

Factors that Hinder Effective Implementation of Special Needs Education Policies and Management in Rivers State

Francesca Uche Ezekiel Uko¹, Modupeola Abike Olawoyin²

¹Institute of Education, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic

²Department of Educational Management, University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that hinder effective implementation of special needs education policies and management in Port-Harcourt. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the correlation between inadequate funding and implementation special needs education policies and management. It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management. Data were collected via structured questionnaire issued to 120 special education stakeholders which represents 94.1 percent of the population. The data were analyzed, and hypothesis tested using appropriate statistical tests including Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. The result revealed that inadequate funding had a mean of 13.73 and SD of 4.56 while implementation of special needs education policies and management had a mean of 12.32 and SD of 5.11. We further found that at p-value of 0.002 and $r = 0.49$ inadequate funding was significantly related with implementation of special needs education policies and management. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected with an affirmation that inadequate funding of education was a barrier to implementation of special needs education policies and management. The more there is lack of fund provision, the greater barrier it poses to the implementation of special needs education policies and management. The result concluded that adequate funding is very vital to implementing special needs education policies and management. The study recommended that Government, NGOs and individuals with philanthropic mindset should redirect their attention to providing the required funding that ensures cost-effective special needs education for children with disabilities.

KEYWORDS: Educational management and policies, educational funding, special needs education, Rivers State, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the 1980s, the education of children with disabilities in Nigeria was through humanitarian and voluntary private organization and Christian missions. These organizations set up residential facilities and provide rudimentary services for the education of children and person with disabilities [1]. During this period there was no federal or state involvement in the education of children with disabilities. The few available humanitarian and voluntary organization centers were able to accommodate the educational needs of only a handful of children with disabilities. In most cases the parents of children with disabilities kept them at home and were left without any formal education or training in appropriate skills to assure transition to independent living. As time went on the government became responsible for special needs education in Nigeria.

In Nigeria, the Federal Government has a major responsibility for public education, at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels; in terms of policy monitoring and funding. States are only responsible for funding and supporting the universities and tertiary educational institutions they establish. The Federal Government

establishes and funds most of the institutions of higher learning. Therefore, policy changes in education are principally driven by the Federal Government. The Federal Government of Nigeria began paying tacit attention to the issue of persons with disabilities following the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War (1967-1969) which left the country with critical number of persons with disabilities [2]. With increasing crude-oil revenue, the government also began the taking over of missionary and religious schools with the intent to move towards universal basic education for all children, including children with special needs. In 1977, the federal government released a National Policy on Education which contained some provisions for special education. As a propitious nation, decided to domesticate the vision of United Nations for special needs education and see education as instrument Par excellence for effecting national development. Section 10 (94) reaffirms that education shall be:

- to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.

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- Provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.
- Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries.
- All necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education shall be provided” (Pp36-37).

This National Policy on Education is the only recognized instrument the safeguard the provision and implementation of special needs educational management and policies in Nigeria. One of the first states in the Nigeria to move forward with the dictates for the education of children with special needs in the 1977 National Policy on Education was Plateau State; by enacting the Plateau State Handicapped Law in 1981 which makes the education of children with disabilities compulsory with a provision for the rehabilitation of adults with disabilities. Like in most developing countries, serious governmental policies in Nigeria are driven by international trends, treaties, agreements, manifestos, and directives. In the arena of education, national policies are driven by international organization manifestos especially those from the United Nations International Children and Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nation Educational Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declarations. From the late 1980s UNICEF began to take on the issue of education for children including those with disabilities as a central goal.

In addition, significant importance is the UNESCO's Declaration on Education for All (EFA) in 1990, the Salamanca Statement Framework for Action 1994, and the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal, in 2000. All of these form the coherent force that influenced the adoption of national policies on the education of children with disabilities in Nigeria. As result of political instability, Nigeria was unable to formulate a coherent National Policy on Education, especially the education of children with special needs until 1999 when a democratic system of government began to take root again; following three decades of military dictatorship. In 1999 the Universal Basic Education (UBE) policy was adopted and enacted into law in 2004 as the UBE Act [3]. The UBE Act provides for free basic education for all children from ages 5-16. However, the actual provision for funding of the education of children with special needs, as a national education policy under the UBE Act, was not put into effect until 2008. This was when the policy of Inclusive Education was officially and formally adopted as an integral part of the UBE policy. Goal two of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by world nations in 2000 proposed that, by 2015, children should have free, compulsory and accessible education which has been reauthorized in item three of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the factors that hinder effective implementation of special needs education policies in Port-Harcourt. Specifically, the study sought to investigate the correlation between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management. It was hypothesized that there is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Research Design

The research design adopted for this study was survey research design. This design has to do with the collection of data to accurately and objectively describe existing phenomena in order to determine the extent of implementation of special needs education policy in the study area. This study makes use of this approach to obtain a picture of the present condition of particular phenomena [4]. It is the design which is aimed at collecting both large and small samples from a given population in order to examine the distribution, incidence interaction among the phenomenon. This design is preferred because it is more economical and would allow the researcher to use representative sample to make inference of situation abound. It is useful for opinion and attitude studies; it depends basically on questionnaire and interview as means of data collection.

Study Area

The research location is Port-Harcourt, Rivers State. It is one of the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Rivers State, apart from being the capital city of Rivers State, it is also the headquarters of the Municipal Council. It is bordered by Obio-Akpo, Eleme, Okrika, and Degema at North, North-East, South, and South-West respectively. Port-Harcourt City has the population of about 541,115 Persons [5]. However, because of its cosmopolitan status, there abound people from all parts of the state and Nigeria in the city. The people of Port-Harcourt Municipality embraced western education which was brought by the early missionaries thus about 62% of the inhabitants acquire basic education. The main occupations of the people include fishing, farming, business and hunting.

The area is a growing industrial, commercial and educational center. The Municipality has twelve (12) government-controlled secondary schools and 50 privately owned secondary schools of which two are special education centers.

Population of the Study

The population of this study involves all special education stakeholders such as members of National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET), special education lecturers, special education teachers, desk officers in Ministry of Education, post graduate special education students and members of National Association of Exceptional Children (NAEC). There are 96 special education stakeholders in Port-Harcourt municipality as of the time the research was conducted.

Sampling Techniques

The procedure adopted for this study was census survey. This was necessary for the fact that only special education stakeholders were selected and the population was meagre and manageable. Thus, census survey collects complete information from all participants in the population. The researcher therefore visited school, offices and Ministry of Education in the study area and purposively used all the available participants in this category based on their disposition.

Sample

The sample of the study consisted of 120 special education stakeholders (Table 1). This represents 94.1 percent of the population.

Table 1: SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

S/ NO	Demographic Data	Male	Female	Participant
	Stakeholders			
1	Desk officers in Ministry of Education	7	4	11
2	Post-graduate students	5	18	23
3	Members of NAEC/NASET	20	6	26
4	Teachers/lecturers	41	29	70

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection a questionnaire titled "questionnaire on adapted sports and social interaction with hearing impaired students" which constituted 20 items designed by the researcher to generate information from participants in Port-Harcourt Municipality. The items were based on the literature reviewed on challenges that hinder effective implementation of special needs education policies and management. The instrument comprised of two parts.

Section A contained items seeking the demographic data of respondents such as sex, age, and type of disability. While the Section B contained hypothetical statements to measure the four major variables of the study. Items in this section were designed on a modified 4-point Likert Scale, scaled as "SA" for strongly agree, "A" for agree, "D" for disagree and "SD" for strongly disagree respectively. The items were positively and negatively worded.

Validity of the Instrument

The instrument was designed and presented to two lecturers in the Department of Foundation Education, University of Port-Harcourt to ascertain whether the item on the instrument were related to the hypothesis were required to test. The feedback from the lecturers showed that the item on the instrument were adequate to generate data required to test the hypothesis. The instrument was also vetted for face validity by an expert in Educational Test and Measurement. Finally, the instruments were presented to the project supervisor who vetted for content validity of the instrument by removing irrelevant items, introduced relevant ones and approved it for administration.

Procedure for Data Collection

The validated copy of the instrument was photocopied and administered by the researcher to the 115 participants of the study. The exercise of administering and collecting the data lasted for five days due to the small of participants used. The total of 120 questionnaire copies were distributed and retrieved with only 5 copies missing. This implied that a 95.1 percent retrieval of questionnaires was obtained from the study.

Procedure for Data Preparation and Coding

The data collected from the field was first prepared by scoring and coding of each retrieved questionnaire. Negatively worded and positively worded items were identified by indicating a negative and positive sign respectively and appropriately against each item as stated. Then each item in the questionnaire was individually assigned a score or coded based on the response option provided for each item using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science). For example, Section A part of the instrument, the first item was age categorized into five 20-25 was assigned 1-point, 26-30 2-points, and 31 and above 3-points. The second item was sex of participants which was categorized into two. Male was assigned 1-point and female 2-points. The third item was category of participants. Ministry desk officers was assigned 1-point, post-graduate student was assigned 2-points, members of NAEC/NAEC was assigned 3-points, and lecturers/teachers was assigned 4-points.

In Section B part of the instrument, items were scored based on the modified 4 points Likert Scale beginning with positively worded items. SA for Strongly Agree was scored 4-points, A for Agree was scored 3-points, D for Disagree was scored 2-points and SD for Strongly Disagree was scored 1-point. The scoring was reversed for negatively worded items. After scoring all the 105 copies of the questionnaire, the data were analyzed using SPSS. The output from the SPSS was used for statistical analysis.

Procedure for Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, each hypothesis was restated as in chapter one. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used to analyze the data. The variable and the hypotheses were identified as follows:

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management.

Variables:

Inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Description of Major Variables of the Study

The variables of the study were factors that hinder effective implementation of special needs education policies and management. These factors were operationally defined as those variables that prevent the implementation of special education policies and management for special needs children. Thus, the factors identified and used in forming the main hypotheses which directed the study were: Inadequate funding, Absence of enforceable legislation, Inadequate personnel, and Implementation of special needs education policies and management.

The data obtained were generated by using a 25-item questionnaire. This was administered to one hundred and twenty (120) participant purposively selected for the study. The mean and standard deviation of the variables were calculated and presented as shown in Table 2

TABLE 2: The Descriptive Statistics of the Major Variables of the Study

S/N0	Variable	Sample	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Inadequate funding	103	13.73	4.56
2	Absence of enforceable legislation	103	12.57	4.27
3	Inadequate personnel	103	13.54	3.43

Hypothesis by Hypothesis Presentation of Result

In presenting the result of this study, each null hypothesis was restated. This was followed by the identification of major variables and the analytical tool adopted before the interpretation of results all at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management. The two variables correlated were inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management. To test this hypothesis, data from the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were subjected to statistical analysis, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. The result of the analysis was presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis of the Relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management (N=103)

Variables	Mean	SD	ΣX^2 ΣY^2	ΣXY	Sig	r
Inadequate funding	13.73	4.56	934.50			
Implementation of special needs education policies	12.32	5.11	1628.39	456.48	0.002	0.49

P<0.05 df=101

The Table 3 above, shows that inadequate funding with a mean of 13.73 and SD of 4.56 and implementation of special needs education policies and management having mean of 12.32 and SD of 5.11 and sig. of 0.002 produced an r= 0.49 at df of 101 shows that inadequate funding is significantly related with implementation of special needs education policies and management. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This indicates inadequate funding of education is a barrier to implementation of special needs education policies and management. The more inadequate the fund provision, the greater barrier it poses to implementation of special needs education policies and management.

Summary of Findings

Based on the statistical analysis of each of the hypotheses which directed the study, the following findings were made from the study:

There is a significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management.

Discussion of Findings

Inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management.

The result of statistical analysis of Hypothesis One of the studies has revealed that there is a significant relationship between inadequate funding and implementation of special needs education policies and management. The result also shows that adequate funding is very vital to implementing special needs education policies and management.

The findings of this study are in agreement with the work of Thani [6] which asserted that adequate funding is crucial to the successful implementation of special needs education. This is because money is required to employ desired manpower, procure and maintain infrastructural facilities, instructional materials, enacting and implementing disability laws and to cope with emergencies arising from expansion or paramount in both the private and public sectors of the economy. Special education service delivery cannot effectively take place where there is no fund for the procurement of the needed facilitates as well as the recruitment of human resources involved. For instance, in Nigeria funding is one of the obstacles to special education service delivery whether in special schools or regular schools. This is because the government does not consider this educational subsector a priority.

Similarly, Mba [7] report that Nigeria is one of the countries that have not given adequate attention to the educational sector, funding the educational programmes from the national projects with less than 10% annual budget. Subsequent upon, this, the administrative structure of special education in the country is generally poor. There is no special arrangement for the implementation of inclusive programmes in the country. Furthermore, the idea of education of special needs children remains unattainable in the country when there is poor funding hence evidence points that the little amount of fund from the government for the implementation of educational programmes is not judiciously utilized resulting to collectively poor remuneration of personnel that oversees education of deaf children.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Survey was adopted for the study. A total sample of 115 participants was purposively selected for the study. A well-structured and validated questionnaire was the main instrument for data collection. The formulated hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Analysis in SPSS software. All hypotheses were subjected to testing at the traditional 0.05 level of significance.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study conclusion was drawn as follows:

Inadequate funding is a barrier to implementing special needs education policies and management. Quality education for special needs children is only cost-effective when adequate funding is committed to it.

Legislation is the only instrument that provides clear guidelines on the implementation of special needs education policies and management. If this tool is not available, the

education of these learners assumes a status of humanitarian service and not a right-based service. The quality of special needs education policies implementation is dependent on the availability and quality of special education personnel. Hence, the quality of its implementation cannot exceed the availability of skilled manpower in the field of disability.

Recommendations

- Government, NGOs and individuals with philanthropic mindset should redirect their attention to providing the required funding that ensures cost-effective special needs education for children with disabilities.
- The incumbent government should without hesitation give attention to Disability Bill that is formulated to offer equality and improve the quality life in all facets and education of persons with disabilities.
- Scholarships and staff development programmes should be offered to teachers and intending special education teachers as a motivation or incentive in order to increase special education professionals.

Suggestion for further studies

Suggestions are hereby made that researchers interested in carrying out further studies in this area can investigate on the following:

- Global best practices in implementation of special needs education policies and management in any area of choice.

- Similar topic with larger scope and sample size could be researched upon to give a more valid generalization of findings.

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