

ACTUALISING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION THROUGH EXIT SLIPS: A CATHOLICON TO CLASSROOM MARGINALISATION IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

Ibukun Francis AGBAJE & T.K, AKINWAMIDE

Ekiti State University, Faculty of Education, Arts and Language Education Department
Ekiti State, Ado-Ekiti

Abstract

There are obvious differences and class distinctions that exist among students in our present-day setting. The differences could be in age, academic background, learning ability, level of assimilation and retention. We equally have those with psychological problems and peculiar ailments. The inability of teachers to manage these differences might jeopardise the achievement of learning objectives during classroom interaction. The twenty first century classroom teacher is thus saddled with the responsibility of demonstrating high level of competence and expertise to identify these problems in the class and ensure that slow and fast learners as well as introverts and extroverts in the class gain from the learning and teaching process. Exit Slips strategy which is designed to elicit information from each student in the classroom could be a major way of actualising inclusive education and eliminating dichotomy that might exist in a classroom setting.

KEYWORDS: inclusive-education, exit-slips, catholicon, classroom marginalisation, remediation, participatory

Introduction

Our society is bedeviled with different forms of marginalisation which could be political, racial, ethnic or social. The resultant effect of these could be different levels of agitations, civil unrest, large scale protest and agitations for self-determination. The situation in many classroom environments could be likened to the marginalisation being experienced in the society by different people at different times. In order to ensure an egalitarian society, every citizen should have a sense of belonging and equal opportunity, ditto with classroom environment. The interest of the slow learners, physically challenged, victims of insurgency, albinos, pupils with disability and such likes are believed to be sidelined during class interaction. This situation could birth depression, malice, withdrawal, truancy, drug addiction, and dropping out which are counterproductive. The twentieth

century, competent and trained teacher should be able to adopt the right strategy such as exit slips to ensure inclusivity of all during class interactions.

In order to ensure an egalitarian society as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013), every citizen should have a sense of belonging and equal opportunity. Inclusive education through exit slips strategy is therefore being considered as the panacea for classroom marginalisation in this 21st century. Apart from the obvious differences in age, academic background and learning ability among students in the classroom environments, other differences may be hidden. These may include poor eyesight, poor assimilation and retention, psychological problem and peculiar ailments. It will take an expert even beyond the classroom to identify some of these problems. It is therefore the responsibility of the teachers to

demonstrate high professionalism to be able to manage the differences in the class and ensure that slow and fast learners as well as introverts and extroverts in the class gain from the learning and teaching process. Exit slips strategy which is designed to elicit information from each student in the classroom could be a major way of actualising an inclusive learning, where learners, irrespective of the differences in their intelligent quotient, race, tribe, sex, social, ethnic or academic backgrounds learn side by side at their own pace without bias or any form of marginalization.

Concept of Inclusive Education

According to Omede (2016) inclusive education is simply a way of accommodating all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, gift, disability or other conditions during lesson delivery. It is the type of education that plans for children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalised areas or groups (UNESCO, 1994). It is a type of education where the interest of every learner is accommodated without the exclusion of any.

The practice of teaching all children, including those with special needs or impairments, in the same classroom setting is known as inclusive education. Regardless of a student's academic standing or other distinctions, inclusive education aims to give equal educational opportunities and encourage full involvement, learning, and social integration. It allows all students, irrespective of their differences and learning capacity, to learn at the same pace. All students, including those with disabilities, those with varying learning styles, and those from diverse cultural origins, are

valued and celebrated for their diversity in inclusive education.

Inclusive education is a system of education that looks into how to transform education systems in order to remove the barriers or obstacles that might prevent pupils from participating fully during classroom interaction. In other word, inclusive education encourages class participation. These barriers or obstacles may be linked to ethnicity, gender, social status, poverty and disability among others. In some contexts, certain ethnic minorities face discrimination in the classroom. Additionally, the family's financial incapability might make it difficult for some families to afford basic learning tools for their children who compete with their counterparts from well to do homes. This might make such children to drop out of school

The global drive for educational inclusion might be the panacea to the challenges of exclusion of certain set of students in the class. To this end, the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) came out with Millennium Development Goals and Education for all. Equally, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and to promote lifelong learning opportunity for all. The implication of this is to ensure that no child is excluded in the class. The essence of inclusive education therefore is to identify and erase the dichotomy that may exist among learners in the same class so that every learner may learn simultaneously at their own pace. It is a way of fulfilling the recommendation of UNESCO (2009) which states that inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and to the enjoyment and exercising of fundamental human rights.

The principle of equal education opportunity for all is equally contained

under philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria according to National Policy on Education (FGN 2013: 3d & e) that:

d. Education is compulsory and a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and also the peculiar individual challenges;

e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

Section 2 of the National Policy on Education under Basic Education is in consonance with the global drive for educational inclusion. For instance, (FGN, 2013:11b) states the provision of compulsory free and universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school age. This is irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, colour, ethnicity and socio economic background of the child.

It behooves the teacher in the class to demonstrate high rate of dexterity to ensure the achievement of these global and national goals. Nevertheless, this goal will remain a mere paper work as long as there is no existing inclusive curriculum where all students irrespective of their diverse backgrounds are entitled to access and participate actively and indiscriminately during classroom interaction.

However, if we take a cursory look at the curriculum for Junior Secondary Classes, it will be discovered that adequate provision for diversities among students has not been practically focused. The characteristics that might elicit a bias response in the class include: gender, ethnicity, religion, perceived social orientation, age, disability, accent, personality, interest, friend and family among other factors. A teacher therefore is expected to ensure that students have excellent

provision as they struggle to develop knowledge and produce positive learning outcomes. A language teacher is expected to ensure that all students have a fair chance of pursuing their career, aspirations and life goals without being excluded in the class. Curriculum should equally be planned in such a way that privileged and underprivileged students are brought together under the same learning opportunity in the absence of fear of molestation. Figures 1 to 4, adapted from Akinwamide (2018), illustrate the inclusive learning situation:

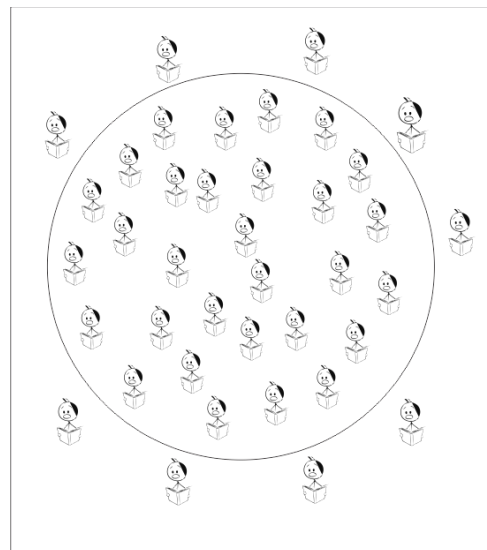


Figure 1: Exclusion of some students in a learning environment

Figure 1 shows the exclusion of certain students in the class by the teacher during learning activity. The exclusion of the students could be as a result of one or all the following factors: lack of recommended textbook and other relevant writing materials, poor background, hangover problems from home, lost of interest and poor attitude towards the teacher and the subject, ethnicity and racial discrimination, inability of teacher to recognise and identify the learners' learning difficulties and a number of other factors. In every classroom situation,

however, some students have a common identity as depicted in Figure 2.

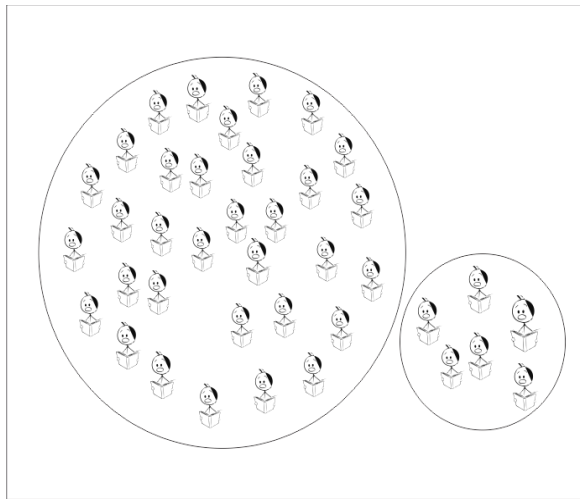


Figure 2: Exclusion of a group students in a learning environment

Figure 2 shows the exclusion of a group of students who have a common identity such as language, tribe and family background. In some instances, there are also extroverts and those in upper class dominating a particular class as shown in Figure 3.

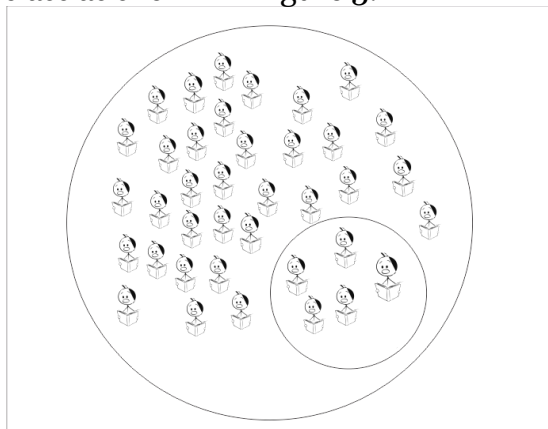


Figure 3: Over concentration on few extrovert students within an inclusive learning environment

Figure 3 shows too much attention of a few extroverts in the class to the disadvantage of other students. The proposed inclusive education through exit slips strategy; a panacea to classroom marginalisation is shown in Figure 4.

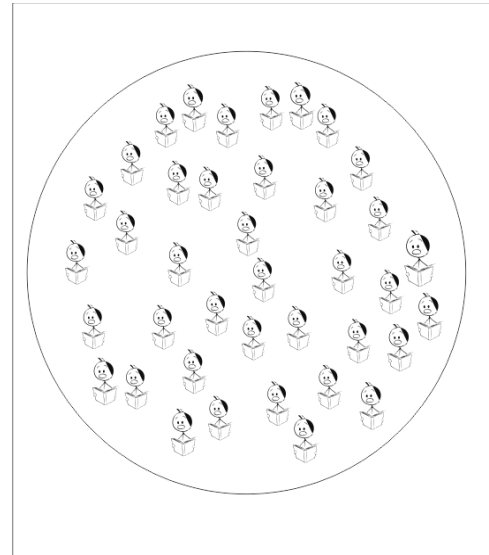


Figure 4: PROPOSED INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Figure 4 is the illustration of the proposed inclusive education where the teacher recognises the learners' individual differences in the class and plans the lesson through exit slips strategy so that every student will be able to learn at their own pace. The implication of this is that no student is excluded during class interaction.

It could be argued that there exists an inclusive classroom setting. However, there is no inclusive education as a system being practised in any known Nigerian schools. Inclusive education could become a commonly used phrase as it is now being used in education as a process where all students, regardless of any challenge or background are placed in appropriate general education classes that are in their own neighbourhood schools to receive high-quality instruction, interventions, and supports that enable them meet success in the core curriculum (Bui, Quirk, Almazan, and Valenti, 2010).

Inclusive education means different and diverse students irrespective of social, economic and academic backgrounds learn side by side in the same classroom. They enjoy field trips and after-school activities together. They participate in students

government together without any form of discrimination. Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom. In a truly inclusive setting, every child feels safe and has a sense of belonging. In order to effectively implement inclusive education, the teachers should have been trained and given the necessary support and resources to nurture, encourage, and respond to the needs of all students.

Inclusive Education (IE) provides better quality education for all children and is instrumental in changing discriminatory attitudes. The school is expected to provide the context for a child's first relationship with the world outside their families in order to create enabling environment and the development of social relationships and interactions. Respect and understanding grow when students of diverse abilities and backgrounds play, socialise, and learn together.

It is generally observed that most children around the world are excluded from schools where they belong because of disability, race, language, religion, gender, and poverty. Since every child has the right to be supported by their parents and community to grow, learn, and develop in the early years, and, upon reaching school age, to go to school, it becomes necessary to look into the option of inclusive education to meet this yearning. This would enable every child to be welcomed and included by teachers and peers alike. When all children, regardless of their differences, are educated together, everyone benefits as it serves as the cornerstone of inclusive education.

Further, Dreyer (2017) identifies two most fundamental concerns in education today as the quest for excellence in teaching and the intensive effort to offer equal opportunities for all

learners. It is clear that the traditional understanding of teaching is becoming obsolete in the face of increasing numbers of learners from diverse cultural and linguistic background with different abilities and educational needs in today's classrooms. Teachers are challenged to grow and adapt to the demands of schooling in the 21st century and beyond. Inclusive education which is the type of education that allows students from diverse cultural, educational, social and economic setting to learn side by side could be the right answer. Inclusive education values diversity and the unique contributions each student brings to the classroom situation. Open Society Foundations (2019) observes that in a truly inclusive setting, every student feels safe and has a sense of belonging. No one is excluded in the class no matter their academic, social or economic strength or weakness.

Inclusive education focuses on the capacity of educational institutions to understand and respond to an individual learner's educational requirements. Inclusive education is very necessary in view of the diversity in the society where we have: high income as well as low income parents; literate; semi-literate; and illiterate parents. The class distinction is a factor to be considered and managed by teachers so that learners can learn side by side with their counterparts at their own pace. This is in line with Ainscow, Booth and Dyson (2006) who view inclusive education as a principled approach to education which involves the process of increasing the participation of students in and reducing their exclusion from the curricular. It aims at responding to the diversity of students who are vulnerable to exclusionary pressures.

Inclusive education can be advanced and become a reality in our schools by ensuring that teachers have

the training, flexibility, and resources to teach students with varied needs and learning styles to cope with the various challenges confronting the excluded students during classroom interaction. Increasing student engagement in and lowering their exclusion from the curriculum is the goal of inclusive education, a morally sound approach to education. It tries to address the variety of pupils who are prone to pressures that marginalise them. Inclusive education therefore, means real learning opportunities for all learners irrespective of their learning difficulties and differences.

Concept of Exit Slips Strategy

Exit slips are written students' responses to questions which teachers pose at the end of a class or lesson. These quick, informal assessments enable teachers to quickly assess students' understanding of the material. It is a strategy that provides an opportunity for students to reflect on their learning. In the administration of exit slips, students are given small pieces of paper on which they record various responses about their learning for the day. Teachers may vary the focus of the exit slips to elicit different types of information from the students that can be used to plan the next segment of the learning taking into cognizance their various responses. Teachers may request that students record what they have learned or identify questions they have, or points that challenge them. Exit slip is a quick, simple strategy that should take students five minutes or less to complete. Exit slips provide students with an opportunity to take stock of their learning and inform the teachers about where they need additional support. Through this process, every student in the class irrespective of peculiarities or differences is able to express his/her learning deficiencies.

Exit slip, according to Marzano (2012), is a strategy in which the teachers present students with questions as a way to informally assess the students' understanding of what was taught at the end of learning interaction. It is a way of assessing both learning and teaching process. The responses from learners will enable teachers to identify the weaknesses and strengths of learning interaction and how far the content of the lesson has been comprehended. Exit slips could as well be an avenue for teachers to plan for future lesson. Thus, exposure of students to exit slips strategy could be a sure way to eliminate learning dichotomy during lesson delivery.

Benefits of Inclusive Education:

Inclusive education has lots of positive impacts not only on the students but also on the teachers, school administrators and the society at large. The benefits of inclusive education include among others the things the following:

Tailored Training

Diverse learning styles, difficulties, and strengths are acknowledged in inclusive education as it enables teachers to modify their lesson plans to meet the various needs of students.

Active Participation and Collaboration

Identification of diverse needs of students in the class enhances their active participation in the class. Inclusive education promotes collaboration, among educators and parents, and enables staff to create a supportive learning environment for all students. It involves working together to address the diverse needs of students.

Reinforcement for better Performance:

Inclusive education promotes learning efficiency during class interaction

Parental Involvement:

Inclusive education encourages active participation from parents and guardians through the feedbacks from the teachers of their children. Regular communication between parents and teachers helps in understanding the child's progress, challenges, and any necessary adaptations in teaching methods.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

Educators in inclusive classrooms need specific training to effectively teach students with diverse needs. Professional development programs help teachers learn about different disabilities, teaching strategies, and assistive technologies which enhance their ability to create inclusive learning environments.

Social Inclusion:

Inclusive education is not just about academics; it also focuses on social integration. Students learn important social skills and values by interacting with peers of diverse backgrounds and abilities thereby fostering empathy, understanding, and acceptance.

Legal Framework and Policies

Some countries such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, India, and Ethiopia have legal frameworks and policies that mandate inclusive education. These laws ensure that students with disabilities have the right to access education in mainstream schools and receive necessary support and accommodations.

Conclusion

The concept of inclusive education and exit slips strategy has been explained. The effective implementation of exit slips strategy to enhance inclusive education is being considered as the panacea to learning marginalisation facing the disadvantaged students during classroom interaction. It could equally be a sure way of ensuring full class participation irrespective of learning disability or social differences that exist among students. Inclusive education through exit slips strategy will encourage multicultural learning environment, socialisation and the development of the child.

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