

Principals' Administrative Strategies and the Academic Self-Concept of Special Needs Students in Inclusive Public Secondary Schools in Calabar Municipality, Cross River State

¹Anam,
Ekpenyonganwan
Godwin,
²Ogbeche, Mary Mark,
³Andeshi, Wendy Alorye
& ⁴Ugian, Mary Anyin
^{1,2,3&4}Department of Educational
Management, Faculty of
Educational Foundation Studies,
College of Education,
University of Calabar, Calabar

Article DOI:
10.48028/ijprds/ijedesr.v9.i1.16

Keywords:
Administrative
strategies, Inclusive,
Self-concept and
Special needs

Corresponding Author:
Anam, Ekpenyonganwan Godwin

Abstract

The study investigated whether principals' administrative strategies could improve the academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. Research design was a cross-sectional survey. The population of the study consisted of all the public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. A sample of 10 schools was obtained out of the 15 public secondary schools through purposive sampling. The study was carried out using 250 respondents (10 principals, 100 teachers/counsellors, 120 students- (20 of them were special needs), 20 parents/guardians of the special need students, selected by purposive sampling method. Three (3) research questions were raised and answered while two (2) null hypotheses (Ho) were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistics. A structured checklist and questionnaire instruments were used to collect data, and the data were analysed using mean. Results showed that respondents were favourable. The instruments were validated by three (3) Test and Measurement experts. The questionnaire had a reliability index of 0.85 using Cronbach Alpha technique while a checklist instrument has an index of 0.82 using Kudar-Richardson 20 (KR-20) reliability technique. Disposed to more than 70% of principal administrative strategies in enhancing students' positive academic self-concept using an average mean rating of 2.5 on a four-point Likert scale. In conclusion, collaborative work and teachers' parents' relationship enhance positive academic self-concept of special needs students. It was recommended among others that principals, teachers, and parents in inclusive public secondary schools should have positive attitudes towards students receiving special education if "Education for All" must be attained for National Development.

Background to the Study

In a march towards entrepreneurship and National Development in Nigeria, we need nothing short of encouraging all categories of learners, especially the special needs students. A growing body of research has indicated that special needs students perform better academically when they are trained in an inclusive institution and have a focus on their achievement motivation (Batman & Batman, 2014). Until 1975, the needs of students with disabilities in USA were primarily met through self-contained special education classes within regular schools. In the same year however, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act was passed which guaranteed all children with disabilities free and appropriate public education (Parkay & Stanford, 2004). This was the formal beginning of inclusive education. The philosophy of inclusive education allows children with and without disabilities to attend the same classes in the general schools with addition of education supports. Full inclusion according to Friend and Bursuck (2002:4), represents the belief or philosophy that students with disabilities should be fully integrated into general education classrooms and schools and that their instruction should be based on their abilities and not their disabilities'.

In full inclusion, if a child needs support services, these are brought to the child. The child does not have to participate in a pull-out programme to receive support services. Advocates of full inclusion maintain that pull-out programme stigmatizes participating students because they are separated from their general education classmates. A key concern here is to show support for or to encourage the abilities of the special need's students. One influential motivational construct in school learning arena is self-concept. Self-concept is the feeling a person has about self. It is also defined as individual's belief about himself or herself in terms of his or her academic, social, athletic, personal capabilities and characteristics (Bandura, 1997). Academic self-concept of special needs children is the feeling within themselves about their academic abilities notwithstanding their disabilities. There is a general belief among educational psychologists that individuals have within themselves vast resources for self-understanding and altering their self-concepts, basic attitudes and self-directed behaviour (Ejar, Ejue and Ajah, 2014). It therefore behoves school principals to evolve administrative strategies that will positively alter or influence the academic self-concepts of special needs children for improved performance academically. Umoinyang and Nenty (1995) observed that self-concept is a multi-dimensional trait, and listed subjectively some components of self-concept, they included: self-concept of relations with parents; self-concept of general self; self-concept of general academic ability and so on. However, measurement of self-concept based on accumulated experience of the individual may either be positive (high) or negative (low).

Many studies on special needs students show that relationships with others have a significant influence on a person's self-concept. Mrug and Wallander (2002) carried out a study on self-concept of young people with physical disabilities, with a question: Does integration play a role? The population consisted of 184 young people with physical disabilities. The study compared four groups of students who differed in their level of

school integration: (a) US integrated students (n=53), (b) Czech integrated students (n=14), (c) Czech students educated at special schools daily (n=51), (d) Czech students attending special schools on a residential basis (n=66). A One-Way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was performed on four self-concept variables: Negative self-perception, Aggression/instability, Negative world view, and Dependency. The analyses revealed that more integrated students reported more positive attitude. The most positive self-concept was reported by young people living with their families and attending regular schools, whereas the most negative self-concept report came from students living in the most segregated environment residing away from their homes in a special boarding school.

The role of the school principal is pivotal in creating and promoting inclusive school cultures and strengthening the academic willpower of students with disabilities. Principals are expected to work with varied curricula and methods in delivering instructional services to increasingly diverse school populations. Certainly, the principal's role towards inclusive practices is key to the success or failure of inclusion in the individual school (Dyal, Flynt & Bennett-Walker, 1996). An accepting and supportive climate can significantly enhance the self-concept of students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms/schools (Parkay & Stanford, 2004). Subsequently, they identified three key areas that school principals can create a truly inclusive classroom and encourage special needs students; these are collaborative consultation, partnerships with parents and assistive technology for special learners.

The term principals' administrative strategies as used in this study refers to school principals' approaches for effective learning/interaction with special needs students towards improving their academic self-concepts. To this study, collaborative consultation with stakeholders and teachers' partnership are two strategies recommended to improve academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive classrooms. Collaborative consultation involves the working of classrooms teachers with other professionals in the school system in which their specialized knowledge/ideas are shared and used to help special needs of students' learning. While Teachers'-Parents' Partnership involves teachers working closely with parents of special needs students to identify some of their special challenges at home, which might influence their learning or adjustment ability at schools.

Collaborative consultation is an approach in which a classroom teacher meets with one or more other professionals (a special educator, school psychologist, resource teacher or a counsellor for example) to focus on the learning needs of one or more students. In addition to working with other professionals to meet the learning needs of all students, effective teachers develop good working relationships with parents. Sambo & Bwoi (2015) also identified engagement with parents as an administrative strategy to meet the needs of children with low academic self-concept in inclusive schools. The term 'self-concept' is a feeling about oneself. Our sense of self organizes our thoughts, feelings and actions. The elements of your self-concept, the specific beliefs about which you define

yourself are your self-schemas. Schemas are mental template by which we organize our environment. The way we perceive ourselves powerfully affect how we process social information, how we remember and evaluate others and ourselves (Myer, 2007). It believes that principals' administrative strategies could impact positively on academic self-concept of special needs students.

Statement of the Problem

Many studies with a focus on encouraging special needs students in inclusive public secondary schools in Nigeria have tended to emphasize on upgrading of physical facilities with minimal or no concern for personal variable like students' low academic self-concept. Several studies have also revealed that negative academic self-concept has proven to be a stumbling block on special needs students' learning. There is, however, a general belief that school principals have the administrative capability to inspire students with low/negative self determination to improve their abilities. This study, therefore, investigated the influence of principals' administrative strategies such as collaborative consultation with other professionals and partnerships with parents on improving the low academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality operate in terms of inclusive classroom arrangement?
2. To what extent does collaborative consultation influence the academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive schools?
3. How does teachers' partnership with parents influence the academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive schools?

Statement of Hypotheses

Ho1 Collaborative consultation of relevant stakeholders (teachers, counsellors and psychologists) has no significant influence on the academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive classroom.

Ho2 There is no significant influence of teacher-parents partnership on the academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive classroom.

Methodology

The study was conducted as a sample survey covering all the 15 public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. Research design was a cross-sectional survey because the opinion of all the participants was collected one point across board. The target population was all the principals, teachers, counsellors, students and parents in the study area. Multiple sampling techniques were adopted. Judgment (purposive) sampling was used to select 10 schools out of 15 of them, only inclusive schools were used, the only one special education school was left out. Wholistic sampling was used to select all the identified special needs students, their parents, all the 10 principals and the counsellors.

Other teachers and students were selected using simple random sampling techniques. These methods were adopted to ensure that there was a good representation of the population on which the result of the study was generalized. A sample size of 260 was selected but 250 (96.2%) return rate was used for the study as 10 of the data collecting instruments were not appropriately filled by the respondents. Its distribution was as follows: 10 principals, 94 teachers, 6 counsellors, 130 students (20 of them were special needs) and 20 parents/guardians of special need students.

A well designed and structural questionnaire and a checklist constructed by the researcher were used to elicit information from the respondents. The instruments were validated by three (3) Measurement and Evaluation experts who went through copies of the instruments and their corrections were affected. Copies of the instruments were administered on 20 principals, 20 teachers, 10 students and 10 parents outside the study area. It had a reliability index of 0.85 using Cronbach Alpha technique. The checklist was used to evaluate the school facilities/activities to determine the Educational Delivery System about inclusion. It has ten (10) items and was responded to by principals, teachers and students. It has two (2) options: "Yes" and "No". "Yes" signifies availability while "No" represents too low or complete absence. It is as shown in Table 1. A tick (√) represents "Yes" while x represents "No". To ensure the reliability of the data collected from the field, the instruments were subjected to a pilot study after which the estimates of reliability for both (checklist and questionnaire sets) were obtained. Kuder-Richardson 20 (KR-20) technique was used to estimate the internal consistency of the checklist with a coefficient of 0.82 while reliability index of 0.85 was obtained from the questionnaire using Cronbach-Alpha technique. Both reliability indexes are considered high enough for inferential statistics of this nature (Thorndike & Thorndike-Chris, 2010). The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part A measured collaborative consultation influences special needs students' academic self-concept while part B assessed Teacher-parents partnership influences special needs students' academic self-concept. The questionnaire is a 4-point Likert type rating scale of Strongly Agree=4, Agree =3, Disagree=2, Strongly Disagree=1 for all positively worded items and the negatively worded items have a reversed scale (R). Parts A and B have 12 items, 6 items each.

For each item, the mean of the aggregate of the weights represents the rating on item indicating the degree to which the item was considered to exert influence in academic self-concept. The means and standard deviations of respondents' rating for each item were computed. The results are presented in Tables 2 and 3. As a decision rule, an item that failed to attract a mean rating score of 2.5 or more is regarded as low self-concept, such an item does not have much influence. Any mean score of 2.5 or more is considered high self-concept. The checklist was used to answer research questions 1 while the questionnaire instrument (rating scale) was used to answer research questions 2 and 3 through descriptive statistics of frequency, weighted mean score and standard deviation. Independent t-test was used to test the two (2) null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The data used for the T-test analyses was restricted to responses from the 20 special needs students as shown in Tables 4 and 5.

The procedure for data collection was direct administration of the questionnaire and the checklist schedule from the randomly selected respondents for the study. The respondents were assured of confidentiality. As stated earlier, the data collected were analysed by using descriptive statistics and t-test analysis

Results

The major findings from the field exploration are presented in accordance with the order in which research questions and hypotheses were listed.

Table 1: A checklist of Facilities and Activities to determine the Educational Delivery System about inclusion in Calabar Municipality.

S/No	Facilities and Activities	Responses	
		Yes	No
	Facilities		
1	School has specialized assistance e.g. counsellor	√	
2	Resource room educator(s)		x
3	Special education resource room(s)		x
4	Customized computer keyboard		x
5	Special education teacher(s)		x
	Activities		
6	Students are placed in general classroom	√	
7	Consultative specialist(s) help classroom teachers	√	
8	Specialized instruction in area of need		x
9	Students placed in full-time special education class in general education school		x
10	School timetable provides for parents to work with classroom teacher(s)		x

√= Present of facilities and activities; x= Absence of facilities and activities

The result of table 1 shows that many facilities required for full inclusion were not available and activities expected for full inclusion were equally absent. Observation shows that several of the special need's students have minor cases of disabilities. Most of them were physically challenged people. Thus, full inclusive classrooms and schools do not exist in Calabar Municipality. Education Delivery System is therefore a partial inclusion.

Table 2: Frequency weighted mean score and standard deviation of responses to influence of collaboration with others on student academic self-concept.

S/N	Statement (Collaborative with others)	SA	A	D	SD	X	Standard deviation	Decision rule
1	Student develops more self-concept where the general education teacher work with the school counsellor	432	243	82	20	3.11	0.61	Accepted
2	Interaction with occupational therapist on student capability provokes self determination	476	204	102	12	3.18	0.60	Accepted
3	Consulting with students on issue of leaning materials enhances sense of 'self' as a learner	448	234	60	30	3.10	0.76	Accepted
4	Instructional arrangement by resource room educators makes self-learning more inspiring	200	159	140	77	2.30	1.06	Not accepted
5	Students do not feel excited attending counselling section with invited counsellor (R)	36	80	246	368	2.90	0.97	Accepted
6	Working with resource teacher does not boost student's academic self-concept (R)	37	92	228	364	2.88	0.98	Accepted

R=Reversed rating, \bar{x} =mean, Decision rule: >2.5 Accepted, <2.5 Not accepted

It can be observed from Table 2 that the mean score range between 2.88 with a standard deviation of 0.60 suggesting that the respondents seem to agree that principals' collaborative consultation with other professionals largely influences the academic self-concept of students with disabilities. However, item 4 has a mean score (2.30) and standard deviation (1.06) which is not accepted because it is below 2.5. A possible reason could be because most of the schools do not have resource room educator as shown in Table 1

Table 3: Frequency weighted mean score and standard deviation of responses to influence of teacher-parent partnership on student academic self-concept.

S/N	Statement (teacher-parent partnership)	SA	A	D	SD	X	Standard deviation	Decision rule
1	Parent constant visit to school spurs learner	452	261	72	14	3.20	0.60	Accepted
2	Parent-teacher academic performance awards promote academic self-concept	440	378	60	14	3.17	0.62	Accepted
3	Teacher-parents joined sponsorship of resource materials does not encourage learners(s) (R)	20	76	228	464	3.15	0.75	Accepted
4	Guiding students to do assignments at home by parent provokes self determination	324	234	124	29	2.84	1.01	Accepted
5	Teacher-parent interaction does not enhance self-determination (R)	26	80	210	436	3.08	0.81	Accepted
6	Labelling special needs students raises academic self-determination	224	192	136	62	2.44	1.81	Not accepted

R=Reversed rating, \bar{X} =mean, Decision rule: >2.5 Accepted, <2.5 Not accepted

The result in Table 3 shows that except for item 6 with a mean score of 2.44 and a standard deviation of 1.81, all other five (5) items are considered by respondents that Teacher-parent partnership has strong influence on academic self-concept of exceptional students.

Table 4: Independent t-test of collaborative consultation influence academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive secondary school.

Variables	N	X	SD	Df	t-value	Sig.
Collaborative consultation	12	3.11	0.61			
Non-collaboration	8	2.30	0.86	18	2.31	*significant

Significant level 0.05; 2 tailed test; *significant

The calculated t-value ($t=2.31$) is greater than the critical value ($t=2.093$) at 0.05 significance using 18 degrees of freedom (df). The means that collaborative consultation with other professionals has significant influence on special needs of students' academic self-concept. The null hypotheses were rejected and alternate hypotheses accepted.

Table 5: Independent t-test analysis of teacher-parent partnership influence on academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive secondary schools.

Variable	N	X	SD	Df	t-value	Sig.
Teacher-parent partnership	13	3.17	0.60	18	2.61	*Significant
No parent-teacher partnership	7	2.44	0.61			

Significant level 0.05; 2 tailed test; *significant

From Table 5, the calculated t-value of 2.61 is greater than the critical t-value of 2.093 at 0.05 level of significance using 18 degrees of freedom (df) and a two tailed test. This means that the teacher-parent partnership has a significant influence on academic self-concept of special needs students. Based on this result, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternate hypothesis accepted.

Discussion of Findings

The results from the findings can be seen as follows:

- 1 Educational Service Delivery in Calabar Municipal does not reflect full inclusion (gotten from checklist).
- 2 Consultative collaboration of principal with other professionals encourages special needs students' positive academic self-concept.
- 3 Teachers-parents partnership enhances academic self-concept of special needs students in an inclusive classroom/school.
- 4 Labelling of special needs students lower their academic self-concept.

Based on the results obtained from the study, full inclusive education was not practiced in public secondary schools in Calabar Municipality. This could be because of poor financial situation and state government policy as the results reveals absence of essential facilities in the schools and the Educational Delivery System has not accommodated full inclusion (Parkay & Stanford, 2004). However, other major findings of this study show that principal administrative strategies can enhance special needs students' academic self-concept. Table 2 results reveal that collaborative consultation with other professionals as a strategy has a great influence on student academic self-concept. When collaborative consultation influences special needs students' self-concept was subjected to a t-test analysis. It reveals that there is a significant influence of collaborative consultation on special needs students' academic self-concept. This result conforms with the findings of Friend and Bursuck (2002) that collaborative consultation among teachers and other professionals enhance students' abilities.

Similarly, the results of the study show that teacher-parent partnership has a great influence on academic self-concept of special needs students in inclusive classroom/schools. A further examination of the influence of teacher-parent partnership on

academic self-concept of special needs students reveals a significant influence on student academic self-concept. This finding also conforms with findings of Umoinyang and Nenty (1995); Mrug and Wallander (2002) and Sambo and Bwoi (2015), that parent-teacher partnership positively influences special needs student self-concept. The impact of teacher-parent partnership on student learning, including their academic self-concept, cannot be overemphasized. Since parents are the first set of persons children relate with and can easily identify abnormality in their children. However, it was revealed in the study that some teachers and parents are in the habit of labelling some special needs students.

Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that

- 1 Full inclusion in public secondary school in Calabar Municipality is lacking.
- 2 Effective consultation of school principals through his/her teachers with other educators can encourage students with low academic self-concept to a high positive self-concept.
- 3 Teacher-parent partnership has very great impact on encouraging students to be self-determined in their academic especially the special needs students.

Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, the following recommendation was made:

- 1 Principals and the state government should make funds available to enable the schools to avail themselves of basic requirements for full-inclusive education.
- 2 Principals should improve their collaborative effort with other professionals and have more positive attitude towards the special needs of students.
- 3 Parents and teachers should avoid labeling students with disabilities. This is because labelling as it is argued may lead to low academic self-concept.

References

- Batman, D. F. & Batman, C. F. (2014). A Principal's guide to special education. Arlington, A Council for Exceptional Children.
- Dyal, A., Flynt, S. W. & Bennett-Walker (1996). Schools and inclusion: Principal's perceptions, *Clearing House*. 70(2), 32-35.
- Ejar, B. F., Ejue, J. B. & Ajah, E. E. (2014). Best practices and experiences in assessment techniques used by Nursery School Teachers' in Cross River State. *Journal of Educational Assessment in Africa*. 9, 283-291.
- Friend, M. & Bursuck, W. D. (2002). *Including students with special needs: A practical guide for classroom teachers*. Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Mrug, S. & Wallander, J. L. (2002). Self-concept of young people with disabilities: Does integration play a role? *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*. 49(3), 1-16.
- Myer, D. G. (2007). *Exploring social psychology*. 4th ed. Hope College; Boston
- Parkay, F. W. & Standford, B. H. (2004). *Becoming a teacher*. 6th(ed.), Boston, Allyn and Bacon.
- Sambo, A. M. & Bwoi, G. M. (2015). Administration of inclusive education in Nigerian schools: Issues and implementation strategies. *Nation Journal of Inclusive Education*. 3(1), 107-115
- Thorndike, R. M. & Thorndike-Chris, T. (2010). *Measurement and evaluation in psychology and education* (8th ed.). New Delhi: PHI Learning.
- Umoinyang, I. E. & Nenty, H. J. (1995). Best relation, human environment and self-concept: An analysis of self-concept factor scores, *Journal of Cross River State Chapter of Organisation. Mondiale Pow L' Education Pre-Scholair*. 1(1), 178-194.