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**Inclusive Education: A Remedy to Education of Physically Challenged Child**

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**BY**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study aimed at assessing inclusive education as a remedy to education of physically disabled secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. Expost-facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised physically disabled children and school teachers in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 20 teachers and 100 students (ratio 1:5), which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a Questionnaire titled "Inclusive Education and The Physically Challenged Child Questionnaire (IEPCCQ)". Face validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels. The study concluded that physical disabilities have been identified among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State, some of which includes: hearing, mobility learning and language impairment, and multiple disabilities. Based on the above conclusion, the study recommended that the government should put up physical facilities required for accessibility of the physically challenged learners in public primary schools thus improving their participation. Also, the government should plan on training of all teachers in regular public secondary schools on how to handle learners with physical challenges. The training will equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills to handle physically challenged learners.*

**KEYWORDS: Inclusive Education, Physically Challenged, Academic Performance**

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**INTRODUCTION**

At least one out of ten people in the world has a disability, according to estimates by the World Health Organization (W.H.O., 2002). These include people with hearing, vision, language, mobility and learning impairments. People may be born with a disability or acquire

one during their life. People living in poverty are particularly susceptible to becoming disabled through dangerous labor practices, malnutrition, poor natal healthcare, and untreated diseases. Having a disability can often present numerous challenges to leading a full and productive life. People with disabilities are often unable to access health services, employment and education, due to obstacles in their environmental and the attitudes of other people (Filmer, 2008).

According to Mont, (2007), children with disabilities in poor and developing countries face particular difficulties, linked to poverty and social barriers. In many traditional cultures, a child with a disability is seen as a bad omen, bad luck, or a result of poor lineage. Some children with disabilities are hidden from the community and kept out of school. Those who do attend school – often the ones with less severe disabilities – may face embarrassment, discrimination and misunderstanding. Every child has the right to an education. Unfortunately, in the past many people assumed that the best place for children with disabilities was in a special school or classroom, separated from their ‘normal’ peers. Today, however, international experts and people with disabilities themselves are united in the belief that inclusive education in the child’s local community school, together with their non-disabled peers, offers the best opportunity for social integration and self-sufficiency. Inclusive education models are particularly well suited for developing countries that cannot afford duplication or separation of essential educational services. Achieving education for all also requires that communities work together to better understand the needs and abilities of people with disabilities, removing barriers in the environment and in prevailing social attitudes. Achieving education for all also requires that communities work together to better understand the needs and abilities of people with disabilities, removing barriers in the environment and in prevailing social attitudes (UNESCO, 2009).

### **Statement of the problem**

There is a problem on physically challenged learners participating in the learning / teaching process in secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. This is due to the fact that the school environments are unfriendly which hinders their accessibility within the schools. The methodologies used by teachers in the teaching/learning process do not actively involve the physically challenged learners since majority involve use of mobility which is a hindrance to these particular learners. This study therefore aimed at assessing inclusive education as a remedy to education of physically disabled secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study was to assess inclusive education as a remedy to education of physically disabled secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study sought:

1. To find out the types of physical disabilities identified among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.
2. To determine the influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State.

3. To examine the influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the types of physical disabilities identified among physically challenged secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
2. What is the influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State?
3. What is the influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation of secondary school physically challenged students in Akwa Ibom State?

### **Hypotheses**

H0<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

H0<sub>2</sub>: There is no significant influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation of secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Concept of Inclusive Education**

In its broad sense, inclusive education is the principle and practice of educating all children within a common general education setting. Inclusive education especially targets those children traditionally excluded from general education for reasons of gender, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, poverty, and disability (Abosi, and Koay, 2008). The principle of inclusion promotes the idea that in order to receive a quality education that is equal and accessible; children must be educated to the best of a community's ability in a general education classroom. Inclusive education is moreover a method of creating communities, schools, and societies free of discrimination.

Inclusive education for children with disabilities, the subject of this guide, is best understood as a subset of the broader definition of inclusion as education for all. Children with disabilities are one of the most prominent groups traditionally excluded from education. Any plan for education for all must be especially in tune with the needs and abilities of children with disabilities, and fully involve them in education systems. Because inclusive education by nature includes the participation of all children and focuses specifically on the inclusion of marginalized children, it is the best way to ensure education for all children.

Bayat (2014) notes that when analyzing education for children with disabilities, key concepts like 'integration' and 'inclusive' are often used interchangeably although they are not the same. Integration is largely associated with mainstreaming children with disabilities into regular classrooms but inclusive is about accommodating all children. This lack of clarity has a profound impact on the understanding and practice of inclusive education which is contributing to a lack of overall progress on improving education for children with disabilities (Sharma & Das, 2015).

Kalyanpur (2011) describes how Cambodia has adopted a reasonably strong inclusive education policy framework by just integrating children with physical disabilities into mainstream classes. This happens largely because physically disabled children can be enrolled with little adjustment on the part of the school. Any children with more challenging disabilities were either being referred to special schools or were not in education at all. Pather (2013) noted a similar trend across Southern Africa where they are developing inclusive education models that are essentially focused on the integration of children with disabilities and not considering the wider aspects of educational needs such as poverty or ethnic status for example. So in reality, inclusive education is being implemented using an impairment/integration perspective which does not reflect the shift in thinking envisaged or promoted by the international development sector.

### **Concept of Disability**

Disability vary a great deal from country to country, a simple and widely understood definition of disability is a physical, mental, or psychological condition that limits a person's activities. Disability affects children and adults across social, ethnic, economic, and geographic boundaries. According to Filmer, (2008), disability can be caused by a number of factors including malnutrition, lack of or poor prenatal and postnatal health care, increased vulnerability to accidents caused by risky work environments, interaction with unexploded ordnance and landmines, or the lack of early detection of illness and abnormalities. All of these causes are prominent in poorer countries. Identifying children with disabilities in developing country settings can be a challenge, Parents of children with disabilities may be reluctant to come forward out of shame or fear of discrimination. Knowledge about disability may be limited or nonexistent, and local languages might lack appropriate terms for discussing problems and solutions with families. Some countries and regions already have sophisticated identification systems for people with disabilities, while others have almost no information.

Mont, (2007) averred that physical disability is the long-term loss or impairment of part of a human body function resulting in a limitation of physical functioning, mobility, dexterity or stamina. Due to the functional loss, the person will experience the inability to perform normal movements of the body, such as walking and mobility, sitting and standing, use of hands and arms, muscle control, etc. The categories of physical disabilities are: muscular-skeletal disability and neuro-muscular disability. A person can be physically disabled due to Congenital and Hereditary, the person has physical disability since birth or the disability developed at a later stage due to genetic problems, problems with muscle cells or injury during birth.

Disability has not always been observed and communicated in the same way. As already stated, the first descriptions were developed within religious system and later on became a theme in medical science (Stiker, 1999). The struggles of individuals with disabilities and their organizations to be included in other systems, e.g. the legal, labour market, education, social security, etc., implied at the same time a challenge of the dominance of previous observations. People with disabilities require the same range of health services and education, especially the children (UNESCO, 2009).

### **Types of Disability**

According to Hove, (2014), disabilities are addressed in the following areas; Physical, behavioral, learning disabilities, Psychological, or Tendency to withdraw from society.

### *Physical/health*

A variety of medical problems may accompany severe disabilities. Examples include seizures, sensory loss, hydrocephalus, and scoliosis, maybe physically clumsy and awkward. Maybe unsuccessful in games involving motor skills.

#### **Causes of Physical disability:**

- i. Largely biological (either before conception or during gestation).
- ii. Brain Dysgenesis (abnormal brain development).
- iii. Can happen after birth. (Accident, Abuse, Neglect, etc.). Examples are visual impairment, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, autism, and speech/language impairment, (CRS, 2007).

#### **Teaching Strategies Adopted for Physically Disabled Children**

According to UNICEF (2007) physically challenged learners require individualized educational experiences to promote their participation. Individualized learning objectives, methodology and teaching should ensure that the teaching process will become more accurate and accountable. Methods and techniques of prescriptive teaching are essential to a teacher as a basis for writing and implementing the individualized education programme. The programme assures the child that he or she will have a plan tailored to his or her individual strengths, weaknesses and learning styles.

The classroom teacher is the most important person in the process of including a learner with physical challenges in a regular classroom. The teacher may make it possible for the learner to be accepted by the other learners by demonstrating positive and supportive attitudes to the learner. The teacher can enhance the inclusion of a physically challenged learner into the classroom by encouraging other learners to support that in class time, working closely with the learner's parents, adjusting class work to meet the learners needs and making the learner feel welcome and an important member of the class. (Ngugi, 2002).

**Assistive Technology:** Any device or tool that enables a student to participate in learning activities can be called assistive technology. Simple pencil grips or ergonomically designed pens can make holding and manipulating writing instruments easier. Oversized art supplies and handmade adaptations can allow students with fine motor difficulties to create art. For those with more severe impairments, assistive technology lets students have access to computers for learning and expressing themselves. Keyboard and mouse alternatives replace standard input devices. Voice recognition software allows users to speak what they want to input instead of typing it.

**Classroom and Teaching Strategies:** Teachers can significantly improve educational outcomes of students with physical disabilities by implementing specific strategies. Classroom arrangement with easy access to supplies can prevent accidents and improve participation in activities. Using a buddy system or working with paraprofessionals can provide students with necessary assistance to complete assignments. Finally, individual accommodations and encouragement can promote learning and ease frustrations over physical difficulties.

***Accommodations and Modifications:*** Since each student differs in degrees of impairment and ability, accommodations and modifications must be individualized according to needs. Although some subjects are more difficult to accommodate and modify for certain disabilities, many options make learning more accessible. Accommodations can include note takers, the use of scribes for written assignments, handouts in alternative formats, and separate rooms for testing. A teacher's creativity also opens new opportunities to learn.

***Adaptive Physical Education:*** Physical disabilities should not exclude students from participating in gym activities. Depending on a student's disability, a separate, adaptive class or modifications within a typical gym class both offer physical education. Basketball, golfing and tennis can be adapted or participated in with the assistance of a physical education teacher or aide. Other physical activities, even swimming, can provide great therapeutic benefits to students.

Moodley (2002) says that in order for the learners to be active participants in the learning and teaching process, schools must ensure that teaching and learning materials are used as well as made available to the physically challenged. Learners must be provided with learning materials to meet their individual needs. In an inclusive setting, physically challenged learners would require other resources over and above what is provided by the school. This includes resources to enhance mobility such as wheel chairs, crutches and positioning devices (Randiki, 2002). In inclusion it is emphasized that teachers should use locally available resources to support learning.

### **Inclusive Education and Physically Challenged Children**

Waruguru (2001) noted that inclusive education requires identification, reduction or removal of barriers within and around the school that may hinder learning. Teachers and school systems need to modify the physical and social environment so that they can fully accommodate the diverse learners' needs. Waruguru views (2001) about inclusive education seem to be in concurrence with those of the government. Children with disabilities are the direct beneficiaries of an inclusive education program. They benefit by being provided with a quality education that suits their needs and abilities. Children with disabilities furthermore benefit from the increased acceptance they feel in their classes, communities, and households. The skills children learn in the classroom can be used in everyday life. After participating in inclusive education, children are often more active in household activities, community activities, and have more friends. Opportunities for educated children with disabilities post-school are greatly increased by having obtained an inclusive education, preparing a child for work or a higher education degree (Ajuwon, 2008).

The Ministry of education in its strategic plan of 2006-2011 states that successful inclusion will require additional efforts particularly, pre-service training and in-servicing of teachers to prepare for specialized demands of teaching the physically challenged learners in particular. Inclusive education also requires concerned efforts to prepare parents and communities for the changes in their schools for effective inclusion. More so, a strategy is needed for the development of materials, adaptive resources and new teaching approaches that are appropriate for use in inclusive classrooms (Government of Kenya, 2005). The key issue with inclusive education is to

make the regular schools welcoming for all learners regardless of differences the learners (Kirk, Gallagher and Anastasiow, 2003).

According to the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework (2009), the policy advocates for provision of education for children with special needs through inclusive education. The government places emphasis on inclusive for education through regular schools for learners with special needs and disabilities as opposed to the practice of using special schools and special units (MOE,2009) The Ministry of Education recognizes and will reinforce inclusive education as one of the means for children with special needs to access education (MOE, 2009) The main areas on the physically challenged learners are providing funds for adaptation of infrastructure, equipment and facilities in learning institutions, review of curriculum as well as training of teachers in Special Needs. This study therefore sought to establish school based factors which influence participation of physically challenged learners in regular public primary schools.

According to Obani, (2004), inclusive education for students with disabilities (SWD), this includes academic gains in literacy (reading and writing), math, and social studies — both in grades and on standardized tests — better communication skills, and improved social skills and more friendships. More time in the general classroom for SWD is also associated with fewer absences and referrals for disruptive behavior. This could be related to findings about attitude they have a higher self-concept, they like school and their teachers more, and are more motivated around working and learning. Their peers without disabilities also show more positive attitudes in these same areas when in inclusive classrooms. They make greater academic gains in reading and math. Research shows the presence of SWD gives non-SWD new kinds of learning opportunities. One of these is when they serve as peer-coaches. By learning how to help another student, their own performance improves. Another is that as teachers take into greater consideration their diverse SWD learners, they provide instruction in a wider range of learning modalities (visual, auditory, and kinesthetic), which benefits their regular students as well.

## **Method**

Expost-facto research design was adopted for the study. The study was conducted in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised physically disabled children and school teachers in public secondary schools in Akwa Ibom State. Strategic sampling technique was used to select 20 teachers and 100 students (ratio 1:5), which constituted the sample size for the study. The Main Instrument used in this study was a Questionnaire titled “Inclusive Education and The Physically Challenged Child Questionnaire (IEPCCQ)”. Face validation of the instrument was carried out to ensure that the instrument has the accuracy, appropriateness, completeness and the language of the study under consideration. Cronbach Alpha technique was used to determine the level of reliability of the instrument. The reliability coefficient obtained was 0.84 and this was high enough to justify the use of the instrument. The researcher subjected the data generated for this study to appropriate statistical techniques such as descriptive statistics and simple regression. The test for significance was done at 0.05 alpha levels.

## **Hypothesis testing**

### **Hypothesis one**

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis, regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 1).

**TABLE 1: Simple Regression Analysis of the influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State**

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	0.96a	0.92	0.92	0.59	0.92

**\*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 98; N= 100; critical R-value = 0.207**

The table shows that the calculated R-value 0.96 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.207 at 0.5 alpha level with 98 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 92 predicts 92% of the influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. This rate of percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. This is in line with the finding of Moodley (2002) who avowed that in order for the learners to be active participants in the learning and teaching process, schools must ensure that teaching and learning materials are used as well as made available to the physically challenged. Learners must be provided with learning materials to meet their individual needs. In an inclusive setting, physically challenged learners would require other resources over and above what is provided by the school. The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

### Hypothesis Two

The null hypothesis states that there is no significant influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation, high self-concept and academic gain in literacy among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. In order to test the hypothesis regression analysis was performed on the data, (see table 2).

**TABLE 2: Simple Regression Analysis of the influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation, high self-concept and academic gain in literacy among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.**

Model	R	R-Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. error of the Estimate	R Square Change
1	.87a	.75	.75	.83	.75

**\*Significant at 0.05 level; df= 98; N=100; critical R-value = 0.207**

The table shows that the calculated R-value 0.87 was greater than the critical R-value of 0.207 at 0.5 alpha level with 98 degree of freedom. The R-Square value of 0.75 predicts 75% of the influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation, high self-concept and academic gain in literacy among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This rate of



percentage is highly positive and therefore means that there is significant influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation, high self-concept and academic gain in literacy among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State. This is in agreement with the finding of Waruguru (2001) who noted that inclusive education requires identification, reduction or removal of barriers within and around the school that may hinder learning. Teachers and school systems need to modify the physical and social environment so that they can fully accommodate the diverse learners' needs. Opportunities for educated children with disabilities post-school are greatly increased by having obtained an inclusive education, preparing a child for work or a higher education degree (Ajuwon, 2008). The significance of the result caused the null hypotheses to be rejected while the alternative one was accepted.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

Physical disabilities have been identified among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State some of which includes: hearing, mobility learning and language impairment, and multiple disabilities. The study also concluded that there is significant influence of teaching strategies on academic performance of various physically challenged secondary school children in Akwa Ibom State. Also, there is significant influence of inclusive education on the extent of promotion of motivation, high self-concept and academic gain in literacy among secondary school students in Akwa Ibom State.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion of the study, the following were the recommendations:

1. Programs should always remember to tailor their inclusive education programs to fit the specifics of their communities, while maintaining the fundamentals of inclusive education. Because disability awareness, education systems, infrastructure, government structure, and types of prevalent disabilities vary so greatly from country to country, programs are encouraged to use local resources to accurately assess the existing capacities as well as the needs of each area.
2. The government should put up physical facilities required for accessibility of the physically challenged learners in public secondary schools thus improving their participation.
3. The government should plan on training of all teachers in regular public primary schools on how to handle learners with physical challenges. The training will equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills to handle physically challenged learners.
4. Sensitization should be done more specifically to the head teachers on inclusion of physically challenged learners in schools.

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