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# **BASIC SCHOOL TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PRACTICES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN KWARA CENTRAL SENATORIAL DISTRICT, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

*This study examined basic school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices in Kwara Central Senatorial District. A descriptive survey was adopted for the study. A total of 323 basic school teachers were randomly selected from 28 selected basic schools from the four Local Government Areas. Teachers Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Questionnaire (TATIEQ) was designed for this study. The instrument was subjected to test-re-test method and was found to have reliability coefficient of 0.80. One research question was answered and four research hypotheses were tested. The data collected were analyzed with percentage, t-test and ANOVA statistics at 0.05 level of significance. The study revealed that basic school teachers had positive attitude towards inclusive education practices; there was no significant difference in male and female teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices. It was on the basis of these findings that the researchers recommended that, government at all levels should make inclusive education compulsory for all basic schools. Also, there is need for teaching of special education as a foundation course for all pre-service teachers in training.*

**Keywords:** Teachers' Attitude, Basic Education, Inclusive Education.

## **Introduction**

Human beings have always been concerned about how to improve their condition of living and better face the forces of nature and the environment. Obtaining quality education is the foundation to improving people's lives and sustaining development. Basic education is the bedrock for other levels of education. It is to this end, the Federal Government of Nigeria has made basic education universal, free and compulsory for every child of school going age (NPE, 2013). Education for All (EFA) is a key enabler for sustainable development.

Education for all (EFA) has always been an integral part of sustainable development agenda. The notion that education is for "all" and not for "some" can be traced to the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights which makes education a fundamental right. The Convention on the world fit for Children (2002) with the core principles of non-discrimination, devotion to the best interest of the child, the right to life, survival and development as well as respect for the views of the child. Inclusive Education (IE) is a key strategy for the attainment of EFA.

The inclusive education model evolved out of the realization that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate.

The basis of inclusion is that special needs pupils have a right to the benefits of full school experience, with needed modifications and supports, alongside their peers without disabilities who receive general education. Children with disabilities form the largest group of children who have been and continue to be persistently excluded from education. The World Bank estimates that of the 115 million children worldwide who are not in school, 30-40 percent are children with disabilities. Ojo (2016) found that, children with disabilities constitute more than 30 per cent of the over 10 million out-of-school children in Nigeria. According to Nigeria's current population statistics in 2016, Kwara State had an average population of about 270,000 children with different disabilities out of which only 10,000 are currently receiving some form of basic education through the few special needs schools and inclusive unit in basic schools. According to UNESCO (2009), inclusive education system can only be created if ordinary schools become more inclusive, in other words, they will become better at educating all children in their communities. Kochoing (2010) asserted that, inclusive education is about transforming educational systems to accommodate the needs of children with special needs. It is not just about inserting children with disabilities into existing structures, but adapting the structures to reflect their different needs. Inclusive Education is anchored on the notion that students with disability will

benefit from enhanced learning, social and communication skills, while those without disability will benefit from the exposure to diverse characteristics, talents and temperaments.

Many countries both developed and developing countries adopted the policy of mainstreaming /inclusion in their education policies. Nigeria for example adopts the policy since inception of her National Policy of Education (NPE). The latest revised policy document NPE (2013) provide that education must be inclusive and that all children including those with disabilities have the right to qualitative, functional and effective basic education. The Universal Basic Education Act of 2004 provides that basic education is free and compulsory for all school-age children while Section 42 of Nigerian Constitution speaks of freedom from all forms of discrimination. Fakolade, Adeniyi and Tella (2009) found that, only one state that has actually started the implementation of the inclusive education at the basic school level, other states of the federation in Nigeria are just starting up by creating a unit in each of the schools for their inclusive classrooms. Fakolade (2009) argued that Nigeria is known to have some of the best laws on inclusive education in Africa, but the implementation has remained the main problem due to different hindrances.

Teachers are the driving force to the success of including children with disabilities into regular classes (Thomas, 2012). The prepared teachers are the custodian to advocates inclusive education programmes in order to make it more realistic and profitable to persons with special needs which kick against discrimination and stigmatization that is usually accorded to them by the populace (Omede & Momoh, 2016). Inclusion is the principle applied to accommodate all human beings with diverse abilities in one system, in such a manner that all involved can be assured of successful, equal and quality participation in real-life experiences from birth-death. Prater (2003) identified teacher attitudes as one of several elements that are critical in promoting the success of students with disabilities in general education settings. Teachers may require more instruction time or other teaching methods and professional knowledge in mainstream. According to Meijer (2004), inclusive education largely depends on teachers' attitudes towards pupils with special educational needs and on the resources available to the teachers. Ross-Hill (2009) explains that not offering frequent and substantial training brings about tension, stress, and attitudinal change of the teachers in inclusive

settings. Therefore, providing teachers with support will improve the overall implementation of inclusion making it more beneficial for the students.

It is on the basis of this background that this study seeks to examine basic school teachers' attitude toward inclusive education practice for sustainable development.

### Statement of the Problem

There is a growing recognition that including children with disabilities in general education can provide them with the opportunity to learn in natural and stimulating settings which may also lead to increased acceptance and appreciation of differences. Yet, children with disability continue to experience different forms of exclusion which vary depending upon their disability. The successful inclusion of children with disabilities into regular education classroom depends on the attitude of the teachers. Therefore, teachers' attitudes regarding the inclusion of children with special needs will be examined.

### Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study was to examine basic school teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices for sustainable development. Specifically, the study examines:

- a. the attitude of basic school teachers to inclusive education practices.
- b. the attitude of male and female teachers to inclusive education practices.
- c. the attitude of regular teachers and special need teachers to inclusive education practices.
- d. the attitude of basic schools teachers towards inclusive education practices based on levels of qualification?
- e. the attitude of basic schools teachers to inclusive education practices based on years of experience.

### Research Question

1. What is the attitude of basic school teachers towards inclusive education practices?

### Hypotheses

1. There is no significance difference in the attitude of male and female teachers to inclusive education practices.
2. There is no significance difference between the attitude of special need education teachers and regular teachers to inclusive education practices.
3. There is no significance difference in the attitude of basic schools teachers to inclusive

education practices based on level of qualification.

4. There is no significance difference in the attitude of basic school teachers to inclusive education practices based on years of experience.

## Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. The sample of the study was 323 teachers drawn from 28 basic schools (both regular and special need schools) across the four Local Government Areas of the senatorial district. The questionnaire titled "Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education Practices (TATIEP)" was used to collect data. The instrument was developed by the researchers and has two sections: Section A elicited teachers' demographic information while section B has 25 items with 4 point-likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA-4points), Agree (A-3points), Disagree (D-2points) and Strongly Disagree (SD-1point) on teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices. A reliability test was performed on the instrument after it was validated by experts in Sociology of Education and Educational Psychology. The reliability coefficient of 0.80 was obtained. The minimum score a respondent will have is 25 while maximum score is 100. High score (51-100) in this scale indicated positive attitude, while low scores (1-50) indicated negative attitude. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count, percentage, t-test and ANOVA statistics at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

The data collected are reported below.

### Research Question 1:

*What is the attitude of basic school teachers towards inclusive education practices?*

**Table 1: Attitudes of Teachers towards Inclusive Education Practices in Kwara Central Senatorial District**

| Attitudes    | Frequency  | Percentage   |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Positive     | 262        | 81.1%        |
| Negative     | 61         | 18.9%        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>323</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Result from table 1 shows that 262 of the respondents who participated in the study had positive attitude towards inclusive education for sustainable development representing 81.1% while 61 had negative attitude towards inclusive education representing 18.9%.

**Hypothesis One:** *There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on gender.*

**Table 2: t-test Analysis on the Difference in Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Practices based on Gender**

| Gender | N   | Mean | SD   | t      | Df  | Sig (2 tailed) | Decision      |
|--------|-----|------|------|--------|-----|----------------|---------------|
| Male   | 171 | 75.4 | 6.63 | -1.944 | 321 | .053           | Do not Reject |
| Female | 152 | 76.8 | 6.15 |        |     |                |               |

### P>0.05

Result from table 2 shows the t value yielded -1.944 which is not significant with P value .053 > 0.05. This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on gender.

**Hypothesis Two:** *There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on teacher type.*

**Table 3: t-test Analysis on the Difference in Teachers' Attitude towards Inclusive Education Practices based on Teacher**

| Teacher Type      | N   | Mean | SD   | t    | Df  | Sig (2 tailed) | Decision      |
|-------------------|-----|------|------|------|-----|----------------|---------------|
| Regular Education | 50  | 76.7 | 4.95 | .755 | 321 | .451           | Do not Reject |
| Special Education | 273 | 75.9 | 6.67 |      |     |                |               |

### P>0.05

Result from table 3 shows the t value yielded .755 which is not significant with P value .451 > 0.05. This shows a non-significant result. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This means that there is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on teacher type.

**Hypothesis Three:** *There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on teachers' qualification.*

**Table 4: Analysis of variance showing difference in Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Practices based on Teachers' Qualification**

|                | Sum of Squares | df  | Mean Square | F     | Sig  | Decision      |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|---------------|
| Between Groups | 122.099        | 2   | 61.049      | 1.478 | .230 | Do not Reject |
| Within Groups  | 13220.650      | 320 | 41.315      |       |      |               |
| Total          | 13342.749      | 322 |             |       |      |               |

### P>0.05

From table 4, result shows the  $df$  (2, 322) and  $F$  value yielded 1.478 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected since the  $P$ -value .230 is greater than 0.05 (.230 > 0.05). This means that there is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based teachers' qualification.

**Hypothesis Four:** *There is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based on teachers' year of experience.*

**Table 5: Analysis of Variance showing Difference in Teachers' Attitude Towards Inclusive Education Practices based on Teachers' Years of Experience**

|                | Sum of Squares | Df  | Mean Square | F    | Sig  | Decision      |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|------|------|---------------|
| Between Groups | 81.412         | 2   | 40.706      |      |      |               |
| Within Groups  | 13261.337      | 320 | 41.442      | .982 | .376 | Do not Reject |
| Total          | 13342.749      | 322 |             |      |      |               |

#### **$P > 0.05$**

From table 5, result shows the  $df$  (2, 322) and  $F$  value yielded .982 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level. Hence, the null hypothesis is not rejected since the  $P$ -value .376 is greater than 0.05 (.376 > 0.05). This means that there is no significant difference in teachers' attitude towards inclusive education practices based teachers' year of experience.

#### **Discussion**

Table 1 revealed that basic school teachers had positive attitudes toward inclusive education practices. This finding support the findings of Bornman and Donohue (2013) that teachers tend to develop positive attitudes toward children with physical disabilities and they are less confronting when included in the general education school. The reason for the similarity between the previous and the present studies could be that, teachers could be more supportive to inclusion if they are given some training on handling children with special educational needs. However, this finding is not in agreement with the findings of Zoniou-Sideri and Vlachou (2006) that secondary education teachers developed negative attitudes regarding the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools.

Table 2 also revealed that there was no significant difference in the attitude of teachers toward inclusive education practices based on gender. This is in line with the findings of Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden (2000) that there was no significance difference in teachers' gender and their attitude

toward inclusion.

Table 3 showed that there was no significant difference between the attitude of special educational needs teachers and regular education teachers. This result implied that both the regular teachers and special needs education teachers had positive attitude to the practice of inclusive education despite the kind of children been taught.

Table 4 revealed that there was no significance difference in the attitude of basic school teachers toward inclusive education practice based on level of qualification. This finding is in agreement with Heiman (2001) who found out that teachers' level of educational qualification did not significantly influence teachers' attitude toward inclusive education.

Table 5 also showed that there was no significance difference in the attitude of basic school teachers toward inclusive education practice based on years of experience. This finding is in connection with Evangelin (2006) submission that, number of years teaching did not influence teachers' attitude. The attitude remained generally positive no matter how long the teachers have been teaching.

#### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the above findings and discussion, it is concluded that basic school teachers' attitude plays a significant role in achieving the practice of inclusive education and for the attainment of the global development agenda. The following recommendations were provided based on the findings:

The Government at all levels should make inclusive education practices compulsory in all basic schools so as to sustain teachers' positive attitude and help those with negative attitude to improve as this could prompt them be more supportive to inclusive education.

Also, to foster positive teacher's attitude toward inclusion, there is need for teaching of special education as a foundation course for all pre-service teachers in training in order to equip them with appropriate techniques and skills of handling children with special educational needs.

In addition, there should be provision of special equipment and materials in order to sustain positive attitude of the teachers so as to enable them plan and prepare ahead and make teaching-learning interesting and effective.

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