



Knowledge of Regular Teachers Towards Inclusive Education Practices for Students with Hearing Impairment in Rivers-West Senatorial District, Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to analyse regular teachers' knowledge of including students with hearing impairment in RWSD, Rivers State. To facilitate and inform the study, a descriptive research design was adopted, and the study was guided by three goals, three research questions, and three null hypotheses. The population consisted of 2454 teachers in public senior secondary schools in RWSD, while the sample comprised 400 teachers. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled the Teachers Knowledge towards Inclusive Education Practice Questionnaire (TKIEPQ). Teachers in Special Needs Education and Measurement and Evaluation validated the instrument. The test-retest method was used to establish reliability, yielding coefficients of $r=0.72$ for the three dimensions of teachers' knowledge towards individualised education plans (IEPs), $r=0.76$ for differentiated instruction, and $r=0.75$ for the scale of classroom accommodation. The mean and standard deviation were used to present the answers to the research questions, while an independent t-test was used at the 0.05 level of significance to test the null hypotheses. Teacher knowledge was observed to be low when teachers were asked about their knowledge of individualised education plans, differentiated instruction, and how they accommodate learners with hearing impairment in the classroom. It was recommended that school administration and teachers continue to develop knowledge of inclusive practices, particularly individualised education plans (IEPs), to maximise learning opportunities for students with hearing impairment in inclusive and special education settings.

Keywords: Knowledge, Teachers, Inclusive Education, Hearing Impairment, Practice

Introduction

A worldwide effort is underway in early years settings to provide education for children with special needs within general education settings, grounded in the principle of equality and the recognition that each child is part of the collective! The right to education for all must be realised; we must meet these fundamental requirements for learning by engaging with the child at a level they can understand and providing quality education that enriches life. Yet many children, young people and adults are still experiencing school exclusion all over the world. Nothing in the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (2018) or under any of the international human rights treaties should exclude anyone from, or limit someone's educational opportunity on the basis of socially defined or perceived differences, such as those based on sex, ethnic origin, language, religion, nationality, social origin, economic status and ability. Access to schools is not the same as education, as education not only makes a space accessible to those who can access it, but also to those who cannot. The focus is on identifying and addressing barriers and obstacles to learning that work towards exclusion (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2018). Based on the findings of Bamidele (2018), UNESCO in 2009 pointed out that conventional schools need to be

more inclusive in practice to enable the implementation of an inclusive education system. This can indicate whether they are making it easier to teach ALL young people in their communities. Regular schools with an inclusive orientation will be the most effective way to fight against discriminatory attitudes; to make societies welcoming; to build an inclusive community; and to achieve universal education. They also provide quality education to many children, strengthen competences, and, after all, boost the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system (Bamidele, 2018). It was emphasised that all children are entitled to education, and that they should be provided with the opportunity to enjoy and receive an education of an appropriate standard. Every child is unique, with individual interests, learning needs and abilities. These can be addressed through the education system, which should be designed to reflect the wide range of qualities and needs (Thala, 2020). The concept of inclusive education is based on the fact that students with SEN should be included in the regular classroom as much as possible, and that the regular teacher should be a facilitator. This will remain untouched if the educator isn't predisposed towards inclusion, as this may influence the pedagogy practised in an inclusive context. According to Cubo (2017), positive attitudes promote achievement and are the foundation of inclusive education. Inclusive education aims to contribute to the improvement of rich learning and social environment for children with and without disabilities, to minimise the effects of stigma, marginalisation and all forms of neglect (Lampu, 2022).

Over the past twenty years, education has placed strong emphasis on the inclusion and system integration of students with hearing disabilities into mainstream classes. Only recently has the focus shifted to how educators view the inclusion of students with special educational needs (SENs) (Dapu, 2018). The attitudes of key players (takers) in inclusive classrooms are among the first and probably main reasons for this shift in research focus, because today's educational approaches assume that understanding the practices and dynamics of inclusive classrooms requires evaluating teachers' attitudes (Dapu, 2018). Children's diverse skills, regardless of their backgrounds, enhance their interactions with each other and their teacher, making classes unique and interesting to attend (Ubani & Wichendu, 2024). Teachers' effects on a child's behaviour extend beyond learning how to behave to include learning and overall school performance. Whether an attitude is hurtful or helpful to a child depends on the attitude the teacher holds towards the child. Students with disabilities require a positive, inviting learning environment where they can learn, communicate and flourish. Due to their impairments, students with disabilities need an accommodating human and physical environment to be successful. Another important psychosocial issue that schools will need to closely track in relation to a pupil's positive growth in relation to disability is the role of the teacher (Ubani & Sanikpege, 2023). Over time, teachers have a unique opportunity to gain a deep understanding of the children in their class and their capacity, talents, abilities and needs. One of the most rewarding aspects of my teaching career is seeing firsthand the emergent nature of a class reliant on multiple talents, by virtue of the teacher's understanding of how to be inclusive.

According to Ajasin (2016), knowledge comprises what we come to know about ourselves or are inducted into as valid conceptions, perspectives and propositions about objective reality. The views, perceptions and conceptions of educators can thus directly affect the success or failure of an inclusive education programme. A key aspect highlighted in inclusive education practice is the need for teachers to have knowledge of individualised education plans (IEPs). For an individual student with special needs, an education programme must be individualised, detailing the classroom, time, duration, who and what will be provided to an individual student who is eligible for the provision of special education. Special Education Programmes are individualised written plans formulated by the educational institution or educational unit, depending on the needs of a person with a disability (Fiscus, 2020). An Individualised Education Programme (IEP) is a personal contract negotiated between a service recipient and a service provider. Service providers are those who provide services to students with special needs, such as special education teachers, school counsellors, school psychologists and school administration (Bownell, 2019). However, the people the service benefits also include the family of the person with special needs and, in some cases, the person with special needs themselves. It can be concluded that the individualised education programme must not be simply created by a single person; it needs to be formulated with the participation of all stakeholders involved in the individual's education, and it is expected that everyone will accept long-term and short-term goals. The individualised education plan is a description of a teacher's goal, a map of how that goal will be met, and a description of how it will be achieved. This is a documented resource that would/could apply to the services provided to students with special needs (Platt, 2019). For an Individualised Education Programme, there are three basic elements, planning, curriculum and individualisation.

A major aspect of the practice of inclusive education is being aware of and using differentiated instruction. Differentiated instruction is an educational strategy that allows and requires the teacher to recognise and address the unique learning needs, interests and abilities of every student within the classroom environment. The pedagogical approach encompasses adapting and adjusting the learning context for pupils to their unique needs, ensuring that all pupils have an opportunity to achieve their full potential (Wood, 2021). A teacher-student relationship is an integral component of the learning experience and has a profound impact on a student's academic and socio-emotional development, Wood claims. Trust, support, respect and good communication are the bases of a constructive teacher-student relationship.

Classroom accommodation is a major element of inclusive education, according to Yemisi (2020). Yemisi said, "Accommodations are mechanisms and processes that allow for orderly evaluation of and access to instruction for students with disability. Access is the opportunity and capacity of a person to engage in all education, conversations, activity, product and appraisal by which each pupil of a public school is engaged. Opportunities are being equalized via provision of accommodation." According to Lampu (2022), if there are no modifications, children with disabilities may not participate in level-appropriate learning or complete a test. Yemisi (2020) states that these are implemented to mitigate the impact of disability as well as to give pupils the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. The purpose of accommodations is to minimise or remove the impact of the child's disability. For this reason, Fiscus (2020) found that there are certain things teachers need to take into consideration when integrating a child with a disability in an inclusive educational environment. Goals need to be created during programme preparation and should be based on the student. It is appropriate to set high expectations, but if they are unrealistic and the student is expected to achieve beyond their capacity, this can negatively affect the assessment of the student's achievement. However, overly simple goals can waste the time of the learner and the teacher if the goal is too easy. This implies that teachers' understanding of inclusive education is integral to the education of pupils with special needs. An in-depth study of the understanding of ordinary teachers of inclusive education techniques for children with hearing impairment in RWSD Rivers state is necessary.

Inclusive Education for children with disabilities in regular schools in Nigeria is a pressing problem for both children and teachers. The researcher observed that advocacy for inclusive education has been promoted all over the world, yet there remains no comprehensive understanding or practice of inclusive education in Nigerian secondary schools. Worst of all, societal attitudes towards inclusive education, particularly those of teachers, are among the major challenges to its implementation. A key factor in the successful implementation of inclusive education in schools is the knowledge teachers possess about providing education for students with disabilities in regular classrooms. If teachers are not knowledgeable about exceptional learners, their diversity, and how to use different educational approaches to accommodate them and put inclusive education into practice, the success of this grand educational project can be affected. Further observation by the researcher indicates that teachers' lack of knowledge can also contribute to students' poor performance and further hinder the realisation of inclusive education goals, since in Nigeria there is an increasing population of students with disabilities, which has presented considerable challenges to the educational system. Insufficient understanding of inclusive education among teachers may lead to a poor capacity to meet the needs of students with disabilities, resulting in decreased levels of inclusiveness in learning. In this regard, it is relevant to examine the awareness level of regular teachers towards the implementation of inclusive education practices in the teaching and learning process for learners with hearing impairment in Rivers West Senatorial District (RWSD), Rivers State.

The study aimed to examine the knowledge of regular teachers about inclusive education practices for learners with hearing impairment in RWSD, Rivers State. In particular, the research aimed to:

1. ascertain the knowledge level of teachers regarding the individualised education plan and its uses for students with hearing impairment in public secondary schools (PSS) in the RWSD of Rivers State.
2. determine teachers' level of awareness of differentiated instruction in public secondary schools in public secondary schools towards pupils with hearing impairment.
3. determine the knowledge level of Teachers in accommodating pupils/school-going children with hearing impairment in RWSD, Rivers State public secondary Schools (PSS).

The following research questions guide the study:

1. What is the level of teachers' knowledge of the Individual Education Plan for learners with hearing impairment in public Secondary schools in RWSD, Rivers State?
2. What is the level of teachers' knowledge about differentiated instruction of the hearing impaired in public secondary schools of RWSD, Rivers State?
3. How knowledgeable are the teachers about room adjustments for students with hearing impairments in public secondary schools of RWSD, Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study.

1. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female teachers on their knowledge of individualised education plan in public secondary schools in Rivers- West
2. Senatorial District, Rivers State
3. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female teachers on their knowledge of differentiated instruction in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State
4. There is no significant difference in the mean rating of male and female teachers on their knowledge of classroom accommodation in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State

Methodology

A descriptive design was used in the research. A total of 2454 teachers from public senior high schools in the RWSD of Rivers State, Nigeria, participated in the poll. The sample comprised 344 public senior high school instructors in the RWSD, obtained using the Taro Yamane Scientific Method. Later, the sample size was increased to 400. The research tool was a self-developed questionnaire entitled "Teachers' Knowledge towards Inclusive Education Practice Questionnaire" (TKIEPQ). The TKIEPQ comprises four parts. Section A included respondents' details, such as their school and gender. Items pertaining to teachers' knowledge of individualised education plans (IEP) were placed in Section B; items related to teachers' knowledge of differentiated instruction were placed in Section C; and items related to teachers' knowledge of classroom accommodations were placed in Section D. A modified Likert scale, adapted from the "Teachers' Knowledge towards Inclusive Education Practice Questionnaire" (TKIEPQ), was used, consisting of 15 statements: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. Reliability indices within the "Teachers' Knowledge towards Inclusive Education Practice Questionnaire" (TKIEPQ) showed satisfactory reliability for the three dimensions of teachers' knowledge towards individualised education plans (IEP), with $r=0.72$; for differentiated instruction, $r=0.76$; and for the scale of classroom accommodation, $r=0.75$. The study problem was addressed using the mean and SD, and for the null hypotheses, an independent t-test was used at the 5% level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the level of Teachers Knowledge on Individualized Education Plan in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

S/N	Teachers Knowledge of Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	$\bar{X}$	SD
1	As an educator, I recognize that formulating an IEP necessitates the gathering of facts regarding the kid.	2.11	0.88
2	As an educator, I recognize that the formulation of an IEP necessitates the collection, organization, and examination of all pertinent information.	2.17	0.61
3	As an educator, I recognize that the formulation of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) necessitates the inclusion of medical and health information, school reports, or developmental assessments that reflect the institution's efficacy, alongside the provision of student personal data.	2.16	0.73
4	As an educator, I recognize that the formulation of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) involves conducting interviews with parents, former educators, school counsellors, and other relevant school officials who possess knowledge about the student.	2.10	0.42
5	As an educator, I recognize that formulating an Individualized Education Program (IEP) necessitates the observation of the student and the application of standardized scores from intelligence assessments, as well as evaluations of communication and language proficiency.	2.14	0.55
Grand Mean/SD		2.13	0.54

(Criterion Mean=2.50)

As shown in Table 1, the amount of knowledge that instructors have about individualised education plans for students with hearing impairments who are enrolled in PSS at RWSD, Rivers State College, is presented. More specifically, the outcome reveals that the grand mean is calculated to be ($\bar{X}$ = 2.13; SD = 0.54), which is lower than the criteria mean of (<2.50). This further demonstrates that there is a poor level of understanding among instructors about the formation of individualised education plans for students with hearing impairments who are enrolled in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Level of Teachers' Knowledge on Differentiated Instruction in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

S/N	Teachers Knowledge of Differentiated Instruction	$\bar{X}$	SD
6	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers are to develop teaching materials that make learning interesting for students with special needs	2.10	0.85
7	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should ensure that what students learn is within their interest and capability to learn it	2.12	0.66
8	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should teach each student individually in order to simplify the learning content	2.11	0.89
9	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should provide students with several opportunities to learn by assigning problems to small groups	2.15	0.85
Grand Mean/SD		2.15	0.43

(Criterion Mean=2.50)

Table 2 presents the level of knowledge teachers have regarding differentiated instruction for students with Hearing impairments in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State. According to the findings, the grand mean is calculated to be 2.15, with a standard deviation of 0.43. This value is lower than the criterion mean, which is set at less than 2.50. This further demonstrates a low level of knowledge among teachers regarding differentiated instruction for students with hearing impairments enrolled in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation Showing the Level of Teachers' Knowledge on Classroom Accommodation in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

S/N	Teachers Knowledge of Classroom Accommodation	$\bar{X}$	SD
10	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should put students in groups that help them learn	2.06	0.75
11	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should score students based on their strengths and not based on the volume of task assigned to them	2.09	0.99
12	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should provide students with more time to complete their class work	2.16	0.58
13	As a teacher, I am aware that teachers should arrange sits in the classroom in a manner that favours students learning	2.18	0.31
Grand Mean/SD		2.24	0.84

(Criterion Mean=2.50)

Table 3 presents the amount of information that instructors have about the accommodations that may be made in the classroom for students with hearing impairments in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State. According to the findings, the grand mean is 2.24, with a standard deviation of 0.84. This value is lower than the criterion mean, which is set at less than 2.50. In addition, this demonstrates that there is a poor level of understanding among instructors of the accommodations that should be made in the classroom for children with hearing impairments in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 6: T-Test Analysis showing Significant Difference in the Mean Male and Female Teachers on Their Knowledge of Individualized Education Plan in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p	Remark
Male	184	9.56	0.45	388	.058	.070	Retain Ho
Female	216	12.23	0.33				

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 6 shows that, with a significance level of 0.05 and 388 degrees of freedom, the t-value is 0.058 and the p-value is 0.070, both of which exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. Because the p-value of 070 is greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the mean evaluations of male and female teachers regarding their understanding of individualised education plans in PSS within the RWSD, Rivers State, is accepted. This implies that, within the RWSD of Rivers State, instructors recognised their limited familiarity with individualised education plans in PSS. This was true regardless of whether the teachers were male or female.

Table 7: T-Test Analysis showing Significant Difference in the Mean Rating of Male and Female Teachers on Their Knowledge of Differentiated Instruction in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p	Remark
Male	184	10.23	0.29	388	.078	.060	Retain Ho
Female	<u>216</u>	<u>11.34</u>	<u>0.22</u>				

(Survey Data, 2025)

According to Table 7, the t-cal value is 0.078 and the p-value is 0.060, both of which exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. This is the case when the degrees of freedom are 388 and the significance level is 0.05. Given that the p-value of 0.060 exceeds the significance threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference between the mean evaluations of male and female instructors regarding their understanding of differentiated instruction in PSS within the RWSD, Rivers State, is accepted. It may be deduced from this that instructors, regardless of gender, agreed that they had a poor understanding of differentiated teaching plans in PSS throughout their time working for the Rivers State School District.

Table 8: T-Test Analysis showing Significant Difference in the Mean Rating of Male and Female Teachers on Their Knowledge of Classroom Accommodation in PSS in RWSD , Rivers State

Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	t	p	Remark
Male	184	13.61	0.33	388	.069	.080	Retain Ho
Female	<u>216</u>	10.19	0.61				

(Survey Data, 2025)

Table 8 shows that, with a significance level of 0.05 and 388 degrees of freedom, the t-value is 0.069 and the p-value is 0.080, both of which exceed the significance threshold of 0.05. The null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant difference in the mean evaluations of male and female instructors regarding their comprehension of classroom accommodations in PSS in the RWSD, Rivers State, is accepted because the p-value of 0.080 is greater than the significance threshold of 0.05. This implies that, when it comes to classroom accommodations in PSS within the RWSD of Rivers State, instructors admitted limited expertise in the subject, regardless of whether they were male or female.

Discussion

Study Question One (Table 1) revealed that teachers' knowledge of IEP in PSS in the RWSD, Rivers State, was low. H1 (Table 6) indicated that there was no significant difference – $p < 0.05$ – between the mean scores of male and female instructors on the average knowledge level of Individualized Education Plans (IEP) in PSS in the RWSD in Rivers State. The findings of Bamidele (2018), which showed that teachers in mainstream schools lack information about the Individual Education Program (IEP) method, align with the observed lack of knowledge among female teachers about the method in this study. The findings are consistent with Ajasin (2016), whose study revealed that most regular teachers in conventional schools lacked knowledge of the Individualized Education Program approach. The similarities to Ajasin's (2016) study may be due to the seven-year gap since her research, as progress in awareness and advocacy for implementing individualized education programmes has been recorded in both special and mainstream educational institutions. However, despite these campaigns, knowledge of individualized education programme plans still seems to be lacking.

The findings of study question two (Table 2) revealed a low level of teachers' knowledge of differentiated teaching in PSS in the RWSD of Rivers State. The data in Table 7 showed that there was no significant difference between the means of the ratings of male and female teachers in PSS regarding differentiated teaching in the RWSD of Rivers State, as regards the mastery of differentiated teaching in PSS in the RWSD, under hypothesis two. The results coincide with Bownell's (2019) research, which showed that educators lack an understanding of differentiated instruction, despite its potential to increase students' autonomy and control over the subject matter covered, the method of learning, and the pace of learning, among other researchers who recognise that each student brings a unique experiential background, set of gifts, and interests into the classroom. Surprisingly, the

current finding did not surprise the researcher, as past experience indicated that the lack of differentiation was linked to the insufficient knowledge that normal teachers hold about the practice of differentiation.

From the findings of study question three (Table 3), it is observed that PSS in RWSD of Rivers State have a low level of understanding of classroom accommodations. The third hypothesis (Table 8) proposed that the mean ratings of female and male teachers on knowledge of classroom accommodations in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State, are comparable. HNT 3 (Table 8) was supported by the Hotelling's t^2 test. The results showed that there was no significant difference between the mean ratings of female and male teachers on understanding classroom accommodations in PSS of RWSD, Rivers State. The results of this study support the results of the previous study conducted by Thala (2020), which found a positive correlation between instructional understanding of classroom accommodations and students' academic success in secondary schools. However, the study points out that teachers did have some knowledge about classroom accommodations, but if it were accepted and put into practice, it would have positively affected the academic adjustment of secondary school pupils.

Conclusion

Based on the study findings, the researcher's opinion is that there is limited awareness among teachers in PSS in RWSD, Rivers State, of IEP management, differentiated instruction and classroom accommodations for students with hearing impairments. The results of the study showed that there was no significant difference between male and female teachers in the mean rating of knowledge of Individualised Education Plans (IEP), differentiated instruction (DI) and classroom accommodation (CA) for public secondary school students in RWSD, Rivers State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher made the following recommendations:

1. School administrators and teachers should continue to expand their knowledge on Individualised Education Plan (IEP) in order to continuously better the lot of students with special needs in inclusive and special learning centres;
2. In order to ensure that teachers are knowledgeable on differentiated instruction and classroom accommodation in the schools, training and retraining programs on differentiated instruction and classroom accommodation should be spearheaded by the school authority to enhance teachers' knowledge of such crucial aspects of inclusive education practice;
3. The federal government should declare a state of emergency on post-primary education in order to recruit more who are knowledgeable and are positively oriented to implement inclusive education practices for students with special needs.

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