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## AN ASSESSMENT OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN BAUCHI STATE: A CASE STUDY OF SPECIAL INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CENTRE AZARE

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### Introduction

Education is crucial to human survival and development. It helps us to find solution to life's problems and also become self-reliant. Education is a fundamental right of every child irrespective of physical, cultural, social or mental challenges. However, many people are unable to receive education due to various reasons which include poverty, distance, apathy and physical impairment. Although some governments across Nigeria have made efforts to tackle the obstacles facing many Nigerians in their quest for education through the creation of special schools and the removal of tuition fees, it is important to note that many people are still out of school.

### Abstract

*This research examines the challenges of inclusive education in Bauchi State using the Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare as a case study. It investigates the nature of special/inclusive education as well as the challenges faced by the Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. The research is based on the theoretical foundation of the Situated Cognition theory, which says that learners develop their knowledge base when learning is contextualised and associated with the culture within which they exist. Based on this the research suggests that the daily realities of the students in an inclusive school could be positively leveraged upon to improve their learning experiences. The research employed the Case Study method in which interview, observation and content analysis were triangulated. Findings show that the school is in dire need*

***O**f basic human and material resources needed to run a school. The work therefore calls on the state and local governments as well as well-meaning individuals to intervene in the provision of basic requirements in the school in order to help the students rise above their special needs and maximize their potentials in spite of their challenges.*

**Keywords:** *Special Education, Inclusive Education, Case Study, Situated Cognition Theory, Gender Equality.*

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**W**hile it is difficult for many poor children to gain access to education, it is more challenging for poor children with special needs to access formal education. There are many schools catering for the needs of students with challenges but the plight of these children have not been radically reduced with these schools. There have been certain perceived shortcomings in the operations of the special schools. While many of them are not adequately staffed, others are underfunded. The implication is that the schools end up being places where parents abandon their physically challenged children. There seems to be little hope for career progression for these students when they graduate from school. Few of them go on to higher institutions at the end of their basic or secondary education. Among those that end up acquiring tertiary education, fewer end up getting jobs in government and corporate establishments.

Interpersonal discussions with managers and administrators in some establishments reveal that managers believe graduates with special needs were “pushed” through the grades by teachers and school administrators out of compassion. Thus they perceive them as inadequately prepared for the workplace. This raises question on the quality of education given to pupils in special schools. It is important to stress that there is great ability in disability. The loss of one body organ does not diminish the ability of other organs. Rather, it increases the sensitivity of other organs of the body. Therefore children with special needs need not be looked upon with pity or given substandard education. This position has necessitated the campaign for inclusive education. Inclusive education explains the system where children with special needs and their counterparts without special needs are jointly educated in the same physical space.

This system would help facilitate the social integration of children with special needs in the larger society. Also it would help “normal” students learn to understand and live with their counterparts with special needs. This is the idea behind the establishment the Special Education Centre (Special School Azare). The school was established in 2011 to offer inclusive education to special students in Bauchi state.

There is a seeming lack of deep understanding of the concept of Inclusive education among the educational administrators and policy makers in some Nigerian states. The establishment of special schools and the recruitment of staff to such schools are usually based on political considerations and not altruistic interest of the children with special needs. To this end, it is important to examine the implementation of programmes for people with special needs in Bauchi state with a view to give recommendations on how they can be improved upon.

This work therefore seeks to examine the general operations of the special school in Azare. It also seeks to examine the quantity and qualification of teachers in the school. The work also sets out to observe the study environment in which the students learn. Lastly, it investigates the challenges faced by the administrators in the running of the school.

### **Literature Review**

Inclusive education is an educational reform which advocates for diversity among all learners (UNESCO, 2001). Specifically, inclusive education contends that children with special needs and students who have no special needs must be jointly taught in conventional classrooms. This would provide them with strong foundations for socialization (Abosi, 2001). It must be pointed out that although there are several efforts to promote inclusive education in Nigeria, there are inherent shortcomings in the efforts. The concept of inclusive education is strange to many teachers in Nigerian schools (Udeme & Olisaemeka, 2016, p. 193). This is because many of them tool up teaching jobs as alternatives to their preferred jobs.

There are many challenges facing the special education sub-sector in Nigeria. On one hand, children with special needs in conventional schools often face discrimination and emotional bullying from some of their normal peers. Also, many teachers in conventional or special schools do not have the requisite knowledge for relating with and managing children with special needs. While

some governments have made efforts to staff special schools with specialists, there has been a dearth of specialists in many states and cities across the country. "Parents of learners with special needs are facing many challenges in their effort to participate in their children's education" (Afolabi, et al., 2015, p. 60). Many parents and guardians also consider it a waste of resources and effort to send children and wards with special needs to school. This could be a pre-emption of future challenges/discrimination to be faced by the children and wards with special needs in future. While some parents and guardians send their children and wards with special needs to school, it is often for the purpose of transferring the burden of their training to other people and to make up for the inadequacies of the parents and guardians in managing the children with special needs.

It therefore becomes important for "measures should be put in place by both the schools and government, in order to craft a parent-involvement strategy that will meet and suit the needs and aspiration of parents of learners with SENs in inclusive education" (Afolabi, et al., 2015, p. 60). This shows that inclusive education vis-à-vis the operations of special schools is the collective responsibility of all the stakeholders. Therefore parents and community leaders must not leave the herculean task of providing infrastructure and facilities at special schools to the government alone. Governments must also not shirk their responsibilities to these children because they have inherent skills and abilities despite their obvious special needs. Provision of adequate facilities would aid the harnessing of their skills and talents for personal and national development.

Another important factor in the operations of special schools is the concept of co-teaching. Co-teaching refers to the practice of collaborative teaching between conventional teachers and special education needs teachers. The goal of co-teaching is the provision of inclusive education through the merging of special needs and normal students. Although it is not a full-fledged special education, it provides children with special needs with the atmosphere for personal and collective academic and social development (Hamdan, et al., 2016, p. 297). The interaction with the normal children in an inclusive setting would set the tone for the development and interaction of children with special needs with the larger community. It is no gainsaying therefore, that the "implementation of co-teaching approach requires a modification in thinking that involves many parties" (Hamdan, et al., 2016, p.

297). This could be quite challenging to achieve in consideration of the fact that people are different in their psycho-social experiences.

It therefore becomes vital to make rigorous continuous efforts to overcome the inherent challenges in the implementation of inclusive education and co-teaching. One of the ways to overcome this challenge is through effective legislation (Sukumara, 2014). Another way is the deep involvement of the teachers. Their understanding can be sought and their commitments secured through adequate national and international exposure “through courses and training about the teaching components with respect to inclusion implementation” (Hamdan, et al., 2016, p. 297).

There is a need for comprehensive funding of special schools for effective inclusive and broad-based education. No matter the ingenuity of administrators of special schools, their best efforts would not yield maximum result in the absence of adequate funding. The distribution of financial resources for the implementation of inclusive education is one of the fundamental determinants of the success of special schools (Madaus, et al., 2010). A review of annual national budgets of show that over an 11-year period shows education got less than 10 percent of the total budget (Palladan & Maigari, 2010). Due to inadequate funding of education, teachers, “especially at the lower level are not given what they deserve” (Dada & Umar, 2018, p. 241). This has made the job less attractive to Nigerians.

Adequate funding and effective management of resources would lead to the provision of equipment and facilities which would improve the quality of teachers as well as the learning experiences available to students. The students would benefit immensely because learning aids are geared towards the individual needs of students (Ajuwon, 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical foundation for this work is the Situated Cognition theory which was propounded by John Brown and his associates in 1989. The theory states that “learners’ knowledge and skills are developed within and linked to the activity, context and culture in which they are learned” (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). The situated cognition theory buttresses the need to present knowledge within the prevailing social, physical, and emotional situation and circumstances of the students. Doing this would help the learners discover and understand themselves in relation to the larger society.



Because inclusive education is a fundamental tool for the reshaping of all aspects of the educational process, it is important for educational administrators to understand the dynamics inherent in the physical and social spaces within which the special schools operate. Therefore, it is essential that the physical and social diversities of the student population be identified and catered to. This would ensure that students are able to break the barriers to their personal and collective development which is the ultimate goal of education (Olaniran, 2018, p. 118).

Consequently, teachers and educational administrators in special schools should create environments children could be fully immersed irrespective of their physical or learning disabilities. They should be able to stimulate and cultivate new ideas and behaviours within the context of their prevailing life experiences. The central message here is that the teachers and managers in special schools must be highly resourceful and competent in the area of inclusive education. That is the foundation on which they could contribute meaningfully to the development of children with special needs.

### **Methodology**

The method used for this study is Case Study. This is because it gives us the opportunity to inspect several aspects of the problem through multiple methods. Some aspects of the data were gathered through interview while others were gathered through observation. The research instruments used are interview guide and field notes.

### **Data Presentation**

The Special Education Centre Azare is a government owned institution. Although the school currently operates as a day school, the original plan is to operate it as a boarding school. There are four buildings in the school. One is a block of classrooms with two classrooms, two are dormitory buildings and the fourth one is houses the school's ICT facility. However, one of the hostel blocks is currently being used as makeshift classrooms in addition to the two classrooms contained in the block of classrooms. The other hostel building is currently used as administrative building. Consequently there are two offices in the school. While one serves as the Principal's office, the other one is used as Staff room.

### Facilities and Equipment

There is one audiometer in the school but there is no audiologist in the school, neither is there an audiology assessment form. Similarly there are two brail machines in the school but there is no brailist. There are 21 computers in the school but there is no computer operator. The school is also disconnected from the national grid and there is no provision for power generating set in the school. There are 3 wheelchairs in the school to cater for the needs of the physically challenged students in the school.

It was observed that there is adequate furniture for the teachers while there is inadequate furniture for the students. A first aid box is available in the school but there is no nurse or nanny to administer the first aid to students who need it. The adequacy of the items in the first aid box is also uncertain since there is no specialist to do the assessment of the items.

### Teachers

There are four teachers in the school including the principal. All four teachers are male. There is also a support staff who acts as a sign language interpreter in the school. The interpreter is also male. At the time of conducting the research, there were six student teachers who were on teaching practice at the school. Records and observations show that there are many female students in the school. It therefore becomes important for the recruitment of female teachers to give the female students psychological, emotional and social support. The reason(s) for the lack of female teachers (both general and specialists) in the school is subject to future research.

Below is a tabular presentation of the academic and professional qualification of the teachers in the school:

S/N	Position	Qualification	Years of Experience
1	Head teacher	N.C.E, B. Ed	25
2	General Teacher	N.C.E	
3	General Teacher	N.C.E	
4	Specialist Teacher	Diploma in Special Education	

During the visits to the school, it was observed that the only special educationist in the school was not around. Also not all teachers in the school were on ground at the time of the visits.

### Students

According to official records provided by the management of the school, there are 178 students in the school. The students are spread in classes ranging from Primary One to Junior Secondary School Two (Primary 1-JSS 2).

#### Primary One

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	11	12	<b>23</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	1	1	<b>2</b>
<b>Physically Impaired</b>	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Sub-normal</b>	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>26</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of primary one students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. The table shows that the normal students in the class are far more than the special students. The number of hearing impaired students in the class is two and this indicates that they would provide succour for each other. There is also gender parity in the composition of the class. There are 13 male and 13 female apiece.

#### Primary Two

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	5	7	<b>12</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	6	1	<b>7</b>
<b>Physically Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Sub-normal</b>	5	1	<b>6</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*



The table above shows the distribution of Primary Two students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. The table shows that there are more students with special needs than normal students in the class. This composition is very inclusive and the children in the class are likely to have a huge sense of belonging. The sheer number of students with special needs would facilitate interaction and prepare the students for life after school in the larger society. The number of male students is more than the number of female students in the class.

#### Primary Three

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	2	7	<b>9</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	6	5	<b>11</b>
<b>Physically Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Sub-normal</b>	1	2	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>23</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of Primary Three students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. From the table, it is seen that the number of students with special needs is higher than the number of students who are normal. This indicates that there is a need for more specialist educators (especially in the area of hearing handicap). This would help the school to provide for the learning needs of the students. Specialist educators possess the peculiar skills needed to motivate students with special needs for the identification and development of their talents. Interestingly, the number of female students in this class is higher than the number of male students. It suggests that there is a need to provide female teachers for the students.

#### Primary Four

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	4	6	<b>10</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	3	6	<b>9</b>
<b>Physically Impaired</b>	-	-	-

<b>Visually Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Sub-normal</b>	-	1	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of Primary four students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. The records show that there is parity in the number of normal and special needs students in the class. It indicates that the number of each category of students is significant enough to facilitate interaction. There are more female than male students in this class too.

#### Primary Five

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	10	5	<b>15</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	5	2	<b>7</b>
<b>Crippled</b>	-	-	-
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	-	-	-
<b>Sub-normal</b>	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of Primary Five students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. The table indicates that there are no visually impaired or physically impaired students in the class. Also the number of normal students is higher than the number of students with special needs. There are more male than female students in the class.

#### Primary Six

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	10	2	<b>12</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	8	2	<b>10</b>
<b>Crippled</b>	2	-	<b>2</b>
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Sub-normal</b>	1	4	<b>5</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>30</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of Primary Six students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. In this class, there are more special needs students than normal students. The table also shows that the class contains students with a wide range of special needs. To this end, there is a need for the provision of teachers with diverse specialization and competence to cater to the needs of this class. It is also observed that there are more male than female students in the class. This suggests that parents in the area have not provided much encouragement to their female children with special needs.

#### JSS One

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	2	-	<b>2</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	7	4	<b>11</b>
<b>Crippled</b>	-	-	<b>-</b>
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Sub-normal</b>	2	-	<b>2</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of JSS One students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. In this class, there are only two normal students out of the total population of the class (16). The other 14 students have one form of disability or the other. It is also observed that the number of male students is three times the number of female students in the class.

#### JSS Two

Special Needs	Male	Female	Total
<b>Normal</b>	3	-	<b>3</b>
<b>Hearing Impaired</b>	7	4	<b>11</b>
<b>Crippled</b>	-	-	<b>-</b>
<b>Visually Impaired</b>	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>Sub-normal</b>	1	-	<b>1</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16</b>

*Source: Field Study, 2019*

The table above shows the distribution of JSS Two students in Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare. In this class, there are only three normal students while the remaining 13 have one form of disability or the other. This suggests that there is a need for more specialist educators to cater for the class. Also there are more male than female in the class.

### Data Analysis

The triangulation of methods revealed some differences between official records and realities on ground in the school especially in the area of student enrolment. While the management of the school said they had 200 students during the interview, an examination of their records revealed that they had 178 students across the levels. Further investigation of the realities on ground revealed that three levels; Primary Three, Primary Four and J.S.S One are non-existent on ground. They only exist on paper. This means that there are only 119 students in the school against the official figures quoted by the management. Based on the observed facts on the field there are 50 (42%) pupils with special needs in the school while 69 (58%) are normal.

Naturally one would expect a diversity in the specialization of the teaching staff to cater to the specialist needs of the students with different forms of disability. However, only one (25%) of the teachers is a specialist educator. The remaining three (75%) are regular teachers. It is arguable that the teacher with a specialist training is not a professional because he owns only a Diploma in Special Education. This is short of National Certificate in Education (N.C.E) which is the minimum national benchmark for the teaching profession. It must be emphasized that a Diploma in Special Education does not adequately prepare one to attend to the needs of all categories of special students. It must be said that the staffing in the school is inadequate. It was also observed that the specialist educator was not on ground during the visits of these researchers to the school.

Although the National Certificate in Education (N.C.E) is the minimum teaching qualification in Nigeria, it must be said that it is inadequate in this era of globalization. Only the Head teacher of the Special Inclusive Education Centre Azare has a qualification higher than the N.C.E and this is inadequate. Consequently there is a dire need for more general and specialist teachers as well as support staff. There is also a need for the connection of the school to

the national grid so that students can benefit from the little equipment and facilities on ground whenever there is a power supply.

It was also observed that pupils in Primary One, Primary Two and Primary Six receive their lessons while seated on the floor due to inadequate furniture in the school. This is unbecoming in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings from the research process, the following are the recommendations of this study:

Government should employ more teaching staff for the school. Emphasis should be placed on specialist educators especially hearing and visually impaired specialists. Government should also employ support staff like nurses, nannies brailists and audiographers.

It is important that the government employs female regular and specialist teachers in the school. A school with a significant number of female students deserves a significant number of female teaching and non-teaching staff. Consequently, more women should be encouraged to study special education. Efforts should be made to increase the classroom and hostel accommodation so that the school could be fully operational. The government and well-meaning members of the community should provide more furniture for the students so that no child would continue to sit on the floor. There is a need to ensure the safety of the staff and students in the school by erecting a perimeter fence around the school. Consequently, this would lead to the need for security guards to watch over the school.

There should also be a provision of sporting facilities and equipment in the school. This is important because sports offers several physical and economic benefits to humanity. Engaging in sporting activities would help the students see themselves as equal to their able-bodied counterparts.

### **Conclusion**

There is a need for greater governmental effort in the school. The teachers are inadequate both in numerical strength, professional capacity and gender balance. Therefore, there is a need for the extensive and comprehensive recruitment of Nigerian teachers with specialist knowledge and experience to run special schools in the state. This recruitment should be done without prejudice to the ethnic or religious affiliation of the potential candidates.

It must be noted that the optimization of the Special Inclusive Education Centre would have great financial implications for the government, it must be pointed out that there are inherent unquantifiable benefits to be derived from the standardization of the school. One of the benefits is the creation of jobs for indigenes and residents of the state who have the requisite qualification. This would have a ripple effect on their dependants and other relations. It would also lead to the creation of indirect employment for residents of the area. Small scale businesses would spring up around the school and more people could decide to build houses in the neighbourhood.

The provision of sporting facilities and the encouragement of sports in the school could lead to the development of talents who could go on to become professional athletes. It must be said that Nigerian physically challenged have made the country proud in many international competitions. Many of them are employed by the ministries of sports at the federal and state levels. This means that there are numerous benefits in the education of special needs children.

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