding (2012, 2008, 2004), Flutter and Rudduck (2004), Rose and Shevlin (2004), McBeath et al. (2003) as well as Fielding and Bragg (2003) as an approach which gives agency and legitimacy to children to share their perspectives about what they are learning and how they are learning. It is an issue that is domiciled within the social inclusion ideology that aims to use pupil perspectives to gauge how far education for all is impacting them in mainstream schools. The concept is an area where learner engagement seems to draw its strength, given the position of the United Nations that mandates schools to engage the perspectives of children in the education that concerns them.

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The application of it in schools signifies respect for, value and recognition of the opinions of children to improve a school for all. Antithetical to the authoritarian practice (Ewa, 2019) associated with didactic teaching, it instead enables a school environment in which pupils are regarded as partners with teachers to co-create knowledge and participate in reforms that ease education that is for all of them. It is not merely limited to hearing the voice but allowing it to make a difference and adding value to mainstream schooling. Also, it does not mean speaking for children, but listening to their speech. Where pupil view is encouraged, it builds the child's confidence and deters shyness. It is an avenue for making children with speech defects to improve on their speaking skills and contribute to teaching and learning in a mainstream school. Consequently, failure to engage with learner voice exposes them to the risk of being disengaged from school (Dunleavy, 2008; Rudd et al., 2007). Challenges to pupil viewpoints happen because teachers do not see them as trusted partners (Ewa, 2019). For that, allowing children to have a strong voice in education may be looked upon as an aberration, which is capable of making the tutor lose respect within the context. The adults believe children have yet to develop efficient cognition and conceptual abilities to be able to share their thoughts in a manner that meets teacher expectations.

Research Rationale

Social inclusion is an egalitarian principle that supports the creation of a school environment that fosters education for all pupils to exceed the idea of parity. That implies efforts which are directed at removing barriers and to include all children across social backgrounds in a common community school. As such, it frowns at measures that encourage the establishment and management of separate primary schools for different identities of children in society. In accordance with the United Nation's declaration of inclusion, the Nigerian government has followed up by enacting policies and laws to enable provisions for education for all pupils in a mainstream setting as an approach to include them in education. However, the intentions embedded in available provisions as contained in the national policy on education in that direction indicate that government and stakeholders are unclear about the concept of mainstream as an education for-all strategy. Perhaps it is one reason Nigeria has yet to give force to policy and legislation that provide for compulsory education of all children in a mainstream setting. There seems also to be limited empirical studies and that is affecting advocacies for policy change in favour of the subject matter in Cross River State. Thus, different primary schools with different education policies, curricula and philosophies still exist across the country and within the research site. Where there are efforts to apply social inclusion, the affected schools show signs of impairment, not having the capacity in terms of funding, infrastructure, personnel and equipment to accommodate all children from a diverse population existing within local communities in the state. This suggests that the concept of social inclusion and mainstream schooling are ideologies and policies, not yet experienced in the research context. Consequently, pupils with impairments, and those from various religious, tribal and linguistic backgrounds tend to face the risk of disadvantages in regard to placement and engagement in learning in a mainstream environment.

Purpose of the Study

This research examined whether social inclusion influences education for all pupils in state mainstream primary schools in Cross River State, Nigeria. In specific terms, it investigated the influence of:

- Policy on inclusion on education of all pupils in mainstream schools.
- Learner engagement on education of all pupils in mainstream schools.

Research Questions

The following questions were posed for the study:

- To what extent does the policy on inclusion influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools?

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- How does learner engagement influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated at 0.05 level of significance for the study:

H_{O1}: Policy on inclusion does not significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools.

H_{O2}: Learner engagement does not significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopts the quantitative research approach (Muijs, 2011) so as to be able to address stated research hypotheses. Furthermore, the method is motivated by the need to measure the variables identified herein in a quantitative manner, thus enabling the collection of numeral data and the application of appropriate statistics in data analysis. In consequence, the methodology leans onto the positivist/empiricist paradigm (Williams, 2007; Creswell, 2003) in order to guarantee the scientific values of objectivity, accuracy, validity and reliability in data generation and analysis. More so, it will provide an understanding of the research in the quantitative sense. On that note, other models of research available, with their components, such as the qualitative and mixed methods approaches (Williams, 2007) do not have the capacity to assist in the direction of the present study and are therefore jettisoned for being unhelpful.

Research Design

Consistent with the quantitative strategy, the survey research design (Muijs, 2011; Creswell, 2003) was adopted. This is to facilitate the use of questionnaires to gather numerical data from a potentially large population within the research area via a face-to-face method (Check and Schutt, 2012).

Research Area

Calabar and Ogoja education zones in Cross River State hosted this research. The state is one of the 36 federating units that constitute Nigeria. Ikom and Ogoja are among the educational zones which exist in the state. The choice of these zones was motivated by the fact that regular and special schools are sited in these places. These were public primary schools built and managed by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) based on the Universal Basic Education (UBE) scheme.

Population

7584 pupils, comprising 4320 boys and 3264 girls, were on roll across 26 state primary schools sited in the research location (Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board, 2022). This composed of pupils in both regular and special schools. Particular focus, however, was on pupils in primary five, aged from 9 – 12 years. 2030 pupils, including 1024 boys and 1006 girls, were in this class. Pupils at this age and stage could read, write and understand simple sentences in English, and are also familiar with questionnaires. Even some of the pupils in grade five in special schools could read, write and understand in English. Therefore, these pupils could provide rich data to support the study. Their peers in the lower grades were excluded due to concerns about their language abilities, while those in grade six were also left out because they were preparing for their graduation examination. There was the need not to bother them.

The Sample

The sample size was calculated based on the mix of the children in the population. Consequently, 704 pupils, including 352 boys and 352 girls, representing 34.67 per cent of the population in grade five were selected to participate in the study. These were recruited from eight primary schools across the zones. 104 pupils, comprising 52 males and 52 females, were recruited from each of the six regular schools. 80 children, 40 per school, were drawn from two special schools. In each of the special schools 20 boys and 20 girls were

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selected. The number of children with impairments registered in school, and the special schools existing in the research site was small compared to the situation with the regular ones. The sample was calculated along the lines of gender and disability. Furthermore, the sample size used is to improve generalisability of findings.

Sampling Technique

Participants were recruited through cluster sampling procedure (Muijs, 2011; Williams, 2007; Creswell, 2003). First, three clusters were identified: boy, girl and impairment, and used to select the participants. For each group sealed ballot papers inscribed with the information 'YES' and 'NO' were placed in a container as a means to provide equal chance for all pupils to be selected in each school. Pupils who picked 'YES' were recruited; those who picked 'NO' were ditched.

Data Source

An instrument codenamed Social Inclusion and Mainstream Schooling Questionnaire (SIMSQ) was adopted for data collection. It served as the only source for generating primary data for the study. The researcher constructed SIMSQ to have simple and short sentences, to make it easy for participants to respond to it. The document had three sections: participant information, the demographic and scaling item sections. The participant information area included information for respondents about the research and an invitation to participate. Following that, participants were to provide information about their school, age, gender and disability status in the personal data part. Coming next to that, the scaling item part had a two Likert scale of YES and NO, and 20 statements, 10 for each hypothesis. 20 items were developed so that the questions would cover a wide area of the overall issue under inquiry. The items were worded in a way that would reflect stated hypotheses. Subjects were to place a tick in the box to indicate 'YES' or 'NO' to each of the items.

Establishing Trustworthiness

Based on the positivist/empiricist ideology, the study was evaluated using validity, reliability and generalisability (Mertler and Charles, 2014) serving as the standards in order to ensure trustworthiness. The researcher is research active and can construct data collection tools. That notwithstanding, SIMSQ was submitted to other qualified and competent persons for member checks and psychometric scrutiny. Having passed this scrutiny, it was trailed in one school using 80 pupils so as to subject it to further testing in a real research situation. Data arising from the pilot study was analysed using Cronbach Alpha. The outcome produced a score of .87, which indicates that it is reliable and suitable for use in the primary study. 704 participants were drawn from the population to enhance the generalisability of findings.

Procedures For Data Generation and Data Preparation

A calendar was produced to guide data generation activities. Data gathering and preparation took three months. One month was spent on each of the educational zones to collect data from participants. The third month was used to prepare data for analysis and to produce this report to disseminate the research findings. The schedule was prepared this way to allow enough for travels between schools, to administer and retrieve the SIMSQ from respondents. All completed questionnaires were returned. Data preparation took place thereafter. One mark was allotted to each variable in the biographic section of the SIMSQ. Conversely, items in the scaling section of SIMSQ was scored as follows: YES = 6 marks, NO = 4 marks. Data was entered into a computer program to initiate the process of analysis.

Ethical Considerations

Approval was received from the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), school administrators, teachers and parents for the research. The staff of SUBEB used their records to identify public schools for the study. Children cannot self-consent to participate in research. As

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such, their parents and teachers provided consent for pupils to take part. Data collection activities took place during school hours when the children were still in school. Participants had one week to fill in and return the SIMSQ. All respondents were given the opportunity to withdraw participation from the study at any time without giving a reason. A contingency school was placed on standby in each of the zones for the research to continue in the event of the occurrence of unforeseen and unpleasant circumstances. All items in the questionnaire were worded in a way that would prevent raising emotive issues in the participants. Names of respondents and schools are written in pseudonyms and their data is held securely by the researcher.

RESULTS

The first section of the SIMSQ was merely to provide information to respondents about the research. Data in the biographic part of the SIMSQ was analysed via simple percentage while Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was employed to analyse data from the scaling item section of the questionnaire based on hypotheses. The Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) was the computer program deployed to analyse data. See SPSS output in tables 1, 2 and 3:

Table 1: Participants' biographic data

Category	Variable	Number	Percentage (%)
Name of school	A	104	14.8
	B	104	14.8
	C	104	14.8
	D	104	14.8
	E	104	14.8
	F	104	14.8
	G	40	5.69
	H	40	5.69
	Total	704	100
Gender	Male	352	50
	Female	352	50
	Total	704	100
Age	9-10	552	78.4
	11-12	152	21.6
	Total	704	100
Disability status	Not disabled	624	88.6
	Disabled	80	11.4
	Total	704	100

Data in *Table 1* indicates that 104 pupils from each regular school, representing 14.8 per cent of the sample took part. However, 40 pupils from each special school, representing 5.69 per cent of the sample also participated. It means that more children in the regular schools than their counterparts in special schools participated. Among the participants across schools, 352 were males and 352 were females, representing 50 per cent per cluster in the sample, and that indicates an equal representation of pupils based on gender. In terms of age, however, 552 of the pupils representing 78.9 per cent were aged from 9 – 10 years. 152 of their peers representing 21.6 per cent were aged from 10 -11 years. It shows that younger pupils more than the older ones took part from across the schools. Under the disability category, 624 pupils representing 88.6 per cent had no identifiable form of impairment, but 80 of their classmates representing 11.4 per cent of the sample have impairments. That means that other children outnumbered disabled colleagues in participation in the research.

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Table 2: Pearson product-moment coefficient analysis of policy on inclusion and education for all pupils in mainstream schools

Variable	N	∑x ∑Y	∑x2 ∑Y2	∑xy	CI	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}	P
Policy on inclusion	704	230101	52946470201	32569876146	95%	703	5.63	2.08	<.05
Education for all pupils in mainstream schools		141546	20035270116						

The outcome of the data analysis shown in table 2 indicates that at 95% CI and 703 degree of freedom (df), r^{cal} (5.63) is higher than r^{crit} (N = 704, r = 2.08, p<.05). The null hypothesis states that policy on inclusion does not significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is retained. It suggests that policy on inclusion significantly influences education for all pupils in mainstream schools. In a simple term, it indicates that having a policy provision on inclusion can affect education for all pupils in mainstream settings.

Table 3: Pearson product-moment coefficient analysis of learner engagement and education for all pupils in mainstream schools

Variable	N	∑x ∑Y	∑x2 ∑Y2	∑xy	CI	df	r^{cal}	r^{crit}	P
Learner engagement	704	251004	63003008016	43559987172	95%	703	5.71	2.16	<.05
Education for all pupils in mainstream schools		173543	30117172849						

The outcome of data analysis shown in table 3 illustrates that at 95% CI and 703 degree of freedom (df), r^{cal} (5.71) is greater than r^{crit} (N = 704, r = 2.16, p<.05). The null hypothesis states that learner engagement does not significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It indicates that learner engagement significantly influences education for all pupils in mainstream schools. Simply, it means creating opportunities for active participation can affect education for all pupils in mainstream settings.

Summary of Findings

The following findings were obtained from data analyses:

- Policy on inclusion significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools in parts of Cross River State, Nigeria (N = 704, r^{cal} = 5.63, r^{crit} = 2.08, CI = 95%, df = 703, p<.05).
- Learner engagement significantly influences education for all pupils in mainstream schools in the research context (N = 704, r^{cal} = 5.71, r^{crit} = 2.16, CI = 95%, df = 703, p<.05).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings are being discussed hypothesis-by-hypothesis as follows: The result from the first hypothesis revealed that policy on inclusion significantly influence education for all pupils in mainstream schools in parts of Cross River State, Nigeria. This connects the views of Ewa and Ewa (2019) and Ainscow (2005) that mainstream schools designed in ways that can accommodate all children with special educational needs within a child-centred pedagogy are capable of meeting these needs. That is in accordance with of UNESCO (1994) declaration on inclusive

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schooling at the conference in Salamanca stating that mainstream schooling is the most effective method for tackling discrimination embedded within societies, achieving an education that is genuinely for all and operating a school for all (Ewa, 2015; Eleweke and Rodda, 2002) in local communities. This acknowledges that children are unique in characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs.

The introduction of universal basic education by the Nigerian government and the insertion of integration in her education policy (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013) are signals that the country has decided to provide education for all pupils in general schools framed around the social inclusion philosophy. Primary schools located in Calabar and Ogoja education zones of Cross River reflect this in practice where efforts are being made by the government and teachers to welcome some children with different characteristics to learn together in a mainstream environment. The implication is that Nigeria subscribes to that policy, except that she is taking a cautious and gradual measure towards mainstreaming due to the tensions between local cultures and policy.

The finding from the second hypothesis indicated that learner engagement significantly influences education for all pupils in mainstream schools in the research context. Consistent with this finding by Taylor and Parsons (2011) as well as Fredricks et al. (2004) and Willms (2003) who identified cognitive, emotional, behavioural and academic engagements as benefits which can be derived by pupils as they learn in mainstream schools. Having such dimensions of engagement augments and enhances a socially inclusive atmosphere for all learners at school. For them children who are cognitively engaged have zeal for learning, accept challenges and endeavour to go beyond expectations (Ewa, 2015). Emotional engagement describes affective re/actions such as enjoyment, interest and boredom in relation to how pupils learning in mainstream schools. Those who are behaviourally engaged exhibit disciplined and prosocial behaviour at school. When pupils are engaged it is capable of fostering learner-centredness, thus placing the needs of the child at the forefront of education in mainstream schools in Cross River State.

Learner engagement is in contrast to the traditional teaching method in which the children would have to wait for the teacher to generate and impart knowledge and skills to them in the classroom (Isa et al., 2020). Passive learning is an aberration in environment where the participation of all learner is a method that is always being emphasised in classroom interactions. Also, an engagement-oriented school promotes collaborative learning among pupils where there is an opportunity for all of them to work together to execute assigned tasks, and to assist one another where necessary. Extending the fields of social inclusion and learner engagement further is learner voice, espoused in the works of (2015), Shirley (2015), Flynn (2014), Robinson (2014), Fielding (2012, 2008, 2004), Flutter and Rudduck (2004), Rose and Shevlin (2004) and McBeath et al., (2003). Based on these studies, learner voice involves the perspectives of children regarding the way the school is affecting their education in a mainstream setting. Where learner engagement is promoted learner voice thrives. As pupils have the opportunities to share their views it helps to enhance provisions for education for all of them in general settings. Pupils can be trusted to share their thoughts about school interaction, teacher performance, learner performance, school policies and contributions of parents to support positive school reforms.

CONCLUSION

Provisions for adopting social inclusion have the capacity to advance the notion of education of all pupils in mainstream primary schools in Nigeria. It is a broader and non-segregated approach of widening the capabilities of educational institutions to welcome various identities of children in an ordinary school, rather than in a special school and/or the faith-based counterpart. More so, the current practice based on universal basic education is narrow in scope. It focuses merely on the provision of equal enrolment opportunities for boys and girls in a regular

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school. Placement alone does not enable the school to meet the needs of a diverse pupil population. The social inclusion philosophy helps to push the boundaries of the UBE forward further to also enable the engagement of pupils in education. In other words, the concept serves as a pathway to free UBE from hindrances for it to become inclusive. As such, mainstream schooling draws on the social inclusion ideology to facilitate the creation of a school for all.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made: The government of Nigeria has to revise the national policy on education to properly emphasise mainstream schooling for inclusion to be effective in general schools. Special schools have to be abolished to give way to mainstream schools. The idea of parity in education can be broadened to inclusion of all children in education. Awareness campaigns can be conducted regularly to educate parents, teachers, children and community leaders about general schools based on social inclusion, and to get their support. Pro inclusion laws should be enacted to give legal backing to mainstream schooling. Nigeria should give force to inclusion so as to make it compulsory for all pupils to receive education in mainstream schools. Substantial empirical studies have to be conducted in Nigeria to spark a policy change in the direction of mainstreaming in the country.

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