



Creating Awareness for Inclusive Education Among Parents and Caregivers Through Adult Literacy Programmes

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive Education is the right of every child and it is still the most effective way of making every child have access to equal educational opportunities. Inclusive education is a commitment to educate each child to considering his abilities and disabilities. The goal of inclusive education is not to erase (or deny the existence of) differences, but to enable all students to belong to an educational community that values and validates their individuality. Through inclusive education, adult literacy programmes may include basic Literacy skills for creating awareness and community-based initiatives tailored to the specific needs and goals of adult learners. There are still challenges experienced by parents and Caregivers of children with disabilities. Parents and Caregivers still lack the awareness and the knowledge of the benefits of inclusive education for the children concerned in particular. Inclusive education emphasizes equal opportunities for all learners, including those with diverse needs, and parental involvement which is crucial for its success. Through a learner-centered approach, collaboration, and continuous improvement, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower adult literacy, parents and caregivers to advocate for the educational needs of people. The paper however recommended among others that, there is need to remain committed to the principles of equity, access, and social justice, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to thrive and contribute to a more inclusive world. Curriculum planners should tailor the curriculum of adult literacy programmes to address the specific needs and challenges faced by parents and caregivers of children with diverse needs, incorporate content on inclusive education principles, special educational needs, and effective strategies for supporting children's learning and development.

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Introduction

Inclusive education, as a cornerstone of modern educational philosophy, emphasizes the provision of equal educational opportunities for all learners, regardless of their diverse needs or backgrounds. Central to the success of inclusive education is the active involvement of parents and caregivers in supporting the learning journey of their children. However, studies indicate that parental awareness and understanding of inclusive education concepts remain limited, particularly among marginalized communities (UNESCO, 2020). This knowledge gap poses significant challenges to the effective implementation of inclusive practices and the holistic development of children with diverse needs.

The importance of parental involvement in inclusive education cannot be overstated. Research consistently demonstrates that when parents are engaged in their children's education, students exhibit higher academic achievement, improved behaviour, and enhanced social skills (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2013). Furthermore, parents serve as powerful advocates for their children, advocating for inclusive policies and fostering a supportive home environment conducive to learning.

Addressing the issue of parental awareness requires innovative approaches that leverage existing platforms for adult education and literacy. Adult literacy programs, designed to empower individuals with foundational literacy skills, present a unique opportunity to disseminate information and foster understanding of inclusive education principles among parents and caregivers. By integrating inclusive education components into adult literacy curricula, these programs can serve as catalysts for change, empowering parents to actively participate in their children's educational journey. This paper therefore is therefore aimed at creating awareness for Inclusive Education among Parents and Caregivers through Adult literacy Programmes.

The Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education involves a procedural approach to educate all school age children/ youths in a general school setting where everybody belongs, accepted and supported notwithstanding his abilities or disability conditions. Inclusive education is basically a procedure that is all about the practice of carrying out educational and ancillary services for children with special needs in an inclusive education setting. This practice as pointed out by Ajuwon (2018) anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. What this implies then is that both children with disabilities and their peers without disabilities benefit from their experience of being together in the same school.

Inclusive education especially targets those children traditionally excluded from general education for reasons of gender, geographic remoteness, ethnicity, poverty, and disability (Abosi, & Koay, 2018). The principle of inclusion promotes the idea that in order to receive a quality education that is equal and accessible; children must be educated to the best of a community's ability in a general education classroom. Inclusive education is moreover a method of creating communities, schools, and societies free of discrimination.

Concept of Adult Literacy Programmes

Adult literacy programs are educational initiatives targeted at adults with limited literacy skills, providing instructions and support to improve their reading, writing, and numeracy abilities, as well as essential life skills necessary for active participation in society, employment, and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2009). Adult literacy programmes are initiatives designed to address the educational needs of adults who have limited or no proficiency in reading, writing, and numeracy skills. These programs aim to empower adults to improve their literacy abilities, enhance their



quality of life, and participate more fully in society (Comings&Soricone, 2017).

Yahya and Basira (2013) asserted that adult education in Nigeria is not just about literacy or remedial education to fill a gap. The goals of adult and non-formal education include providing functional literacy for adults and youths to improve their basic knowledge and skills, provide in-service, on-the-job, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and give adult citizens of the country necessary aesthetics, cultural and civic education for public enlightenment.

Awareness for Inclusive Education among Parents and Caregivers

Awareness for inclusive education refers to efforts aimed at increasing understanding and recognition of the importance of providing equitable educational opportunities for all students, regardless of their diverse abilities, backgrounds, or characteristics (Ajuwon, 2018). Inclusive education emphasizes the value of accommodating individual learning needs, promoting diversity, and fostering a sense of belonging for every student within the school community. Raising awareness for inclusive education among parents and caregivers is crucial for ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or differences, have equal opportunities to learn and thrive in school environments. Ajuwon (2018) outlines some strategies to promote awareness. They are as follows:

- **Workshops and Information Sessions:** Organize workshops or information sessions specifically tailored for parents and caregivers to educate them about the importance and benefits of inclusive education. These sessions can cover topics such as understanding diverse learning needs, fostering acceptance and empathy, and advocating for inclusive policies.

- **Collaboration with Schools:** Partnering with schools to facilitate discussions and training sessions on inclusive education for parents and caregivers. Schools can provide insights into their inclusive practices and resources available to support students with diverse needs.
- **Community Events:** Hosting of community events focused on inclusive education, such as panel discussions, film screenings, or awareness campaigns. These events can bring together parents, caregivers, educators, and community members to share experiences, resources, and strategies for promoting inclusion.
- **Online Resources:** Developing and disseminating online resources, including articles, videos, webinars, and downloadable guides, to provide information and support to parents and caregivers interested in inclusive education. These resources should be easily accessible and user-friendly.
- **Peer Support Networks:** This is establishing peer support networks or parent groups for families of children with diverse needs. These networks can serve as valuable platforms for sharing experiences, seeking advice, and building a sense of community among parents and caregivers.
- **Advocacy Campaigns:** Launching of advocacy campaigns to raise awareness about the rights of children with disabilities and the importance of inclusive education. This is encouraging parents and caregivers to become advocates for inclusive policies and practices within their schools and communities.
- **Partnerships with Disability Organizations:** This is collaborating with disability advocacy organizations to amplify efforts in promoting inclusive education. These organizations often have



valuable expertise and resources that can support awareness-raising initiatives.

- **Cultural Sensitivity Training:** Providing cultural sensitivity training to parents and caregivers will enable them understand and appreciate diversity in all its forms. This is emphasizing the importance of creating inclusive environments that celebrate differences and promote belonging.
- **Parent Education Programs:** Parent education programs should be focused on topics relevant to inclusive education, such as understanding Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), supporting social and emotional development, and accessing assistive technologies.
- **Feedback and Evaluation:** This is continuously gathering feedback from parents and caregivers to assess the effectiveness of awareness-raising efforts and identify areas for improvement. The evaluation of data can inform future strategies and ensure that initiatives are responsive to the needs of the community. By implementing these strategies, communities can foster greater awareness, acceptance, and support for inclusive education among parents and caregivers, which will ultimately contribute to the success and well-being of all students.

Benefits of Parental Involvement for children with Diverse needs

Parental involvement is widely recognized as a critical factor in fostering the academic, social, and emotional development of children, particularly those with diverse needs. Research has consistently demonstrated numerous benefits associated with parental involvement, which extends beyond academic achievements to encompassing various aspects of children's well-being and success in school. Some key benefits supported by empirical

evidence according to Hill and Tyson(2019) are as follows:

- **Improved Academic Achievement:** Parental involvement has been positively correlated with higher academic achievement among children with diverse needs (Hill & Tyson, 2019). When parents actively participate in their children's education by assisting with homework, communicating with teachers, and monitoring the progress of students are more likely to demonstrate greater motivation, engagement, and success in their studies.
- **Enhanced Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Children with diverse needs often face unique challenges in the educational environment. However, when parents are actively engaged in their children's education, providing encouragement, praise, and support, students are able to develop a stronger sense of self-esteem and confidence in their abilities (Jeynes, 2007). This increased self-confidence can empower children to overcome obstacles and thrive academically.
- **Positive Attitudes Towards Learning:** Parental involvement fosters positive attitudes towards learning and school among children with diverse needs (Fantuzzo, McWayne, Perry, & Childs, 2014). When parents demonstrate enthusiasm and interest in their children's education, students are more likely to view learning as a meaningful and enjoyable experience, leading to greater intrinsic motivation and perseverance in the face of challenges.
- **Enhanced Social Skills and Behaviour:** Parental involvement has been associated with improved social skills and behaviour among children with diverse needs (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). When



parents model positive social behaviours, communicate expectations, and reinforce appropriate conduct, students develop essential social-emotional competencies, such as empathy, cooperation, and conflict resolution, which are critical for success in school and beyond.

- **Increased School Attendance and Engagement:** Actively involved parents play a key role in promoting regular school attendance and active engagement in learning activities (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002). By fostering a supportive home environment and emphasizing the importance of education, parents encourage their children to prioritize school attendance and participation, thereby enhancing their overall academic performance and school success.

Barriers in creating Awareness for Inclusive Education among Parents and Caregivers

Parental involvement in inclusive education is crucial for the success of children with diverse needs. However, several barriers can hinder parents' ability to actively participate in their children's education. These barriers may vary depending on factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, language proficiency, and individual circumstances. Here according to Delgado-Gaitan(2014) are some common barriers to parental involvement in inclusive education, supported by empirical research:

- **Communication Barriers:** Limited English proficiency or language differences can hinder effective communication between parents and educators (Delgado-Gaitan, 2014). Parents who are non-native speakers or have low literacy levels in the language of instruction may have problems with understanding educational materials, communicating with school staff, or engaging in meaningful discussions about their children's progress.

- **Socio-Economic Constraints:** Financial limitations, including low income and lack of access to transportation or childcare, can pose significant barriers to parental involvement. Parents from low-income backgrounds may face challenges attending school events, meetings, or volunteering due to work commitments or financial constraints.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Differences:** Cultural norms, beliefs, and expectations about education may differ among families from diverse cultural backgrounds (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 2015). Parents' cultural beliefs about the roles of parents and teachers, attitudes towards disability, and perceptions of authority may influence their willingness or ability to engage with the school system.
- **Limited Knowledge and Skills:** Parents may lack the knowledge, skills, or confidence to effectively support their children's educational needs, particularly in areas such as homework assistance, advocacy, or navigating special education services. Parents with limited education themselves may feel intimidated or unsure about how to engage with school staff or advocate for their children's rights.
- **Time Constraints:** Busy work schedules, multiple caregiving responsibilities, and other commitments may limit parents' availability to participate in school-related activities. Single parents, working parents, or those with multiple children may struggle to find the time to attend meetings, workshops, or school events.
- **Perceived Exclusion or Stigmatization:** Parents of children with disabilities or special needs may experience feelings of exclusion, stigma, or discrimination within educational settings (Harry, 2018). Negative past experiences or perceptions of



judgment from school staff or other parents may discourage parents from actively engaging with the school community.

- **Institutional Barriers:** Structural barriers within the school system, such as inaccessible communication channels, limited outreach efforts, or inflexible scheduling, can impede parental involvement. Schools may lack culturally responsive practices or inclusive policies that accommodate the diverse needs and preferences of families from marginalized backgrounds.
- **Lack of Trust or Empowerment:** Parents who feel marginalized or disempowered within the educational system may be reluctant to engage with school staff or participate in decision-making processes (Graham-Clay, 2015). Lack of trust, perceived power differentials, or historical inequities may erode parents' confidence in their ability to effect change or influence educational outcomes. Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach that involves collaboration between schools, communities, and families. By recognizing and addressing the systemic, cultural, and individual factors that impede parental involvement, educators can create more inclusive and welcoming environments that empower all parents to actively participate in their children's education.

Design and Implementation of Adult Literacy Programmes

Designing and implementing effective adult literacy programmes to promote awareness of inclusive education among parents and caregivers requires careful planning, collaboration, and a learner-centered approach. Here according to Graham-Clay (2015) are key components to consider:

- **Needs Assessment and Goal Setting:** Begin by conducting a thorough needs assessment to understand the literacy levels, educational backgrounds, and specific needs of the target audience. Based on the assessment, set clear and achievable learning goals that align with the objectives of promoting awareness of inclusive education.
- **Curriculum Development:** Develop a comprehensive curriculum that integrates literacy instruction with content related to inclusive education principles, policies, and practices. The curriculum should be culturally relevant, learner-centered, and responsive to the diverse needs and preferences of adult learners.
- **Pedagogical Approaches:** Employ a variety of pedagogical approaches and instructional strategies to accommodate different learning styles and preferences. Incorporate interactive and participatory methods, such as group discussions, hands-on activities, role-playing, and problem-solving exercises, to enhance engagement and comprehension.
- **Inclusive Materials and Resources:** Ensure that instructional materials, resources, and teaching aids are accessible, inclusive, and culturally appropriate. Provide materials in multiple languages and formats, and incorporate visuals, audio recordings, and real-life examples to enhance understanding and retention.
- **Community Engagement and Outreach:** Collaborate with community organizations, religious institutions, and local leaders to facilitate outreach and recruitment efforts. Conduct informational sessions, workshops, and community events to raise awareness about the adult literacy program and its focus on inclusive education.



- **Flexible Delivery Options:** Offer flexible program delivery options to accommodate the diverse needs and constraints of adult learners. Provide options for in-person, online, and hybrid learning formats, as well as flexible scheduling and alternative locations to ensure accessibility and convenience.
- **Trained Instructors and Support Staff:** Recruit and train qualified instructors and support staff who have expertise in adult education, literacy instruction, and inclusive education practices. Provide ongoing professional development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge.
- **Individualized Support Services:** Offer individualized support services, such as tutoring, counseling, and academic advising, to address the unique learning needs and challenges of adult learners. Provide personalized feedback and guidance to promote progress and success.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Implement regular assessments and evaluations to monitor learners' progress, identify areas for improvement, and measure the effectiveness of the adult literacy program. Use a variety of assessment tools and techniques to gauge literacy skills, comprehension, and attitudes towards inclusive education.
- **Continuous Improvement and Adaptation:** Continuously monitor and evaluate the adult literacy program's effectiveness and impact on promoting awareness of inclusive education. Solicit feedback from learners, instructors, and stakeholders to identify strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement, and adapt the program accordingly. By incorporating these components into the design and implementation of adult literacy

programs, educators can effectively promote awareness of inclusive education among parents and caregivers, empowering them to actively support the educational needs of their children.

Adult Literacy Theories and their Relevance

Adult learning theories play a pivotal role in shaping the design and implementation of adult literacy programmes aimed at promoting awareness of inclusive education among parents and caregivers. These theories provide valuable insights into how adults acquire knowledge, skills, and attitudes, thereby informing instructional strategies that maximize learning outcomes. Several prominent theories have been identified in the field of adult education, each offering unique perspectives on the learning process and its implications for practice.

One such theory is the Andragogy theory proposed by Malcolm Knowles (1980), which posits that adults learn differently from children and that their learning is characterized by self-direction, experience, and problem-solving. According to Knowles, adults are motivated to learn when they perceive the relevance of the subject matter to their lives and when they have the autonomy to control their learning experiences. In the context of adult literacy programs addressing inclusive education, Andragogy underscores the importance of learner-centered approaches that cater to the diverse needs and experiences of adult learners. By incorporating real-life examples and allowing for self-directed exploration of inclusive education concepts, instructors can create a supportive learning environment conducive to adult learners' engagement and motivation.

Another influential theory is Transformative Learning Theory, as proposed by Jack Mezirow (1991), which emphasizes the process of critically reflecting on one's assumptions, beliefs, and



perspectives to construct new meaning and transform one's understanding of the world. In the context of adult literacy programs, Transformative Learning Theory underscores the need to challenge existing attitudes and perceptions towards inclusive education, fostering a deep understanding of its principles and implications. By facilitating reflective discussions and experiential learning activities, instructors can encourage parents and caregivers to critically examine their assumptions about diversity and inclusion, thereby fostering greater empathy and advocacy for inclusive practices.

Furthermore, Social Cognitive Theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), emphasizes the reciprocal interaction between individual factors, environmental influences, and behavioural outcomes. According to this theory, individuals learn through observation, modelling, and reinforcement, with social factors such as peers, family, and community playing a significant role in shaping learning experiences. In the context of adult literacy programs promoting awareness of inclusive education, Social Cognitive Theory highlights the importance of social support networks and collaborative learning environments. By fostering peer interactions and providing opportunities for shared experiences, instructors can facilitate the exchange of ideas and perspectives, promoting a collective understanding of inclusive education principles among parents and caregivers.

Conclusion

Inclusion in education is an attempt at educating students with special educational needs. Raising awareness for inclusive education among parents and caregivers is crucial for ensuring that all children, regardless of their abilities or differences, have equal opportunities to learn and thrive in school environments. However, the design and implementation of adult literacy programmes

aimed at promoting awareness of inclusive education among parents and caregivers, it represents a critical step towards fostering a more equitable and inclusive society. By addressing barriers, embracing diversity, and empowering learners, these programs have the potential to transform attitudes, behaviours, and outcomes for individuals and communities. Through a learner-centered approach, collaboration, and continuous improvement, educators can create inclusive learning environments that empower parents and caregivers to advocate for the educational needs of their children. As we move forward, let us remain committed to the principles of equity, access, and social justice, ensuring that all learners have the opportunity to thrive and contribute to a more inclusive world.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested in line with the discussions in the paper:

1. Curriculum planners should tailor the curriculum of adult literacy programs to address the specific needs and challenges faced by parents and caregivers of children with diverse needs. Incorporate content on inclusive education principles, special educational needs, and effective strategies for supporting children's learning and development.
2. Government should empower parents and caregivers to become advocates for inclusive education within their communities and educational institutions. Training, resources, and networking opportunities should be provided to equip parents with the knowledge and skills needed to advocate for their children's rights and access to quality education.
3. Government should ensure that programme materials and instructional approaches are culturally sensitive and linguistically accessible to participants from diverse



backgrounds. Resources in multiple languages and formats to accommodate varying levels of literacy and language proficiency should be made available.

4. Government should strengthen partnerships with community organizations, schools, and local leaders to enhance outreach efforts and increase program participation. Conducting targeted outreach activities, such as community workshops, information sessions, and cultural events, to raise awareness and promote program accessibility.
5. Government should provide continuous training and professional development opportunities for instructors to enhance their knowledge and skills in adult literacy instructions and inclusive education practices. Instructors should be equipped with the tools and resources needed to create inclusive and engaging learning environments for participants.

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