MANAGING STUDENTS’ SOCIAL DIVERSITIES FOR EFFECTIVE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN RIVERS STATE – NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigates how teachers manage students’ social diversities in an inclusive education system in Rivers State-Nigeria. Four Research questions and four null hypotheses addresses the study. The descriptive survey research design is adopted for the study in which a structured questionnaire of 26 items entitled “Managing Students’ Diversities and Inclusive Education Questionnaire” (MSDIEQ) is used to elicit information from the target respondents. A sample of 451 teachers was randomly selected from a target population of 2,257 teachers in the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Tables were constructed and means (̅) computed to provide answers to the four research questions. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient is used to test hypotheses 1 and 2, while hypotheses 3 and 4 are tested with t-test inferential tools at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the study reveals that out of the 6 categories of learners examined herein, only the “auditory learners” was significantly managed by teachers. Regrettably too, teachers do not give significant attention in managing students’ social diversities that relate to gender and learning disability. Thus, it is noted that teachers lacked ideas about alternative ways of restructuring teaching and concrete strategies to create conducive inclusive learning environment. The study concludes that the administrative and legal challenges of students' social diversities should be readdressed since the variables have become critical factors in the educative process of today school children. The study therefore recommends the establishment of at least two inclusive education schools in each of the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State and the enactment of legislation to upgrade managing students’ social diversities to the status of ‘right’ to be enjoyed by all school children.

Key words: Categories of Learners, Inclusive Education, Managing, Special Education, Students’ Social Diversities.

A. Introduction

Conceptually, social diversities refer to the variety of differences between people in a given society. However, Sessa (2002) opined that social diversities have to do with the physical characteristics of the individual in relation to race, ethnicity, sex, and sometimes disabilities. Accordingly, social diversities can be defined as acknowledging, understanding, accepting and valuing differences among people with respect to age, class, race and gender (Esty, Griffin, &Schorr-Hirsh, 1995). The deduction here connotes that social diversities in form of social differences exist among the people in any given human environment.

The school environment being part of the human environment is obviously composed of diverse traits of students. Diversity traits as stated in Wema theory (2004) and the theory of Mandigo (2001) in Uzoma (2015) are traits such as, age, height, religion, race, beliefs, experiences and socio-political alienations. However, what is important in this study involves ascertaining how these diverse groups which are noticed in the school system can be managed to achieve inclusive educational goals and objectives. This is imperative because managing social diversities in the classroom is not only about preventing unfair discrimination and improving equality among students of diverse elements, but also valuing their social differences in an inclusive general cum specific classroom administration.

Consequently, the social system derives from the work of Parsons (1960) in Kalagbor (2017) opined that the school consist of defined boundaries within which people interrelate and interact in carrying on academic activities for the purpose of achieving the desired educational goals. The school in a pluralistic area like Rivers State-Nigeria, is a conglomerate of individual teachers, non-teaching school members, students, personalities, structures, values, interests, needs, activities and programmes, functioning for the achievement of common objectives. This connotes that schools in the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State are composed of plurality of students from different backgrounds and social dimensions interacting with each other in a classroom environment.
The implication of this plurality status of students mentioned above, is that, a proper understanding and management of the classroom as a conglomerate of diverse students is useful to the teacher who must teach these students by de-emphasizing individualized instruction and developing a general education curriculum to be delivered in a general-education classroom. This is where the “effective inclusive education” specifically comes in.

An inclusive education system is a way of thinking and acting that demonstrates acceptance of, and belonging for students, regardless of their social backgrounds, needs and academic abilities. Nevertheless, one of the most important principles of inclusive education is that no two learners are the same. Hence, inclusive education is the placement of students with and without disabilities, different learning abilities, capacities and backgrounds into the general-education classroom (Will, 1986). In other words, inclusive education is about how the teacher develop and design the school, classroom, academic programmes and activities so that all students with and without social diversities could learn together in the same classroom. But, it is the result of effective teaching practice, an adopted learning environment and approaches that can ensure that all students in a given classroom are included, engaged, and supported in the process of learning. This, therefore, is the subject matter of section 7, subsection 118 (d) of the National Policy on Education 2014.

Further, in the school system, particularly in public secondary schools classrooms, the following social diversity areas exists: gifted students, students with learning disabilities, culturally diverse students, students with differences in age, social background, social behavior, height, gender, underperforming students (slow learners) and students with diverse religion. The primary school a child attended before his/her admission into the public secondary school could also generate its own form of diversity for the secondary school student. Managing these diversity areas in the classroom environment will imply the teacher negotiating interaction with students in an inclusive learning situation (West, 1996). This is imperative because students’ social diversity traits have direct influence on their academic behaviour and performance (Uzoma, 2015).

Concisely, for a teacher to attempt to account and teach for only one of the above stated social diversities do not do justice to students’ learning process. For instance, where there is a gifted student in a classroom, if a teacher only takes into cognizance that the student is academically gifted, the teacher will be neglecting the other important parts of that individual student’s identity and differences, and those neglected social diversities will most likely have a profound impact on the way that student learns and understands academic materials. The teacher being the classroom administrator and practitioner is expected to take into account such student’s entire social diversity orientation when devising lesson plan in order to maximize each student’s academic efforts.

Another perspective of students’ social diversities which if properly managed will bring about effective inclusive education are the six (6) types of learners. These types of learners, according to Drake (1993) include; Visual Learners (VL)- students who learn best by looking and enjoys reading; Tactile Learners (TL)- students who learn by touching and manipulating objects; Analytic Learners (AL)- students who learn by focusing on details of language, such as grammar rules, and enjoy taking apart words and sentences; Kinetic Learners (KL)- students who learn physically by moving around; Auditory Learners (A-L)- students who learn well by listening; and Global Learners (GL)- students who learn by focusing on pictures and do not care so much about specific details, they do not like to get bored with slow moving lessons. These six (6) types of learners imply that the social diversities emanating therefrom are to be managed and incorporated in the general-education classroom in the form of inclusive education.

Managing students’ social diversities in an inclusive public secondary school system attracts substantial benefits in learning activities: better decision making, especially from the divergent answers students give to a question; improve problem solving among students due to team work; greater creativity and innovative ideas cum academic experiences; inspire students to perform to their higher academic ability and improve their sense of belonging irrespective of their social diversities; enhances students’ classroom participation and commitment to achieving each lesson specific objectives; enhances the teacher-student relationship (core
Relationship) and promoting safe place for students to learn. In other words, managing students’ social diversities is another strategy aimed at encouraging respect to students’ academic freedom, reduce legal actions that may emanate from the application of individualized instruction; facilitate independent thinking and emphasizes the golden rule “treat others as you want to be treated”.

Specifically, the above backdrops suggest that a whole lot of positive relevance are associated with the concept of students’ social diversities in today inclusive education process. It therefore supports the present study to investigate the extent teachers manage students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education, particularly in the rural and urban public senior secondary schools in Rivers state-Nigeria.

B. Statement of the Problem

The critical expectation of stakeholders in education industry from every school administrator and classroom practitioner is ensuring that the school climate, especially the classroom is cohesive to provide platform for bringing together diverse students for effective inclusive education. The inclusive classroom with the diverse students (the six types of learners) therefore determine the kind of teaching style to be introduced by the classroom practitioner in making learning to take place.

However, the researches of Luzzo & McWhirter (1999), Gatta & Trigg (2001), Ruggs & Hebi (2002), Hintado & Gurin (2002) and Uzoma (2015) had differently emphasized that school employees (teachers) consideration of students’ social diversities is positively related to higher level of students’ academic growth; that stigmatization of students by their teachers on the basis of their social challenges are often perceived as barrier to education; that teachers’ negative comments about some students’ academic abilities do create anxiety among the learners, and that diversity among students in education directly impacts their performance. The implication of these research outcomes is that students tend to learn better in a general-education classroom situation.

The observations of the researcher have shown that teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State might not be aware of these related research outcomes and the emerging need for all inclusive teaching/learning process, considering the manner they plan and individualize academic instructions in the classrooms. Teachers, it has been observed, tolerate bulling, teasing and other put-down behavior in the classroom, instead of complimenting “a zero tolerance” for anything that is disrespectful, hurtful or intolerant of students’ social diversities. The classroom practitioners do use the traditional mode of communication (lecture or chalk and talk method) when teaching the learners composed of significant diversities without considering the use of other integrative/inclusive learning styles.

In addition, several studies have dealt on employees’ diversities, especially, teachers’ diversities. It is unfortunate that studies that have relevance on students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State have not been given any prominence. This concisely implies that teachers in Rivers State may not have seen the need to encourage students’ social diversities in a general-education classroom. This study therefore intends to fill this gap by investigating the extent teachers in a general-classroom situation manage students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education process in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State- Nigeria. To further delineate the study, the researcher examined students’ social diversities in relation to their learning disabilities, gender, and parental social backgrounds respectively.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent teachers manage students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State. Specifically, this study aim to:

1. Identify the categories of learners classroom teachers manage their social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State;
2. Evaluate the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental backgrounds for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State;

3. Determine the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State;

4. Investigate the extent classroom teachers in rural and urban public senior secondary schools manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender in Rivers State.

Research Questions
The following four research questions guided the study:

1. What category of learners do classroom teachers manage their social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

2. To what extent do classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities that relate to students’ parental background for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

3. To what extent do male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities that border on learning disability for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

4. How do classroom teachers in rural and urban public senior secondary schools manage students’ social diversities that relate to gender for effective inclusive education in Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses
The following four null hypotheses were postulated for the study:

Ho1. There is no significant relationship between the categories of learners classroom teachers manage their social diversities and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho2. There is no significant relationship between the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities that relate to students’ parental background and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho3. There is no significant difference between the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities that border on learning disability for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Ho4. There is no significant difference between the extent rural and urban classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities that relate to gender for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

C. Methodology
This study adopted the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised of 5,136 public senior secondary schools teachers in the 245 public senior secondary schools in the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State – Nigeria. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 20 percent of the sample from the entire population of the study. This selection gave a sample of 49 public senior secondary schools with 2,257 teachers in 5 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. A further sampling was done to obtain 20 percent of the teachers from the 2,257 teachers, which gave a working sample of 451 teachers in 49 public senior secondary schools in 5 Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

In this study, an instrument was developed by the researcher and entitled “Managing Students’ Diversities and Inclusive Education Questionnaire” (MSDIEQ). The instrument was however subjected to a close examination and modifications by experts in the field of educational management on the subject matter validity of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was established by the use of test-retest method. Thereafter, the two sets of scores derived from the test-retest method were analysed using the Pearson Product Moment
Correlation Co-efficient (r), which yielded a reliability value of 0.80. This value was accepted as high for the utilization of the instrument for data collection. However, the instrument contained 26 items designed to find information on the extent teachers manage students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education. The instrument was structured thus: items 1 to 6 solicited information on research question 1; items 7 to 11 dealt on research question 2; items 12 to 18 solicited information on research question 3; and items 19 to 26 sought answers to research question 4. The instrument was further structured in line with the modified Likert 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA)= 4 points; Agree (A)= 3 points; Disagreed (D)= 2 points; Strongly Disagreed (SD)= 1 point for research question 1. While, Very High Extent (VHE)= 4 points; High Extent (HE)= 3 points; Low Extent (LE)= 2 points; and Very Low Extent (VLE)= 1 point was used for research questions 2 to 4 respectively.

Out of the 451 copies of questionnaires administered to the respondents, 410 copies, representing 90 percent of the total sample were retrieved and used for the study. The descriptive statistics such as the frequency, mean and standard deviation were used with the criterion mean of 2.50 to determine the answers to the 4 research questions. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (r) inferential tool was used to test null hypotheses 1 and 2 while t-test was used to test hypotheses 3 and 4, at 0.05 level of significant.

Data Analysis/Results
Research Questions 1
What category of learners do classroom teachers manage their social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean (x̄) and Standard Deviation (SD) of teachers’ responses on the category of learners they manage their social diversities. Criterion x̄ = 2.50

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Categories of learners</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>x̄</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Visual learners (students who learn best by looking and enjoys reading.)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>820</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tactile learners (students who learn by touching and manipulating objects).</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>853</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Auditory learners (students who learn well in listening)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>Agreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kinesthetic learners (students who learn physically by moving around, they would always want to be noticed in the classroom.)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Analytic learners (students who learn by focusing on details of language such as grammar rules, and enjoy taking apart vows and sentences.)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global learners (students who lean by focusing on pictures such as various teaching materials; do not care so much about details, and do not like to get bored with slow moving lessons.)</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>Disagreed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s field work, February, 2017.

Table 1, item 3 above with a mean (x̄) of 2.74 and SD of 1.03 shows that classroom teachers agreed that they manage the auditory category of learners. While items 1, 2, 4, 5, and
6 with $\bar{x}$ of 2.00; 2.21; 2.15 and 2.43 shows that classroom teachers do not manage the visual, tactile, kinesthetic, analytic and global learners in the classroom.

In all, table 1 with an aggregate $\bar{x}$of 2.27 and SD of 0.91 shows that classroom teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State disagreed that they manage effectively the various categories of learners in inclusive education classrooms.

**Research Questions 2**

To what extent do classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental background for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** Mean ($\bar{x}$) and Standard Deviation (SD) of the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to parental backgrounds. Criterion mean ($\bar{x}$) = 2.50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Teachers do manage students’ social diversities in relation to parental background on the basis of cultural/ethnic background. Students’ parental economic status. Students’ parental political status. Students’ parental educational background. Teachers personal relationship. Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>$\bar{x}$</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Rank Order</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Students’ cultural/ethnic background. Students’ parental economic status Students’ parental political status Students’ parental educational background Teachers personal relationship Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>996</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Low Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Students’ parental economic status Students’ parental political status Students’ parental educational background Teachers personal relationship Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,128</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Students’ parental political status Students’ parental educational background Teachers personal relationship Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,201</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Students’ parental educational background Teachers personal relationship Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>968</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Low Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Teachers personal relationship Aggregate $\bar{x}$ and SD</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1,212</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher’s field work February, 2017.

In all, table 2 with aggregate mean $\bar{x}$ of 2.63 and SD 0.79 shows that classroom teachers in public senior secondary schools to a high extent, manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental backgrounds.

**Research Question 3**

To what extent do male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2:** Mean ($\bar{x}$) and Standard Deviation (SD) on the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities. Criterion mean ($\bar{x}$) = 2.50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Managing students social diversities in relation to disability: Dyslexia Learning Disability: Disability that impedes the students’ ability to read, complete</th>
<th>Male Teachers ($N = 140$)</th>
<th>Female Teachers ($N = 270$)</th>
<th>Deci</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Learning Disability (ADHD):** Difficulty in paying attention in class, hardly focused (emotional and behavioural disorder).


15. **Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD):** Disability in interpreting non-verbal cues or body language, signs and demonstrations.

16. **Dysgraphia Disability:** Disability on students hand writing ability and psychomotor skills; cannot write or think at the same time.

17. **Dyscalculia Learning Disability:** Students understanding numbers, and struggles with memorizing.

18. **Auditory Processing Disability (APD):** Students that are hearing impaired.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>890</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>1st</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>661</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>4th</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>578</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>9th</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>5th</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>574</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td></td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Researcher’s field work, February, 2017.

**Table 3,** items 12 and 13 above with $\bar{x}$ of 2.75 and 2.81 for male teachers; 3.00 cum 3.29 for the female teachers’ shows categorically that both the male and female teachers in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State manage students’ social diversities in relation to speech and language impairment to a high extent.
Also table 3, items 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 above with $\bar{x}$ of 2.31, 2.13, 2.21, 2.13, 1.95 for the male teachers; 2.03, 2.44, 2.14, 1.88 and 2.12 for the female teachers shows that both the male and female teachers in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State manage students social diversities relation to; physical and health impairment to a high extent.

Also table 3, items 13, 15, 16, 17 and 18 above, with $\bar{x}$ of 2.31, 2.12, 2.21, 2.13, 1.95 for the male teachers; 20.03, 2.44, 2.14, 1.88 and 2.12 for the female teachers shows that both the male and female teachers in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, to a low extent manage students’ social diversities relating to: physical and health impairment, interpreting non-verbal cues, psychomotor skills, memorization and hearing impaired.

Comparatively, the female classroom teachers with an aggregate $\bar{x}$ of 2.41, although at a low extent, manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities better than their male counterparts with an aggregate $\bar{x}$ of 2.32 in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Research Question 4**

To what extent do classroom teachers in rural and urban public senior secondary schools manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender for effective inclusive education in Rivers State?

**Table 4:** Mean ($\bar{x}$) and standard deviation (SD) of the extent classroom teachers in senior secondary schools manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender for effective inclusive education in Rivers State. Criterion $\bar{x}$= 2.50.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S/N</th>
<th>Managing students social diversities in relation to gender</th>
<th>Teachers in Rural Schools (N = 178)</th>
<th>Teachers in Urban Schools (N=232)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total weight</td>
<td>$\bar{x}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Teachers introduce anti-discrimination and inclusion rules in relation to gender in the classroom. The teacher develops age-appropriate classroom instruction on academic issues relating to gender.</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>The teacher is aware of students’ social diversities by gender profile in the classroom. The teacher treat student irrespective of gender as an individual and respect each student for who he or she is in the classroom. The teacher rectifies any language patterns or case</td>
<td>449</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>The teacher is aware of students’ social diversities by gender profile in the classroom. The teacher treat student irrespective of gender as an individual and respect each student for who he or she is in the classroom. The teacher rectifies any language patterns or case</td>
<td>582</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>The teacher is aware of students’ social diversities by gender profile in the classroom. The teacher treat student irrespective of gender as an individual and respect each student for who he or she is in the classroom. The teacher rectifies any language patterns or case</td>
<td>354</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>The teacher is aware of students’ social diversities by gender profile in the classroom. The teacher treat student irrespective of gender as an individual and respect each student for who he or she is in the classroom. The teacher rectifies any language patterns or case</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>1.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
examples that exclude or demean students on the basis of gender. The classroom teacher is sensitive to terminology that refers to specific gender. The classroom teacher does not criticize the learning ability of individual students in the classroom on the basis of gender. The teacher does protect students in the classroom on the basis of gender. Aggregate \( \bar{X} \) and SD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>( \bar{X} )</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Extent</th>
<th>( N )</th>
<th>( 'r' )</th>
<th>( t )</th>
<th>( df )</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>338</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>1.76</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Low Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>423</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Low Extent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>595</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>High Extent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Researcher’s field work, February, 2017.

Table 4, items 19, 23, 24, 25 above with \( \bar{X} \) of 2.26, 1.79, 1.89 and 2.30 for teachers in rural schools; 2.39, 1.80, 1.76, 1.82 for teachers in the urban schools shows that both teachers in rural and urban public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, to a low extent, manage students’ social diversities that border on: anti-discrimination and inclusion rules; use of diction in relation to gender, respect to student irrespective of gender, criticism on the ability of students by gender.

Also, items 20, 21 and 26 above with \( \bar{X} \) of 2.52, 3.26 and 3.17 for teachers in rural schools; 2.51, 2.92 and 2.56 for teachers in urban public senior secondary schools in Rivers State indicate that both teachers, to a high extent manage students social diversities in relation to; developing age-appropriate classroom instruction relating to gender, aware of students’ social diversities by gender profile and protection of students in the classroom on the basis of gender.

However, item 22, with \( \bar{X} \) of 1.98 for teachers in rural schools, shows that the teachers in rural public senior secondary schools in Rivers State manage, to a low extent, students’ social diversities in relation to students’ personality by gender, while teachers in the urban schools with \( \bar{X} \) of 2.54 manage same to a high extent.

Comparatively, the teachers in the rural public senior secondary schools in Rivers State with an aggregate \( \bar{X} \) of 2.39, although at a low extent, manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender better than their urban schools counterparts with an aggregate \( \bar{X} \) of 2.28.

**Test of Hypothesis**

**Hypothesis 1**

There is no significant relationship between the categories of learners classroom teachers manage their social diversities and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

**Table 5:** Showing relationship between the categories of learners classroom teachers manage their diversities and effective inclusive education.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( N )</th>
<th>'r'</th>
<th>cal. t</th>
<th>critical t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories of learners’ classroom teachers manage their diversities.</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>1.621</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effective inclusive education

Data in table 5 above shows that the obtained r is 0.08, calculated t-value is 1.621 while the critical t is 1.960 at 408 degree of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (1.621) is less than the critical t-value (1.960), the null hypothesis is therefore accepted. The result of this finding is that the relationship between the categories of learners classroom teachers manage their social diversities and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is not statistically significant.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental background and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 6: Showing the relationship between the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental background.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>'r'</th>
<th>cal. t</th>
<th>critical t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managing students’ social diversities in relation to parental background.</td>
<td>410</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>6.118</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>Significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective inclusive education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in table 6 above reveals that the obtained r is 0.29, calculated t-value is 6.118 while the critical t-value is 1.960 at 408 degree of freedom. Since the calculated t-value (6.118) is greater than the critical t-value (1.960), the null hypothesis is therefore rejected. The result of this finding is that the relationship between the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities with regard to students’ parental background and effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State is statistically significant.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant difference between the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 7: Showing t-test analysis on the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ diversities in relation to learning disabilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>cal t-value</th>
<th>critical t-value</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male classroom teachers</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>1.960</td>
<td>Not significant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female classroom teachers</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data in table 7 above indicated that the calculated t-value is 0.030 while the critical t-value is 1.960 at 408 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. This shows that the null hypothesis is accepted. The finding of this hypothesis is that the extent male and female classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to their learning disabilities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State does not significantly differ.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference between the extent rural and urban classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

Table 8: Showing t-test analysis on the extent rural and urban classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>(\bar{x})</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>cal t-value</th>
<th>critical</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data in table 8 above shows that the calculated t-value is 1.100, critical t-value is 1.960 at 408 degree of freedom and at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated t-value (1.100) is less than the critical t-value (1.960) at 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the extent rural and urban classroom teachers manage students social diversities in relation to gender for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State does not significantly differ.

### D. Discussion of Findings

The first finding of this study indicate that classroom teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State do not effectively manage the various categories of learners (Visual, Tactile, Kinesthetic, Analytic and Global Learners) for effective inclusive education, although the teachers agreed that they do manage only the “Auditory Learners”- students who learn well in listening. The study further identified a non-significant relationship between the categories of learners the classroom teachers manage their social diversities for effective inclusive education in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

The above finding shows that teachers in the public senior secondary schools are not aware of the emerging academic area in classroom teaching and learning process whereby all students, irrespective of their social diversities, are integrated in the classroom academic exercises through inclusive education strategy. The implication here is that the various categories of students’ with their attendant social diversities are not effectively managed due to the teachers’ continued adoption of a teaching method that only acknowledge the “Auditory Learners” (students who learn well by listening), thereby not considering that the various categories of students learn through several senses; hearing (audio-aids), seeing (visual aid), learning and seeing (audio-visual aids) and doing (Castaldi, 1977).

The implication further implies that classroom teachers have not identified concrete strategies aimed to create conducive inclusive learning environments for the various categories of learners (Nwogu, 2000). Hence, the teachers have failed to enforce proactively, the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of students in a supposed inclusive education classroom. Concisely, this finding shows that teachers in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State lack the knowledge and ability to teach the various categories of students with their attendant social diversities in an inclusive classroom arrangement, possibly due to their inadequate professional preparedness for the tasks.

The second finding shows that classroom teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, to a high extent, manage students’ social diversities in relation to students’ parental background. The findings further demonstrate that the relationship between the extent classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities with regard to students’ parental factor and effective inclusive education is statistically significant. In other words, this study certified that teachers, even in an inclusive classroom, tends to give better attention to those students whose parents are not only directly known to them, but whose social, political and economic status are significant in the society. These sets of students do have a better advantage in the management of their various social diversities than others whose parental backgrounds are not significantly ranked. This disparity shows elements of discrimination which obviously is not a variable for effective management of students’ social diversities in any inclusive general education-classroom.

The above finding and its attendant implications support Haveman and Wolfe (1993) in De serf (2002) argument to the effect that parental background factor is a powerful predictor of their children’s educational attainment. Also, in a related research, Omeh (2010), revealed that parental level of motivation to both their children/ward and teachers do have influence on students’ academics. But, it has to be noted that the outcome of both studies do not objectively address the goal of managing students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education.
other words, managing students’ social diversities in a general education-classroom should be devoid of any discriminatory practices.

The third finding shows that the female classroom teachers, although at a low extent ($\bar{x}= 2.41$) manage students’ social diversities in relation to learning disabilities better than their male counterparts ($\bar{x}= 2.32$). The study statistically further identified that the extent male and female teachers manage students’ social diversities relating to learning disabilities does not significantly differ.

The implication here is that male and female teachers’ inability to manage students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education could be the result of low conscious understanding of the subject matter; lack of ideas about alternative ways of restructuring teaching task in general-education classes; and the dearth of professional inclusive education teachers (Uzoma, 2015). Nevertheless, the outcome of this study has validated the observation of the researcher that female teachers are generally more patient than male teachers and they are biologically engineered by nature to be better at raising children. These are basic variables in managing students’ social diversities in the school system.

The fourth finding of this study reveals that teachers in rural public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, although at a low extent ($\bar{x}= 2.39$), manage students’ social diversities bordering on gender better than their urban public senior secondary schools counterparts ($\bar{x}= 2.28$). However, the study further shows that there is no significant difference between the extent rural and urban classroom teachers manage students’ social diversities in relation to gender for effective inclusive education.

The specific issues in view of the above study outcome include that, due to poor management of students’ social diversities in both the urban and rural public senior secondary schools in Rivers State, the gender variables of a classroom seating plan that supports equal participation, equal academic and behaviour expectations, use of gender mental language, proper teacher body language that addresses both male and female students; addressing gender-based discipline, were ill-perceived by teachers in the art of managing students’ social diversities in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State.

E. Summary/Conclusion

The study examined the emerging academic issues of managing students’ social diversities for effective inclusive education, particularly in the public senior secondary schools in Rivers State - Nigeria. The study investigated the various categories of learners teachers manage their social diversities, and students’ social diversities that border on gender, parental background and learning disability. The researcher observed in this study the contention that inclusive education is a sure strategy for all students' active learning in a general-education academic environment irrespective of the students’ social diversities; the outcome of the study is regrettable.

The study concisely informed that both the educational institutions and the teachers in public senior secondary schools in Rivers State had shown apathy and lack of awareness of the need to recognize inclusive education variables, with a view to managing effectively students’ social diversities. Hence, on the basis of the regrettable findings, the study concludes that the administrative and legal challenges inherent in managing students’ social diversities need to be readdressed because they have become critical factors in the education processes of today's school children.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made;

1. The government, and in particular, the education ministry should establish at least two (2) inclusive education schools in each of the 23 Local Government Areas of Rivers State. This should be followed up with the specific provisions of general-education classrooms, the peculiar instructional materials and retraining of teachers as professionals to manage students’ social diversities.
2. A state-wide spread campaign for inclusive education has to be encouraged and facilitated by the education enlightenment unit of the Rivers State office of the National Orientation Agency (NOA). Nevertheless, the pilot inclusive education project which was started since 1999 in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State should be reviewed with a view to sustaining the above stated campaign. Practically, this is simply raising awareness of the teachers on the importance of understanding and embracing all types of social diversities in the classroom.

3. There is the need to enact legislation on students’ social diversity management in schools to take care of the scattered non-discriminatory contents of the law that relate to the education of the child, particularly on equal access to educational opportunities. This enactment should also upgrade managing students’ social diversities to the status of ‘right’ to be enjoyed by all school children.

4. In managing students, the teachers need to ensure that their curricula are flexible, bias free and relevant to students’ social diversities. These strategies can be applied in teaching without policies from outside the classroom. In other words, it is a way of creating more inclusive learning environment.

5. Inclusive education as a subject matter should be enlisted in the National Policy on Education (NPE), instead of mentioning it as an aspect of “Special Education” as presently contained in section 17, sub-section 118 of the National Policy on Education, 2014.

References


