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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Planning and Supervision of Instructional Leadership for Inclusive Learning: Issues and Strategies for Improvement

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ABSTRACT

Planning and Supervision of Instructional Leadership is germane to the successful implementation of an educational programme. More importantly, inclusive learning opportunity for secondary school students will be strengthened and sustained if educational leaders at different levels of secondary education adequately plan and supervise instructional learning processes and leadership. This paper therefore provides a comprehensive framework for planning and supervising of Instructional Leadership that promotes inclusive learning in Nigerian Secondary School System. The Framework identifies critical elements of inclusive learning, instructional leadership and teacher capacity building to ensure equity and academic excellence among the various learners. The papers also acknowledged some gaps which are regarded as issues to include dearth of qualified teachers, poor resource availability, policy implementation problem among others. Effective planning and supervision strategies are consequently suggested to assure inclusivity, social justice and effective teaching and learning of students at the secondary tier of education.

Keywords: Planning; supervision; instructional leadership; inclusive; social justice

INTRODUCTION

Education is an instrument for social reconstruction and national development. Every nation put in place the type of education that will meet the need and aspiration of the citizen for political, social and economic growth. It is important to note that education is the right of every child as stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 which states that every person has the right to education and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNESCO, 2020) which provides that children with disabilities should also have effective access to and receive education, training, healthcare. This is equally one of the international agenda for Education for All (EFA). This agenda supports that education should be inclusive as to meet the needs of everyone

irrespective of their races, colour, disabilities, albinism and vulnerability (FME, 2023).

Inclusive learning has been universally recognised as a means of attaining equity, justice and quality education for all learners, especially those who have been conventionally excluded from mainstream education due to disability, ethnicity, gender, giftedness or other characteristics. Inclusive learning will be effective and efficient if educational leaders adequately plan and supervise instructional learning processes and leadership.

Secondary Education is the education received after primary education, and before tertiary education. Secondary schools as opined by Ogbonnaya (2015) are established to provide middle manpower for the economy and to prepare students for tertiary education.

Secondary school education is a very vital level of the educational system as it is the bridge between the primary and tertiary institutions where students are been trained to acquire skills that will make them self-reliant and useful members of the society. It has to be all inclusive for there to be social justice in order to accommodate everyone without discrimination.

To this effect, the study investigated planning and supervision of instructional leadership for inclusive learning: issues and strategies for improvement with focus on concepts of Instructional planning, Instructional supervision, instructional leadership, inclusive learning, elements of inclusive learning, issues of inclusive learning and finally strategies for inclusive learning.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Instructional Planning

Planning is a vital part of educational management. It involves the process of identifying and projecting sequence of activities to be carried out in an organization in order to achieve set goals. Duruh (2018), defined planning as the act of foretelling and preparing for the future which involves the process of working out possible actions and the methods for accomplishing the goals of an organization.

Planning is futuristic and requires the identification of goals and objectives of an organization and looking at modalities/ ways of attaining them. The goals, tasks, policies and nature of management are elements needed in the planning process of any organization for qualitative results (Tijjani and Adegbemile, 2015). Educational planning involves the preparation and total implementation of the plans made.

Instructional planning as cited by Olibie in Ayeni (2022) is described as the systematic process of selection of subject topics, formulating quantifiable instructional objectives, obtaining content-knowledge, deciding the best teaching methods, choosing suitable instructional materials, ascertaining suitable techniques for class control, determining measures for evaluating students' performance and giving feedback for the purpose of attaining educational goals. Kumar (2020) equally instructional planning as a planned, systematic process of designing, implementing and appraising learning outcomes to attain definite learning objectives, looking at student diversity, technology integration and critical thinking skills. Instructional planning aids the teacher in the preparation of learning activities by making effective use of the suitable instructional methods and materials in the teaching-learning process thereby reducing

wastages and preventing nonconformity with predetermined goals.

The success or failure of inclusive learning in Nigeria will depend on the nature of the implementation of the planned instructions. There is therefore, need to continuously supervise the progress made, identify errors in the plan and determine how to surmount them even if it means altering the original plan, principles and decisions in order to achieve better results. Hence, educational planners should be well informed of the unique nature of students' diverse needs and ambitions so as to possess extensive statistical data that will enable them improve on instructional plans which would significantly advance the existing situation of inclusive learning in Nigerian secondary schools. Trained personnel should be employed to help actualize inclusive learning in our secondary schools.

Concept of Instructional Supervision

Supervision of schools and instructional leadership are essential tool for the effective planning and management of the educational system in the attainment of educational goals. The place of supervision cannot be underrated, as it is to ensure quality and accountability in the system. Consequently, it is an educational effort that is focused on improving the teaching and learning processes that will be beneficial to the learner. Tijjani and Adegbemide (2015) perceives supervision as "a deliberately planned programme for the improvement and consolidation of instruction involving a continuous process of guidance based on frequent visit to the place of instruction in order to define and re-define the objectives of instruction. According to Duruh (2018), school supervision requires all efforts of authorized school officials in providing instructional leadership to teachers and non-teachers for the enhancement of instruction in meeting the goals and objectives of the school. School supervision enable teachers to improve on their jobs better.

According to Nnebedum and Akinfolarin (2017), instructional supervision is the actions taken to guide and monitor teachers and also providing supportive and favourable atmosphere for improvement on the instructional process. Akpotu (2019), defined instructional supervision as a systematic and continuous practice of guiding, monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning activities to guarantee quality education delivery, improve teacher competence and enhance student outcomes. Oyewole and Alonge as cited in Oke and Olakotan (2020) posited that

instructional supervision is one of the several methods employed in realizing educational objectives. School administrators must ensure that teachers plan their lessons promptly; structure their lessons with an interesting beginning; revise previous knowledge and encapsulate major points at the end of the lesson among others for the improvement of instructional process (Oyewole & Alonge in Oke & Olakotan, 2020 and Onumah, 2016).

In summary instructional supervision involves checking of teachers' lesson notes, scheme of work, students' notes, teachers' punctuality and regularity in class, classroom observation, moderation of examination papers and marking schemes among others. Effective instructional supervision is a key for inclusive learning in secondary schools and it must be done regularly in order to ensure that the goals and objectives of inclusive learning are met.

Concept of Instructional Leadership

Effective management of any organization can only be attained through good instructional leadership. Duruh, (2018) in his opinion perceived leadership as "the process of directing/controlling the activities and behavior of individual or group towards goal achievement in a given situation. Instructional leadership is the process of guiding, directing and supporting teachers and students to attain academic excellence which is directed towards curriculum implementation, teacher professional development and students learning outcomes (Akpotu, 2019). Instructional leader develops and communicate clear vision for academic excellence, ensure that teaching and learning is in line with the curriculum standard, provide training for teachers, encourage student-centre learning etc. Agenyi (2018), stated that the principal is the head and leader of secondary school and also the chief accounting officer of the school, he/she supervises the staff, manages resources, source for funds, assign duties and direct member of staff in their activities in the day to day running of the school.

Similarly, Onuma (2016) asserted that the principal has the primary functions of exhibiting effective instructional leadership practices for the improvement of diversified curriculum and quality of instructional programme for effective attainment of set school goals. Ahmed (2016) mentioned instructional leadership practices to include: outlining and communicating school goals, supervision and evaluation of instruction, management of curriculum, monitoring of students' progress, protection of instructional time, maintaining high visibility,

motivation of teachers, promotion of professional training and providing incentives for students.

The principal as the head of secondary school is responsible for the provision of instructional leadership which enhance quality teaching and learning through supervision of instructional programme in the attainment of educational goals and objectives. Inclusive school leadership takes place within a regulatory framework that universally defines inclusive learning and it regulates the available resources, decisions made and clarifies responsibilities. Inclusive school leaders combine elements of instructional, distributed and transformative leadership models in their school leadership (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2020). Looking at the special nature of inclusive learning, an efficient administrative and instructional leadership is needed in order to motivate both the secondary school teachers and students for actualization of the goals and objectives of inclusivity in education. Principals and teachers' performance in the implementation of inclusive learning is greatly dependent on their level of awareness of inclusive education.

Concept of Inclusive Learning

According to UNESCO (2020), inclusive learning is defined as a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning and reducing exclusion from education. This means that all learners have the right to a quality education that caters, to the extent possible, for their individual needs. Some countries around the world including a few states and schools in Nigeria have been promoting inclusive education policies and practices. Inclusive learning has to do with 'Education for All' a process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and it includes removing barriers to learning by involving all learners who otherwise would have been denied access through marginalization and segregation (FME, 2023). The Nigerian Government commitment in ensuring Education for All being one of the signatories to the Salamanca Declaration-1994, Dakar Framework of Action-2000, and United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities-2006 and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed by the UN in 2015 in which education of learners with Special Needs is to be implemented through an Inclusive Education (IE) approach. These declarations requires the governments' of all nations to adopt as a matter of law and policy of the principles of inclusive

education by enrolling all children in school among others. Nigeria Constitution strongly protects human rights on all grounds. while the UBEC Act-2004 emphasizes free and compulsory education for all Nigerian children of school age irrespective of their diverse needs. Furthermore, the National Policy on Education (NPE) promises education for all without any discrimination and emphasizes the need for the inclusion of children with Special Needs Education (SNE) (FRN, 2014). The core value of these treaties and Policy documents is that all children have the right to receive the kind of education that does not discriminate on any grounds such as ethnicity, religion, economic status, language, gender, disability etc.

Inclusive Education is a new approach to educating children with disabilities/challenges and learning difficulties alongside the normal ones in the same age-appropriate classes that are in their neighbourhood schools in order to receive high-quality education, interventions and supports that enable them succeed in the core curriculum (Suzanne, 2015; Singh, 2016; and Lilla, 2017). Inclusive learning aids the facilitation of learning and equally boosts access, inclusion, and participation for both teachers/facilitators and learners' diversities in the teaching/learning process.

In spite of the universal free access to basic education and the huge amount of resources invested in education, many children are still left out of school because of marginalization due to gender, poverty, disability, conflict, minority, ethnicity/language/religion, cultural choice, geography(remoteness), age, albinism, almajiri practice, nomadism, migrant fishermen and farmers, teacher/facilitator to learner ratio etc. Some others drop out of school as a result of unsafe/insanitary school environments, abuse and discrimination at school, or lack of effective teaching techniques to help them learn. Inclusive learning is designed to address/accommodate all these issues.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4) equally affirmed that inclusivity in education so respects all learners, especially gifted children, those with disabilities, the girl child, those belonging to ethnic minorities, hard-to-reach communities and other out of school children, youth and adults through access to free, qualitative and compulsory Basic Education (FME,2023). Inclusive learning is associated with tenets of equity, social justice, democracy and participation which promote excellence for all learners (UNESCO, European Agency and G3ict, 2014).

The principles framework guiding inclusivity as stated in FME (2023) are;

- Inclusivity in learning ensures that all learners have equal rights to access quality education.
- Learners have their unique needs and there is need to support them so that their full potentials will be attained.
- Discriminatory/abusive attitudes and practices should be identified by teachers so as to reduce barriers to learning and participation.
- To identify the psychosocial and health needs of the learners thereafter, provide support to prevent the problems.
- To ensure that quality education is accessed by learners in a conducive and safe learning environment.
- Inclusion of all learners in the same learning environment will encourage social interaction and acceptance of diversities.
- Educators should be empowered in their classroom practices to be more responsive and flexible in meeting the needs of learners.

Elements of inclusive learning

Elements of Inclusive learning could be categorised as follows:

- Children with challenges and other children: Ensuring inclusive learning for all children and young people which prevents racism and discrimination on any ground, promotes citizenship and teaches them to understand and to accept differences of opinion, of conviction, of belief and of lifestyle, while respecting the rule of law, diversity and gender equality (European Union Education Ministers, 2015). When the challenged and other children are properly managed and taught how to amicably co-exist irrespective of their diversities, it will enhance a positive Inclusive community, where the able ones will not stigmatize the challenged students but rather, help them where necessary.
- The teacher: Teachers act as role models for both learners, they are key to creating an effective and attractive environment which is conducive for learning. According to European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, (2020), they are major players in building effective links between different levels of education and training, families, the world of work and the local community, with a common

aim of raising learner achievement. The teachers are expected to undertake special training in addition to their initial teaching knowledge and skills so as to be equipped with the required skill to handle all students in their inclusive classrooms.

- **The Family:** The conditions of challenged children are best understood by their parents and as such they should create an interaction with their teachers to make inclusion of these special children less stressful. They should follow up on what was learned in the school and also support the children to build their self-confidence at home.
- **Supportive Inclusive Learning Services:** These are activities and assistance needed to help the physically, emotionally, and intellectually challenged children to cope with school work. Christopher (2014) posited that these services are mostly provided by institutions outside the school though needed and contracted to achieve the goal of inclusive learning such as special teachers, speech therapist, physiotherapist, occupational therapist and guidance and Counsellors
- **School Staff/Educational Assistant:** They help the teachers' in keeping watch/attending to the special children in the classroom by providing specialized instructions using school facilities to ensure their safety, thereby enabling them to be independent and to build self-esteem.
- **Instructional Adaptation:** This is the teacher's way of adjusting the Instructional contents and teaching methods to accommodate both classes of students to learn and participate fully in academic contents. This is done to meet the needs of individual learner in an Inclusive Classroom.

Issues with inclusive learning

Inclusivity in learning is be devilled with different issues /challenges among which are;

- **Accessibility of curriculum and materials:** Most curricula are rigid and learning objectives do not accommodate learners facing barriers to learning, leaving teachers with little or no room to plan (Tomlinson, 2017). Treviranus (2014) opined those materials for teaching such as digital materials, braille or large print texts, audio descriptions may not be easily accessible.

- **Teacher Training and Support:** Secondary school teachers are supposed to be given extra training from the conventional training to enable them adapt with the teaching of both the challenged and conventional students. Instructions are differentiated by teachers to enable them cater for diverse learning needs of the students. Teachers lack the requisite training and may struggle to adapt to instruction (Hall, 2015).
- **Physical Access:** Most secondary schools were built without consideration for persons with disabilities which hinders their movement. Physical access such as ramps, elevators, adaptive furniture, and accessible restrooms, playgrounds and recreational spaces poses barriers to inclusive learning (Christopher, 2014).
- **Adaptive Technology and Resources:** Some technology assisted resources like Text-to-speech software, speech-to-text software, and adaptive hardware are not readily available in secondary schools and this can impede inclusion in learning. This is supported by Burgstahler (2020) who stated that there is Limited access to assistive technology
- **Bullying and Social Exclusion:** One of the issues that may be faced in inclusivity in learning is fear of the challenged been bullied by the regular students which can lead to social isolation/withdrawal. Tomlinson (2017) asserted that bullying can have severe consequences.
- **Funding and Resource Allocation:** Inadequate funding is a serious barrier to inclusive learning as teachers have to be trained to be acquitted with modalities of coping with the disadvantaged students and facilities/materials to aid teaching and learning for proper integration need to be provided. This was affirmed by Kagan (2015), who stated that limited funding is a major issue hampering the success of inclusivity in learning. Government policies according to UNESCO (2020) pose a major external challenge to inclusion due to lack of finance that weakens the implementation success of inclusive education
- **Parent- Teacher communication:** Parents of children with disability will obviously be worried if their children will be stigmatized or not, and if

they will be able to adapt to the environment of other normal children. While the parents of the normal children without disabilities are equally anxious that learning process of their children will be disturbed.

Strategies for inclusive learning:

A lot of strategies have been put forward to help ameliorate issues faced with the planning and supervision of instructional leadership for inclusive learning. Some of these strategies are discussed below:

1. Government should develop education policy for inclusive education that will promote inclusive learning environment to accommodate all categories of learners and encourage the teachers. The environment should be such to integrate the learners without segregations or give room for stigmatization but rather equity and social justice.
2. A new curricular and instructional resources that will promote inclusive learning should be developed. The course content should be such that will be individualized to meet the physically, emotionally, and intellectually needs of challenged students.
3. Teachers' professional development should be encouraged and they should be trained continuously on resource management, classroom management, pedagogic skills to address, educational needs of individual learners, inclusion, encourage the production of learning and teaching materials.
4. Regular monitoring and inspection of schools should be carried out on a regular basis. Teachers are expected to be dynamic in their choice of teaching methods by using varied instructional strategies and resources to accommodate/meet the needs of all learners as every student have different challenges, learning and assimilating.
5. Continuous assessment and feedback are required for effect actualization of inclusivity in learning. teachers should use teachers should use varied instructional strategies and resources that will meet the learning needs should be invested upon.
6. There should be equal distribution of learning resources which should be made available to all learners. These resources include funds and instructional aids such as Braille kits and

materials, magnifiers, large print examination papers, textbooks and reading materials, and other assistive technology/devices etc. to cater for the diversity of learners.

7. Community participation in the management of schools should be encouraged for successful inclusion in learning.
8. Educational leaders and government should promote the culture of inclusivity in diversity among learners and citizens.

The strategies outlined underscore that inclusive learning can only be fully realized through deliberate planning, strong instructional leadership, and sustained collaboration among stakeholders. Policies that enshrine equity, curricula that reflect diversity, professional development that equips teachers with adaptive skills, and the provision of adequate resources are all indispensable for creating a learning environment where no student is left behind. Furthermore, continuous monitoring, assessment, and community engagement are vital in ensuring that these strategies translate into meaningful practices within schools. When government, educators, families, and communities work in concert, inclusive learning ceases to be an aspiration and becomes a lived reality that promotes social justice, equity, and educational excellence for all learners.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Inclusive learning is not merely a pedagogical adjustment but a transformative philosophy that redefines the goals and practices of education. It seeks to create schools where equity, participation, and social justice are embedded in every aspect of teaching and learning. The discussion in this paper demonstrates that planning and supervision of instructional leadership are not ends in themselves but instruments through which inclusive learning becomes a reality. Properly executed, these processes ensure that schools are prepared to meet the diverse needs of learners, dismantle systemic barriers, and cultivate a culture where all students regardless of background or ability can thrive. More importantly, inclusive learning should be understood as a developmental imperative for Nigeria. A nation cannot achieve sustainable growth while leaving sections of its population excluded from quality education. Instructional leadership that is grounded in inclusivity contributes directly to human capital development, national cohesion, and social transformation. It prepares future citizens to respect

diversity, embrace collaboration, and build more equitable communities. Thus, the value of inclusive learning extends far beyond the classroom it shapes the moral and developmental fabric of society.

In essence, the challenge before educational leaders is not whether inclusive learning is desirable, but how it can be systematically and sustainably realized. This demands vision, commitment, and accountability from policymakers, school administrators, and teachers alike. By embedding inclusivity in the planning and supervision of instruction, Nigeria's secondary schools can move from aspiration to action, ensuring that the right to education becomes a lived reality for all learners.

To strengthen inclusive learning in Nigerian secondary schools, it is recommended that governments and educational authorities develop comprehensive policies that explicitly integrate inclusivity into instructional planning and supervision frameworks. Such policies should establish clear guidelines for curriculum adaptation, provision of assistive technologies, and equitable resource distribution to ensure that all learners irrespective of disability, gender, or socio-economic background have equal opportunities to succeed.

Equally important is investment in continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders. Training should focus on differentiated instruction, classroom management for diverse learners, and the use of adaptive technologies. Principals, as instructional leaders, must also be equipped with supervisory skills that promote accountability, mentorship, and collaborative problem-solving within schools. By strengthening teacher competence and leadership capacity, inclusive practices can become embedded within everyday instructional processes rather than viewed as additional burdens.

Finally, inclusive learning requires active collaboration between schools, families, and communities. Parents and community stakeholders should be meaningfully engaged in supporting learners with special needs through advocacy, resource mobilization, and participatory school governance. Regular monitoring and feedback mechanisms must also be institutionalized to track progress and address challenges promptly. When supported by adequate funding, policy coherence, and societal commitment, these strategies will not only promote inclusivity but also enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of

secondary education in Nigeria.

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