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TEACHING FOR ALL AND CHILDREN'S LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN IKOM EDUCATION ZONE, CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Teaching for all is a crucial aspect of education which can impact learning among school children. Yet, it seems unpopular in policy and overlooked in practice. This cross-sectional survey was consequently conducted to examine whether teaching for all affects the way children learn in public primary schools in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. Two research questions and null hypotheses were adopted for the study. 800 children, including 400 boys and 400 girls, were randomly drawn from four (4) state primary schools sited in four (4) Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Zone to participate. Data were generated from participants via the Teaching for All and Children's Learning Questionnaire (TACLQ). Based on the social inclusion theory, the simple linear regression was deployed to analyze data, facilitated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings suggest that teaching for engagement and differentiated teaching have significant influences on the way children learn in state primary schools within the district. It is, therefore, recommended that classroom instruction should be implemented in a manner that would significantly motivate participation for every pupil during lessons. Educators are to always vary teaching methods during instruction so as to fit teaching to the learning needs of every child. It is concluded that teaching for all guarantees effective learning for all school children.

Keywords: Teaching for all, school children, learning, learner engagement, primary school.

1.0 Introduction

Teaching for all is a skill- cum-procedure which requires that an educator fits teaching practices to contexts so as to engage every child in effective learning in a mix ability classroom. It is a construct that draws from the Education for All (EFA) philosophy (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2015) to affirm the right of every pupil to learn. Even with its alignment to the EFA, however, teaching for all appears underemphasized or overlooked in primary education. Yet, the concept presents a cornerstone for shared prosperity in learning for all children in primary schools. It presupposes that a practitioner and his instructional activities take cognizance of the differences in pupil characteristics and engage all of them in learning to lead to positive performances. Major aspects of a teacher's work are always implemented in the classroom involving a mix of children with heterogeneous abilities and demographics. Provisions for juvenile education are consequently made to accommodate and to service such heterogeneity in school.

A school where there is a completely homogenized pupil population is yet to be seen. Teaching for all is made popular further in the present study because learners are naturally different and teacher skill also requires improvement. Implicitly, some teachers seem to be ineffective in a pluralistic classroom. The subject matter, nonetheless, is an in-school measure that bolsters the notion of the no-child-left-behind (Ewa, 2024, 2020) in education. It goes beyond mere schooling and mere teaching. Rather, it is more about a practitioner's efforts to effectively reach the-difficult-to-reach learning needs of every pupil. One dominant task which underlies the functions of a teacher, whether in preservice or in the field, is the capacity of the practitioner to conduct classroom programmes in a manner which engages every child without exception. A teacher that is for all makes efforts to differentiate teaching to avert lapses in pupil engagement during instruction. S/he expresses behaviours that promote value for pupil inclusion in learning. This also serves as a classroom management strategy (Adzongo and Olaitan, 2019; Akpakwu, 2012) that has the propensity to overcome inequities in education inside the classroom, thus raise academic performances for all children. Children are entrusted onto the teacher for education and for care. That means enabling a symmetrical, rather than segregated, relationship for the pupil with all the personnel in the classroom, to provide a comfortable environment for all of them to learn.

Further understanding of the notion can be achieved from the works of Ewa (2015), Silver (2015) and World Bank (2013). Postulations made by these eminent researchers on 'social inclusion' provide the theoretical underpinning to the main thematic issue under research as well as offer germane insights to clarify it. They explicated it to reach more depth. Analyses on this theory give the sense that learning becomes constraint-free insofar as there are no depravities in attitudes, actions and resourcing in education. Any undertakings with a focus on equalizing human benefits in basic education upholds human rights, and that is also symptomatic for egalitarianism

(Ewa, 2024). It is discernible that many pupils tend to be losing on learning, and this disadvantage has a connection to poor resourcing of the school, incompetent teaching, application of ineffective instructional strategies, ignorance of the children of their rights and blurry conceptualization of inclusion.

These institutional barriers are features of social exclusion in education as documented in the work of Silver (2019). A defining aspect of social inclusion, however, is teaching for all, which is about recognizing, valuing and accommodating the needs of every learner in classroom instruction. Rose (2008) views it as fostering inclusion in the classroom, and practicing child-centred education therein (Power, Rhys, Taylor & Waldron, 2018). It draws attention away from the school to what happens between the teacher and pupils in the classroom. The postulation positions itself as a mitigant to ineffective teaching and poor learner performance. It frowns at whatever thing that hinders a learner from profiting from teaching. Social inclusion is the logical antonym of social exclusion (Cano-Hila, 2022; Koller, Le Pouesard & Rummens, 2018). It lays emphasis on the creation of conditions that can even up learning to advantage all, including the less favoured children, in teaching.

Addressing the issue of teaching for all, as a consequence of social inclusion, inspires more examination, this time, on the extent to which teaching is conducted to engage children. Ensuring learner access to the classroom, by itself, does not guarantee engagement in classroom lessons for the child. A further layer of inclusion is required to make the child feel valued and accepted as a person (Korpershoek, Canrinus, Fokkens-Bruinsma & De Boer, 2019) by the teacher and his peers. For teaching for engagement to become meaningful, it has to take note of the risks which children with learning difficulties face in the classroom. Where, for instance, a child sits blandly; is unable to follow teacher explanations, cues and ask questions, Nguyen, Cannata & Miller (2018) and Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris (2004) describe that behaviour as passive engagement. A learner is likely to miss out on learning when the tutor chooses to look the other way when faced with such a child other than taking on the problem head-on. A pro-engagement educator would rather feel concerned to search for remediations to spark the motivation for the individual child to become active in the lesson and to benefit from it. Engagement correlates motivation to learn. It is not enough for a teacher to assume that all children are learning whereas realistically some of them are staying at the periphery. Optimization in learning is doable. That may occur where engagement serves as a catalyst for every learner to get to the deeper levels of learning (Cents-Boonstra, Lichtwarck-Achoof, Denessen, Aelterman & Haeren, 2021; Skinner, 2016).

As a teacher would notice, children's engagement in learning differ. Every child experiences certain degree of motivational issues towards learning. Such issues reflect in their attitudes and actions during lessons. As some of them may exhibit high level of enthusiasm to learn, others can display a rather low and/or nonchalant dispositions to studies. In addition to that, a child-specific

focus on the very factors that impact children's engagement in particular lessons is bound to reveal other quite interesting things which are native to the child involved. Some of them have preferences for autonomous learning in which they apply their agencies to develop personal learning goals (Cents-Boonstra et al., 2021). Attributes such as this are indicative of the cognitive engagement (Fredricks et al., 2004) which the child brings to support learning. Implicitly, the child understands the value of education. Consequently, the person shows substantial commitment towards completing his assignments; takes initiative, participates effectively in group work and asks searching questions. Nevertheless, teaching can also thwart children's engagement when they are made to endure rather than enjoy the lesson. Interest and the lack of it for a lesson is a depiction of emotional engagement as identified by Fredricks et al. (2004). Positive affective reactions to teaching among children are expressed through readiness to learn, long attention span to teaching and friendliness towards the subject teacher.

As a contrast, you may observe that school children are emotionally disengaged when they become disruptive, inattentive and absent-minded during classroom instruction, thus leading to underperformance. Other researches on teaching for engagement, involving Aelterman, Vansteenkiste, Haerens, Soenens, Fontaine & Reeve (2019) as well as De Meyer, Tallir, Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Aelterman, Van den Berghe, Speleers & Haerens (2014), beamed searchlight particularly on teacher behaviour in regard to the way it impacts children's academic performances in school. According to these researchers, teaching practices in which the teacher is unfriendly, yells at, threatens, shames the children or is distant from them makes engagement a tough issue for the children to deal with. Positive teacher behaviour is a source of motivation for positive performances among pupils. However, learning in an atmosphere where tensions exist between the teacher and children can become quite an uphill task.

Implementing teaching by applying unidirectional and monotonous approaches, especially in a mix ability classroom, is a misguided practice. Quite a number of practitioners often engage in it. An unskillful practice like this would cause a teacher to lump the abilities of different children, assume all of them to be the same, and attempt to attend to them with a single shot. Gardner (2021) lamented that the biggest mistake of past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual and thus to feel justified in teaching them all the same subjects in the same way. Teaching that is meant for all recognizes the fact that the classroom is populated by children who are individually different. Each of these individuals looks up to the teacher for help in learning. Differentiation of instruction (Stavrou and Koutselini, 2016), however, is a useful tool in a demographically and academically diverse classroom. Apart from being a teaching procedure, it is also an innovative way of thinking about teaching and learning (Tomlinson, 2014). Any practice which aligns itself to differentiation brings learning within the grasps of all children by providing multiple options for them to acquire knowledge and to express it. A 21st century

philosophy in education as this one makes teaching adaptive to learner differences (Barnes, 2019) in the classroom.

Obviously, the differentiated teaching is opposed to the traditional method. The didactic procedure is a one-method-fits-all mentality (Desinguraj and Gnanam, 2021). One size does not actually fit all. Instead, it commands compliance from learners to the dictates of the teacher, without them really getting involved in instruction. Many teachers in the context tends to be fixated to the didactic method as it helps to cover teachers' flaws and protect their authority. However, when juxtaposed with the differentiated instruction, which highlights 'all' in learning, the directed approach is an ineffective alternative. Unlike the former, emphasis of the traditional method is on cognitive competence of a learner. Classroom instructions that rely on cognition alone is narrow in focus, and undermine the importance of the affective as well as the psychomotor aspects of a child's education. Actually, adopting the differentiated instruction can take a toll on teacher efforts to create opportunities for a holistic development of the child. When faced with huge work load and poor resourcing, differentiated teaching can become a tedious practice for the teacher. Resisting to use it, however, would present enormous disadvantages, including poor teacher development, limited communication channels, inflexible teaching, ineffective classroom management strategies and poor learning outcomes.

Children have multiple intelligences which, according to Gardner (2021), include logical-mathematic, linguistic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, musical, naturalistic, existential and bodily kinesthetic intelligences. Such intelligences help the tutors identify and vary their capabilities and sensibilities in teaching (Barnes, 2019). An educator's ability to know his or her children's abilities individually provides a guide for the practitioner to apply multiple strategies, objectives and materials to make instruction responsive to different learner needs. As the teacher takes the learning profiles (Tomlinson, 2014) of every child, the tutor may have the means to vary contents, process and product while presenting every subject. This is oriented towards a specific and individualistic measure, serving as a pattern to diagnose (Desinguraj and Gnanam, 2021; Barnes, 2019; Stavrou and Koutselini, 2016) the learner needs during teaching in order to achieve optimal performance. Pupils sometimes develop positive relationships with teachers who know them by names, their strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, a classroom in which children are made to learn under different instructional arrangements can guarantee them possibilities to vary learning styles, adjust their goals and engage in healthy competition with peers. This also implies varying of assessment procedures to measure diverse learner competences. Differentiated assessment mechanisms are likely to produce learning outcomes to cover a manifold of learner needs in a mix ability setting.

Teaching for all is a practice of which aim is to ensure no child is missing out on learning in a mix ability classroom. Substantial researches and literature indicate that the concept has the potentials to address

inequities in learning, stimulate children across multiple intelligences to engage in effective learning and to ensure positive academic performances for all of them. In spite of the huge benefits, it appears the concept has yet to be firmly rooted in practice in state primary schools sited within Ikom Education Zone. School children tend to be experiencing various shortcomings in learning as a result. This gives the hint that educators are applying instructional strategies which fail to recognize differences among pupils, and cannot cater for their individual needs; hence this research.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The study examined whether teaching for all has influence on the way children learn in state primary schools in Ikom Education Zone, Cross River State, Nigeria. It specifically inquired whether:

1. Teaching for engagement has influence on children's learning in state primary schools.
2. Differentiated teaching has influence on children's learning in state primary schools.

1.2 Research questions

These questions were posed for the research:

1. To what extent does teaching for engagement influence children's learning in state primary schools?
2. What is the extent to which differentiated teaching influence children's learning in public primary schools?

1.3 Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses (Ho) were formulated at .05 level of significance for the study:

Ho^1: Teaching for engagement does not significantly influence children's learning in state primary schools.

Ho^2: Differentiated teaching has no significant influence on children's learning in public primary schools.

2.0 Research method

The quantitative research strategy (Asim, Idaka & Eni, 2017; Muijs, 2011) was employed as a suitable strand of research methods for the study. It is a procedure that can facilitate testing of stated hypotheses and application of appropriate mathematical models to analyze data. Besides, it strongly links the positivist/empiricist/experimentalist paradigm (Cresswell, 2003), ensuring objectivity, accuracy, validity and reliability in data generation and analysis. For this reason, the qualitative approach and Mixed Methods Research (MMR) are consequently ditched because they do not fit into the direction of this research. The cross-sectional survey research design (Zimba and Gasparyan, 2023; Muijs, 2011) was therefore adopted as a suitable approach to conform with the quantitative research method. (Cross-sectional) surveys present useful pictures to reflect population characteristics and actions, and allow for the use of questionnaires (Zimba and Gasparyan, 2023; Check and Schutt, 2012) to gather numerical data from entities that belong to the same population. Also, the design enables inquiries on current attitudes, beliefs, views and practices and facilitate inferences. Other research designs were discarded because they are unhelpful to the study.

Ikom Education Zone served as the area of study. It is one of the education districts in

Cross River State. The zone covered four (4) local government areas (LGAs): Ikom, Etung, Boki and Obubra. A significant amount of public primary schools is located in the Zone. The decision to work with only minors is to enable examination of 'teaching for all and children's learning' from the lens of the child; not the teacher. 1468 children were on roll across 40 state primary schools in the research site (Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board, 2022).731 of them are boys while 737 are girls. Particular attention was given to children aged from 9 to 12 years in primary 5 in all schools. Children at this age and stage can read, write and understand simple sentences in English. Their peers in the junior grades were excluded due to concerns about their proficiency in English. Pupils in grade 6 were also not allowed to participate because they were preparing for their graduation examination.

800 children, including 400 boys and 400 girls, were randomly recruited from the population across four (4) primary schools in the zone. 200 children were drawn from one school in each LGA within the district to participate. The sample represented 54.49 percent of the population. This is done to improve the position for generalizability. Participants were recruited via the stratified sampling method (Asim, Idaka & Eni, 2017; Muijs, 2011). Two subgroups were identified: boy and girl. Representatives were randomly selected from each subpopulation to participate. For each subgroup, sealed ballot papers carrying the inscriptions 'YES' and 'NO' were placed in a container in order to provide all group members equal chance to be selected in each school. Pupils who hand-picked 'YES' were recruited; those who selected 'NO' were excluded. Other sampling methods are jettisoned as they are inappropriate for use herein.

The Teaching for All and Children's Learning Questionnaire (TACLQ) served as the data source. The inquirer constructed the instrument in simple English for children to be able to respond to it. TACLQ served as the tool used to generate data for the study. TACLQ consists of three sections: participant information, biodata and scaling item. The participation sheet contained information for subjects about the research and an invite for them to participate. Under the biodata, participants were to indicate their school, age and gender. For the scaling item section, a two Likert scale of YES and NO, and 20 items, 10 for each hypothesis, was created. 20 items were developed so that the questions would cover a wide area of the overall issue under inquiry, and to reflect stated hypotheses. Participants were to tick in the box to indicate 'YES' or 'NO' to each of the items.

Evaluation of the study was based on three canons: validity, reliability and generalizability (Mertler and Charles, 2014), serving as the standards to ensure trustworthiness. The researcher is research active and capable of constructing instruments for data collection. Besides, TACLQ was forwarded to other qualified and competent persons for member checks and psychometric inspection. TACLQ was later trialled in one state primary school located outside Ikom Education Zone so as to subject the instrument to testing in a real research situation. 80 pupils were involved in the pilot

study. The decision to conduct the pilot study in a school sited outside the main research location was to prevent bias. Data arising from the pilot study was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha. The outcome produced a score of .78, indicating that it is reliable and appropriate for use in the primary study.

Field work was consequently conducted for three (3) months. A calendar was produced to guide data generation activities. One week was spent with the subjects in each school during data collection. The remaining two months were used for data preparation, analysis and to disseminate the research outcome. Each variable in the biodata section of the TACLQ was scored one mark. However, marks allocated to items in the scaling item section were as follows: YES = 6, NO = 4. Data was keyed into SPSS to ease analysis.

The Cross River State Universal Basic Education Board (CRS-SUBEB), school heads, teachers and parents gave approval for the research. Staff of SUBEB used their official records to identify public primary schools located within the zone to participate. Children cannot self-consent to participate in research. Consequently, their parents and teachers provided consent for them. Data collection activities occurred during school hours when the children were still in school. Participants had one week to complete and return the TACLQ. Every subject was given the opportunity to withdraw participation from the study at any time without giving a reason. A contingency school was kept on standby in each of the LGAs so that the research can continue even in the event of the occurrence of unforeseen and unpleasant circumstances. All items in the TACLQ were worded to prevent raising emotive issues in the participants. Names of the participants are pseudonymized in order to conceal their identities. Their data is also preserved securely by the researcher.

3.0 Results

The participant information section of the TACLQ was meant to only provide information to subjects about the study; not for further analysis. However, the biodata part of the questionnaire was analyzed via simple percentage while the simple linear regression was employed to analyze data extracted from the scaling item section of the questionnaire based on hypotheses. Again, SPSS was deployed to perform data analysis. See SPSS output in tables 1, 2 and 3:

Table 1 Participants' biodata

Category	Variable	Number	Percentage (%)
Name of school	A	200	25
	B	200	25
	C	200	25
	D	200	25
	Total	800	100
Gender	Boys	400	50
	Girls	400	50
	Total	800	100
Age	9-10	348	43.5
	11-12	452	56.5
	Total	800	100

Data on table 1 illustrates that the select school in each LGA within the education zone had 200 participants, representing 25% of the sample size. Among the participants, 400 of them, representing 50%, were boys and the other half of the sample were girls. Also, 348 of the children were aged from 9-10 years, constituting 43.5%, and 452 of them were aged from 11-12 years, representing 56.5% of the sample. This indicates that children from across schools and genders were equally represented in the research. Disparities, however, occurred on the age of the pupils. Children aged from 11-12 years were overrepresented in the study compared to their classmates aged 9-10 years. This gives a hint that older children were enrolled in state primary schools within the research context.

Table 2 Regression of teaching for engagement on children's learning in state primary schools

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.075[a]	.006	.005	11.24652

Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	562.146	1	581.240	3.431	.014*
Residual	64134.213	480	120.452		
Total	64696.359	481			

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	21.325	2.140		16.433	.000
Teaching for engagement	.216	.130	.075	.2.112	.024

*p<.05

Data on table 2 suggests that an R-value of .075 was obtained, producing an R-squared value of .006. This means that the variation in teaching for engagement accounts for about 6% of the total variation in children's learning, thus the p-value (.014) associated with the computed F-value (3.431) is less than .05. For that, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that teaching for engagement significantly influences the extent to which children's learning in state primary schools. Thus, teaching that highlights learner engagement helps pupils to learn in primary schools. To test the significance of the combination of both the regression constant (21.325) and the regression coefficient (.216) making a significant contribution in the prediction model, that is, prediction of children's learning (t = 16.433 & .2.112, p =.000 <.05), thus the presence of differentiated teaching. The mathematical relationship is depicted by the following equation y = 21.325+.216x where y = teaching for engagement and x is children's learning.

Table 3 Regression of differentiated teaching on children's learning in state primary schools

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.077[a]	.006	.007	14.54712

Sources of variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-value	p-value
Regression	562.146	1	581.240	3.464	.018*
Residual	68434.344	480	120.452		
Total	68996.49	481			

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	t-value	p-value
(Constant)	25.432	2.140		17.415	.000
Differentiated teaching	.328	.130	.075	.3.210	.036

*p<.05

Data on table 3 indicates that an R-value of .077 was obtained, giving an R-squared value of .006. This means that the variation in differentiated teaching accounts for about 6% of the total variation in children's earning thus, the p-value (.018) associated with the computed F-value (3.464) is less than .05. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected. It means that differentiated teaching has significant influence on children's learning in public primary schools. Thus, varying instructional approaches can help meet the different learning needs of pupils. To test the significance of the combination of both the regression constant (25.432) and the regression coefficient (.328) making a significant contribution in the prediction model, that is, prediction of children's learning (t = 17.415 & .3.210, p =.000 <.05), thus the presence of teaching for engagement. The mathematical relationship is depicted by the following equation y = 25.432 +.328x where y = differentiated teaching and x is children's learning.

4.0 Discussion

Findings for hypothesis one suggests that teaching for engagement significantly influences children's learning in state primary schools in Ikom education zone. Such a finding is so because classroom programmes that foster active participation of children can guarantee effective learning for all of them. A classroom in which learner engagement is a watchword could inspire all of them to draw their energies from across the cognitive, affective and behavioural components (Fredricks, Blumenfeld & Paris 2004) to be able to make meanings from what s/he is experiencing and to internalize it. Moreover, engagement ensures that children not only follow teacher leads, but more importantly, also make contributions during lessons, have a voice and to act upon what is being imparted. According to Cents-Boonstra, Lichtwarck-Achoof et al. (2021) and Skinner (2016), engagement is a catalyst for every learner to get to the deeper levels of learning during instruction.

Furthermore, the result obtained for hypothesis two surmises that differentiated teaching has significant influence on children's learning in public primary schools in Ikom education zone. This finding has occurred this way because children are, in fact, different in terms of personal characteristics and social backgrounds. A practice whereby the teacher applies an assortment of methods during lessons has the tendency to diagnose learning needs in a mix ability classroom, thus help to resolve the peculiarities among the learners. In the views of Rose (2008) it is about promoting inclusion in the classroom and practicing an education, which is more pedo-centric (Power et al., 2018). Another impact and significance of the procedure is that it helps bring the gains of learning to the doorsteps of the less favoured children. It is multidirectional of reaching out even to children with learning difficulties, and to ensures no child is actually left behind in classroom activities.

5.0 Conclusion

Latest practices in education focus on meeting the learning needs of 'all' children in a mix ability classroom. Such progressive pedagogies reflect teaching for all. They commit to skills and methods which ensure that every learner is given the opportunity to achieve from learning. The measure stretches the boundaries of education for all beyond parity in enrolment rates to the engagement of every child effectively in classroom activities in ways that can benefit all of them irrespective of personal characteristics and social backgrounds. Antithetical to the directed mode, teaching for all acknowledges that there are diversities in pupils' needs, abilities, cultures, levels of motivation and interests in Ikom Education Zone. Consequently, it provides avenues for the educator to skillfully vary instruction in a manner that befits learner idiosyncrasies so as to check inequities in learning among school children in the context.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Classroom instruction should be implemented in a manner that would significantly motivate participation for every pupil;
2. Educators are to always vary teaching methods during instruction so as to fit teaching to the learning needs of every child;
3. Teachers are to participate in regular refresher courses to enhance their teaching skills.

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