

## TEACHERS' RELATED VARIABLES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN IKOM EDUCATION ZONE, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the influence of teachers' related variables on attitudes toward inclusive education in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study, three hypotheses were formulated. Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. One hundred and fifty-eight teachers were selected for the study. The selection was done through the stratified and simple random sampling technique. The Teachers' Attitudes on Inclusive Education Questionnaire (TAIEQ) instrument was used for data collection. The questionnaire was subjected to validation by experts in measurement, evaluation and psychology. The reliability estimate of 0.83 of the instrument was established through the use of Chronbach reliability method. Independent t-test analysis was adopted to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The result of the analysis revealed that gender, teachers' teaching experience and teachers' academic qualification significantly influenced attitude towards inclusive education. It was therefore recommended that teachers should develop positive attitudes toward inclusive education as this is quite crucial for the social, emotional and intellectual development of all learners and not just in an inclusive environment only.

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**Keywords:** *Teacher, Attitude, Inclusive Education, Gender, Academic Experience and Academic Qualification*

### INTRODUCTION

Inclusive Education is a global reform strategy which intends to ensure that no child is left out of school or excluded from education for any

reason. This has to do with educational practices which make provision for all learners within all settings most readily available to them. Accordingly, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Salamanca Conference Declaration of 1994, summed it up thus: "Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions" (Ozaji, Unachukwu & Kolo, 2016 p. 67). Ahmed, Sharma and Doppeler (2012) describe inclusive education as the inclusion of all children regardless of physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions.

As wonderful as the Salamanca Declaration of 1994 may appear to be, inclusive education has not recorded much success as expected, particularly in Ikom Education Zone, of Cross River State. This is seemingly true because in many quarters within the zone, the concept of inclusive education is still strange to most people even among stakeholders especially within the secondary school system. One cannot point out one or two public secondary schools within the zone where these special learners (The blind, deaf, dumb, mental retarded and the likes) are seen sharing the same facilities with the normal learners which of course, is the essence of inclusiveness. The inclusive education is still a mirage among learners in the secondary system in Ikom Education Zone.

Many factors may be responsible for this ugly situation but since it has to do with teaching and learning, one should consider the teachers' factor as fundamental. Rene (2015) observed that the teacher remains the live-wire of any school system. While Akim (2014) opines that what a compass is to the ship captain, is a teacher to the school system. Provision can be made for other factors such as a good perimeter fence for the school, good compound, football pitch and other sporting facilities; well ventilated classrooms, good seats and a wonderful sitting arrangement, staff room, laboratories, sick bay to mention just a few, but where the teacher is not available, nothing can be put to good use. This implies that a teacher is indispensable in the school system.

A teacher is a person who helps learners to acquire knowledge, competence or virtue. (Wikipedia <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>). Whereas, Isangedighi (2007:378) defines a teacher as "a trained professional with knowledge and skills as well as a level of competence in the task of teaching and remoulding the learners under his or her care". Indeed, it is

not just enough to be a teacher but one with good qualities that will bring about learners' achievement. Supporting this assertion, Peterson-Dehica (2016) maintains that students are most affected by the quality of their teachers. Not only do they interact with teachers everyday in the classroom, but for the quality of that interaction for the learners' future. Furthermore, he listed five qualities of a good teacher to include; the ability to develop relationship with their students, patience, caring and kind personality; knowledge of learners; dedication to teaching and engaging students in learning. To perform these duties effectively, teachers must have the right attitude towards learners. This agrees with Anim (2018) that if a teacher does not have a right attitude towards a particular learner, it is difficult to see how any amount of extra resources could be of any meaning, otherwise, teachers' attitudes play a significant role when it has to do with teaching and learning, particularly in an inclusive education.

Ahmed, Sharma, & Deppeler, (2012), maintains that an attitude is a disposition to respond favourably or unfavourably to an object, person, institution or event. Attitude can also be explained as "predispositions to respond to some class of stimulus with certain classes of responses" (Gross in Tungaraza, 2013 p. 24). Attitude can be described in terms of three components of affective, which involves a person's feelings or emotions about the attitude object; behavioural, which has to do with the way the attitude we have influence how we act or behave, while the cognitive component deals with knowledge about an attitude object. (McLoed, 2018). There are four functions of attitude (Gross, 2010). These are knowledge, adjustive, value expressive and ego-defensive function. Gross (2010) believes that attitudes serve both conscious and unconscious motives.

From the foregoing therefore, teachers' attitude seem to be a very crucial variable in dealing with the issue of inclusive education. It is on this note that Karp (2011) opines that the success or failure of inclusive programmes in school depends on teachers' teaching strategies and attitudes. Supporting this view, Boer (2011) observes that the implementation of inclusive education is dependent on the teachers' willingness and attitude to accept the inclusive model. To Cassady (2014), the negative attitudes that some teachers have towards inclusive education can have a detrimental impact on students learning and also impede the success of inclusive education model. This attests to the fact that teachers'

attitudes contribute to teaching effectiveness and subsequent enhancement of students learning and achievements.

Teachers being the live wire in any educational system and especially in inclusive education, need to possess a positive attitude towards the learners. This is actually necessary in order to enhance learning. Accordingly, Thomas (2008) maintains that the teacher can make or mar a learner depending on his attitude towards the learner within and outside the classroom. He observes further that a teacher's positive attitude towards learners is not only a boost and motivation but enhances learning. Whereas, a teacher with a negative attitude towards learners would rather frustrate them. Sharing the same view, Haran (2012) asserts that the success of inclusive education depends largely on teachers' attitudes. He believes that in the classroom, teachers either demonstrate positive or negative attitude towards learners. When teachers portray negative attitude towards learners especially in an inclusive environment, learners' success become difficult while the reverse is the case when positive attitude is demonstrated.

Teachers' positive or negative attitude in the classroom may be as a result of the following factors: the intensity of the disability, lack of special training, teaching equipment, school environment, gender, academic experience, qualification and others. However, this work is focused on only gender, academic experience and teacher qualification. Gender has to do with male and female teachers and their attitudes towards inclusive education. Researchers such as Al-Zyoudi (2006) and Zanda (2012) have found that female teachers expressed more positive attitude towards the idea of inclusiveness than their male counterparts. However, Parasuram (2006) used a One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to examine if there was a statistically significant difference between the mean scores of male and females and found no significant difference between the two means. In another development, Ahmed, et al (2012) carried out a research on some demographic variables affecting teachers attitude towards inclusive education in Bangladesh. Data were collected from 738 teachers working in 293 government primary schools in Bangladesh. The researchers employed Linear Multiple Regression, One – way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Pearson product moment to analyze the data. It was revealed that gender has a significant relationship with teachers attitude towards inclusive education, that, the attitude of male teachers were slightly more positive than their female colleagues. This finding was

contradicted with the findings of Park and Chitigo (2011) who concluded that there had been inconsistent results regarding gender differences in teachers attitude towards special learners.

Teachers' (academic) teaching experience matters so much when considering teachers' attitude especially in an inclusive environment. This has to do with how long the teacher has taught, different classes of learners taught and perhaps, different school locations. Tungaraza (2013) in his work on college tutors' attitude towards inclusive education in Morogoro Region, Tanzania sampled 55 (26 males and 29 females) college teachers from two Teachers' Training Colleges. He used survey research design and Attitude Towards Mainstraining Scale (ATMS) instrument for data collection as well as t – test and simple percentage to analyze his data. The result revealed no significant difference between teachers with long experience and those with short experience in their attitudes towards inclusive education. Again, there was no significant difference between young and old tutors in their attitude towards inclusive education. This result is similar to the conclusion of Thomas (2008) that teachers attitude towards integration was not associated with age and experience. On the other hand, other studies by Al – Zyoudi (2006) and Petari (2008) found that teachers attitudes appear to vary with their perception of inclusion according to age and teaching experience. Subban and Sharma (2005) also found that the most experienced teachers had the lowest level of acceptance of inclusion. In addition, Parasuram (2006) found that young teachers and those with less than five years of experience had more positive attitude than older teachers with many years of experience.

The academic qualification of teachers have also been investigated in respect to their attitudes toward inclusive education. This is concerned with teachers' status in the teaching profession. Again, Ahmed, et al (2012) work also showed a significant relationship between educational qualification of teachers and their attitude towards inclusion. Teachers with Masters Degrees and above have a negative attitude compared to teachers with Bachelor Degrees and below. This finding was quite contradictory with the result of Parasuram (2006), where it was found that teachers with Masters Degrees had positive attitude towards inclusive education than those with Bachelor Degrees and below. Taiye (2012) carried out a study on Teachers attitude as a predictor for the improvement of inclusive education in public secondary schools in

Ibadan Metropoly. He sampled 240 (125 female and 115 male) teachers from 24 public secondary schools. He used t-test and One-way for Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for data analysis. The result showed that gender, qualification and experience of teachers were predictors for improvement of inclusive education.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As fantastic as the Salamanca Conference Declaration of Inclusive Education of 1994 may appear to be, inclusive education has not recorded much success as expected in Ikom Education Zone in Cross River State. This is so because in many quarters within the zone, the concept of inclusive education is still strange to most people even among the stakeholders especially in the secondary school system. It has been observed that no single secondary school within the zone and the state in general where special learners – the blind, deaf, dumb and others, are seen sharing the same facilities with their colleagues, the normal learners, which of course, is the essence of inclusiveness. Inclusive education is a situation where all learners (special and normal) regardless of their conditions are meant to share the same facilities in school. To make the situation worse in Ikom Education zone, there is not even one special centre for special learners within a zone of six Local Government Areas even before the declaration of inclusive education policy.

With this development, one can observe the kind of look warm attitude and less attention and less attention paid to Inclusive Education despite the emphasis by UNESCO on access to appropriate education for persons with special needs being the main thrust of inclusive education. Attempts by private individuals and organizations to set up centres or schools for these programmes in Ikom Education Zone have not been fruitful because of the nonchalant attitudes of the stakeholders especially the teachers towards inclusive education. This is demonstrated by teachers who specialized in special Education not being interested to be posted to special schools even in other zones. This is enough to conclude teachers' attitude towards inclusive education. More so, efforts by the Federal and State governments to grant scholarship to special students and teachers undergoing training on these programmes have not changed the narratives. Researchers on their part, have carried out researches on factors like physical environment, government policies, professionalism, special equipment and others to ameliorate the situation, this notwithstanding, the situation remains the same. The slow pace of success

of inclusive education in Ikom Education Zone has caused researchers to carry out researches on factors like physical environment, government policies, professionalism, special equipment and others to ameliorate the situation, this notwithstanding, the situation remains the same. It is on this premise that the researchers set out to investigate the influence teachers' related variables such as gender, academic experience and qualification on teachers' attitudes toward inclusive education in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State since teachers are considered as catalysts for success in any educational system.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of teachers' related variables on attitudes towards inclusive education in Ikom educational zone, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to determine the:

1. The influence of teachers' gender on their attitudes toward inclusive education
2. The influence of teachers' teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusive education.
3. The influence of teachers' academic qualification on their attitudes toward inclusive education.

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions were raised to guide the study:

1. To what extent do teachers' gender influence their attitudes toward inclusive education?
2. To what extent do teachers' teaching experiences influence their attitudes towards inclusive education?
3. How does teachers' academic qualifications influence their attitudes toward inclusive education.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were tested in the study:

1. There is no significant influence of teachers' gender on their attitudes toward inclusive education.
2. There is no significant influence of teachers' teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusive education.
3. There is no significant influence of teachers' academic qualification on their attitudes toward inclusive education.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Ikom Educational zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. The zone comprised six Local Government Areas. The Ex-post facto research designed was adopted for the study. The population of study was made up of 1585 (1,054 female and 531 male) teachers in the 94 Public Secondary Schools in the zone. The stratified and simple random sample techniques were used for the selection of 158 (105 female and 53 male) teachers for the study (this represented 10% of the total population) while the Teachers' Attitudes on Inclusive Education Questionnaire (TAIEQ) of two parts with 15 items was the instrument used for data collection. Part A which consisted of 3 items elicited information from the respondents' related variables of gender, teaching experience and academic qualification, while Part B comprised 12 items of four Likert type-scale with four items for each variable which measured the respondents attitudes towards, inclusive education. The validation of the instrument was done by experts in measurement, Evaluation and educational psychology in the Department of Educational Foundations, University of Calabar. The test retest reliability estimate of 0.83 was established. 100% copies of questionnaires administered were retrieved because of the direct administration of the instrument with the help of the researchers' assistants. Analysis of data collected was done using independent t-test.

### **Presentation of Result**

In this section, each hypothesis re-stated in the null form, the independent and dependent variables as well as the statistical technique employed to test the hypotheses are identified and presented. The 0.05 level of significance was used for the statistical testing of each of the hypothesis.

#### **Hypothesis one**

There is no significant influence of teachers' gender on their attitude towards inclusive education. The independent variable in this hypothesis is teachers' gender, while the dependent variable is attitude towards inclusive education. Independent t-test analysis was considered the most appropriate statistical technique employed to test this hypothesis. The result of analysis is presented in Table 1.



**TABLE 1**

Independent t-test analysis of the influence of teachers' gender on their attitudes toward inclusive education (N=158)

Teachers' gender	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
Male	53	31.17	1.95	12.39*	.000
Female	105	27.04	2.03		

\* Significant at .05 level, critical t = df = 156.

The result of analysis as presented in Table 1 reveals that the calculate t-value of 12.26 is greater than the critical t-value at .05 level of significance with 156 degree of freedom. The result of the analysis is significant since the calculated value is higher than the critical value. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore implies that there is a significant influence of teachers' gender and attitude towards inclusive education with the male gender showing more positive attitude towards inclusive education than the female as indicated in the analysis.

**Hypothesis two**

There is no significant influence of teachers' teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusive education. Independent variable: Teachers' teaching experience, Dependent variable: Attitude towards inclusive education.

Independent t-test analysis was used to test this hypothesis. The result is presented in Table 2.

**TABLE 2**

Independent t-test analysis of the influence of teachers' teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusive education (N=158)

Teachers' teaching experience	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
20 years and above	73	30.49	1.91	11.49*	.000
Below 20 years	85	26.72	2.22		

\* Significant at .05 level, critical t-value = df = 156.

The result of analysis as presented in Table 2 reveals that the calculate t-value of 11.49 is higher than the critical t-value at .05 level of significance with 156 degree of freedom. The result of the statistical analysis is significant since the calculated value is higher than the critical value. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore implies that

there is a significant influence of teachers' teaching experience on attitude towards inclusive education.

### Hypothesis three

There is no significant influence of teachers' academic qualification on their attitudes toward inclusive education. Independent variable is gender. Dependent variable is attitude towards inclusive education. The independent t-test analysis was employed as the most statistical technique to test this hypothesis. The result of analysis is presented in Table 3.

**TABLE 3**

Independent t-test analysis of the influence of teachers' academic qualification on their attitude towards inclusive education (N=158)

Teachers' academic qualification	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t-value	p-value
Masters/Ph.D	60	30.14	1.88	8.57*	.000
First degree	98	27.43	2.01		

\* Significant at .05 level, critical t-value = df = 156.

The result of analysis as presented in Table 3 reveals that the calculated t-value of 8.57 is greater than the critical t-value at .05 level of significance with 156 degree of freedom. The result of the statistical analysis is significant since the calculated value is higher than the critical value. With this result the null hypothesis was rejected. This therefore implies that there is a significant influence of teachers' academic qualification on attitude towards inclusive education.

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section is concerned with the discussion of findings of the hypotheses guiding the study. The discussion will be done hypothesis by hypothesis. The result of the first hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of teachers' gender on their attitudes toward inclusive education. The study further reveals that male teachers demonstrated a more positive attitude towards inclusive education than their female counterparts. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Park and Chitigo (2011) who concluded that there had been inconsistent results regarding gender differences in teachers' attitude towards special learners, though a large number showed a high level of positive attitudes in females compared to males. The findings on the other hand, was at variance with Ahmed, Sharma and Deppeler (2012) who concluded that

male teachers were slightly more positive in their attitudes than their male counterparts

The result of the second hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of teachers' teaching experience on their attitudes toward inclusive education. However, the findings further reveals that teachers' with 20 years and above teaching experience show more positive attitude towards inclusive education than their colleagues below 20 years. The finding of this hypothesis is contrary to the view of Tungaraza (2013) who revealed that there is no significant difference between teachers with long experience and those with short experience in their attitudes towards inclusive education. Again, there was no significant difference between young and old tutors in their attitude towards inclusive education. This result is similar to the conclusion of Thomas (2008) that teachers attitude towards integration was not associated with age and experience. Petari (2008) also found that teachers' attitudes appear to vary with their perception of inclusion according to age and teaching experience. However, the study was not consistent with Subban and Sharma (2005) and Parasuram (2006) who concluded that most of the experienced teachers had the lowest level of acceptance of inclusion.

The result of the third hypothesis reveals that there is a significant influence of teachers' academic qualification on their attitudes toward inclusive education with an indication that teachers' with Masters and Ph.D qualifications demonstrating more positive attitude towards inclusive education than their colleagues with first degree. The finding of this hypothesis is in line with the view of Park and Chitigo (2011) who showed a significant relationship between educational qualification of teachers and their attitude towards inclusion. Teachers with Masters Degrees and above have a negative attitude compared to teachers with Bachelor Degrees and below. This finding was quite contradictory with the result of Parasuram (2006), where it was found that teachers with Masters Degree had positive attitude towards inclusive education than those with Bachelor Degree and below. Taiye (2012) also showed that gender, training, professionalism and experience of teachers were predictors for improvement of inclusive education.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the study it was concluded that, teachers' gender, teachers' teaching experience and teachers' academic qualification significantly influenced their attitudes toward inclusive education.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In line with the study so far, it is recommended that:

1. Teachers should develop positive attitude towards inclusive education especially the female teachers as this is quite crucial for social, emotional and intellectual development of all learners and not just in an inclusive environment only.
2. Teachers experience is quite necessary in inclusive education. Therefore, all teachers and especially those with low experience should develop more positive attitude towards inclusive education.
3. All teachers should develop positive attitude towards inclusive education most especially those with first degree and below.

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