

Capacity Building For Inclusive Sustainable Development In School Instructional Leadership In The African Context

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive sustainable development (ISD) in education is a critical goal for African nations. This paper explores the integration of inclusive education principles and practices (IEPs) into instructional leadership (IL), the challenges faced by African school leaders, and the impact of inclusive leadership on student outcomes. It also examines the role of community engagement (CE) and the design of professional development (PD) programmes to equip school leaders with the necessary skills. Using evidence-based examples, this paper provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers. The findings highlight the importance of IEPs, CE, and targeted PD in achieving sustainable educational outcomes in Africa. The research underscores the positive impact of inclusive instructional leadership (IIL) on student outcomes, with schools in Nigeria showing better academic performance and improved student engagement due to IIL. Additionally, the study identifies several challenges, such as funding constraints and inadequate teacher education, which hinder the implementation of inclusive education. The Nigerian government's efforts to allocate more funds to education and implement teacher training programmes focused on inclusive practices are steps in the right direction. CE emerged as a crucial factor in promoting ISD in schools. Effective school-community partnerships in Nigeria addressed the root causes of educational challenges, such as unprepared students and poor teaching quality. Finally, the paper emphasizes the need for PD programmes tailored to the unique challenges and contexts of the region, highlighting the African Centre for School Leadership's blended professional development programmes. By addressing these issues, policymakers, educators, and researchers can work towards creating more equitable and sustainable educational environments across Africa.

Keywords: Inclusive Education, Instructional Leadership, Sustainable Development, African Education

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education and sustainable development are intertwined goals that are essential for the progress of African nations. Instructional leadership plays a pivotal role in achieving these goals by fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes equity [1]. However, African school leaders face numerous challenges in building capacity for inclusive sustainable development. These challenges include funding constraints, access and inclusion issues, and inadequate teacher education [2]. Addressing these challenges requires targeted interventions, such as improving resource allocation, enhancing teacher training programmes, and developing inclusive curricula [3].

The theme "Capacity Building for Inclusive Sustainable Development in Education, Teacher Preparation, and Languages" underscores the critical need for educational systems that are both inclusive and sustainable. Our conference paper, "Capacity

Building for Inclusive Sustainable Development in School Instructional Leadership in the African Context," aligns seamlessly with this theme by addressing the pivotal role of instructional leadership in fostering inclusive education.

Inclusive education involves creating learning environments that accommodate all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds. This approach is crucial for promoting equity and ensuring that all students have access to quality education [4]. Sustainable development, on the other hand, focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In the context of education, this means creating systems that are resilient, adaptable, and capable of providing quality education for all students [5].

Inclusive sustainable development (ISD) in education is essential for African nations striving to create

equitable learning environments. This paper delves into the integration of inclusive education principles and practices (IEPs) into instructional leadership (IL), highlighting the challenges faced by African school leaders and the positive impact of inclusive leadership on student outcomes. By examining the role of community engagement (CE) and the design of professional development (PD) programmes, the paper provides a comprehensive framework for equipping school leaders with the necessary skills to promote ISD.

Instructional leadership is a key factor in achieving inclusive sustainable development in education. Effective instructional leaders set clear goals, provide support and resources for teachers, and foster a positive school climate [6]. They also engage with the community and build partnerships to support the educational process [7]. By integrating inclusive education principles into their leadership practices, school leaders can create more equitable and sustainable educational environments [8].

The findings of this research emphasize the importance of IEPs, CE, and targeted PD in achieving sustainable educational outcomes in Africa. Evidence from Nigerian schools demonstrates that inclusive instructional leadership (IIL) leads to better academic performance and improved student engagement. The study also identifies significant challenges, such as funding constraints and inadequate teacher education, which hinder the implementation of inclusive education. The Nigerian government's efforts to allocate more funds to education and implement teacher training programmes focused on inclusive practices are commendable steps towards overcoming these barriers. Despite the growing emphasis on inclusive education and sustainable development, there remains a significant gap in understanding how these principles can be effectively integrated into instructional leadership within the African context. This article addresses this gap by providing evidence-based strategies and practical examples of how school leaders can overcome challenges and implement inclusive practices. It also highlights the critical role of community involvement and professional development in enhancing the capacity of school leaders. By filling this gap, the article offers valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, contributing to the creation of more equitable and sustainable educational environments in Africa.

Community engagement emerged as a crucial factor in promoting ISD in schools. Effective school-community partnerships in Nigeria have addressed the root causes of educational challenges, such as unprepared students and poor teaching quality. Additionally, the paper highlights the need for PD programmes tailored to the unique challenges and

contexts of the region, showcasing the African Centre for School Leadership's blended professional development programmes.

By addressing these issues, our paper provides valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, contributing to the creation of more equitable and sustainable educational environments across Africa. This aligns perfectly with the conference theme, reinforcing the importance of capacity building for inclusive sustainable development in education.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses the critical need for inclusive sustainable development (ISD) in education within the African context. By exploring the integration of inclusive education principles and practices (IEPs) into instructional leadership (IL), the study provides valuable insights into how school leaders can foster equitable learning environments. The research highlights the positive impact of inclusive instructional leadership (IIL) on student outcomes, demonstrating that schools in Nigeria with IIL practices show better academic performance and improved student engagement. This underscores the importance of IEPs, community engagement (CE), and targeted professional development (PD) in achieving sustainable educational outcomes.

Furthermore, the study identifies the challenges faced by African school leaders, such as funding constraints and inadequate teacher education, and offers evidence-based strategies to overcome these barriers. By addressing these challenges, the study contributes to the creation of more equitable and sustainable educational environments across Africa. The findings provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers, reinforcing the importance of capacity building for ISD in education.

Research Questions

In the quest for inclusive sustainable development within African educational systems, it is imperative to explore several key questions. These questions aim to understand how school leaders can effectively integrate inclusive education principles into their instructional leadership practices, identify and address the challenges they face, examine the impact of inclusive leadership on student outcomes, understand the role of community involvement, and design effective professional development programmes. The following research questions guide this exploration:

1. How can school leaders in Africa effectively integrate inclusive education principles into their instructional leadership practices to promote sustainable development?

2. What are the key challenges faced by African school leaders in building capacity for inclusive sustainable development, and how can these challenges be addressed?

3. How does the implementation of inclusive instructional leadership impact student outcomes and overall school performance in African educational settings?

4. What role does community involvement play in enhancing the capacity of school leaders to promote inclusive sustainable development in African schools?

5. How can professional development programmes be designed to equip African school leaders with the skills and knowledge needed for inclusive sustainable development?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we delve into the practical application of inclusive education principles within African schools, examining the integration of these principles into instructional leadership, the challenges faced, and the solutions implemented. We also explore the impact of inclusive instructional leadership on student outcomes, the crucial role of community involvement, and the importance of professional development programmes tailored to the unique contexts of the region. Through real-world examples and research findings, we highlight the transformative potential of inclusive education in fostering equitable and high-performing educational environments across Africa.

Integration of Inclusive Education Principles

Inclusive education principles and instructional leadership are deeply interconnected in creating equitable and effective educational environments. Inclusive education principles focus on ensuring that all students, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal access to quality education. This involves creating supportive learning environments, providing necessary resources and accommodations, and fostering a culture of acceptance and diversity. Instructional leadership, on the other hand, involves the actions and strategies employed by school leaders to guide and support teachers in delivering effective instruction. By integrating inclusive education principles into their leadership practices, school leaders can set clear educational goals, provide professional development opportunities, and cultivate a collaborative school culture that values diversity. This synergy between inclusive education principles and instructional leadership ultimately enhances student outcomes and promotes a more inclusive and high-performing educational system.

Inclusive education principles can be integrated into instructional leadership by fostering an environment that values diversity and promotes equity. For

instance, in South Africa, the implementation of the "Full-Service Schools" model has been a significant step towards inclusive education. These schools are designed to cater to all learners, including those with disabilities, by providing necessary support services and resources [9]. Additionally, the Mophato Education Centre in Botswana has successfully integrated inclusive education by training teachers to handle diverse classrooms and supporting them throughout their careers [10]. In Nigeria, the implementation of the National Policy on Education emphasizes inclusive education by integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms and providing necessary support services and resources [11]. These examples illustrate how inclusive education can be practically implemented in African schools.

Challenges and Solutions

African school leaders face several challenges, including funding constraints, access and inclusion issues, and inadequate teacher education. For example, in Nigeria, many schools struggle with insufficient funding, which affects their ability to provide necessary resources for inclusive education [12]. In Kenya, access and inclusion challenges are evident in the lack of infrastructure to accommodate students with disabilities [13]. To address these challenges, targeted interventions such as improving resource allocation, enhancing teacher training programmes, and developing inclusive curricula are essential. For instance, the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) aims to expand access to quality education by building and rehabilitating education infrastructure [1]. The Nigerian government has made efforts to improve inclusive education by allocating more funds to education and implementing teacher training programmes focused on inclusive practices [11].

Impact on Student Outcomes

Inclusive instructional leadership has a positive impact on student outcomes and overall school performance. Research indicates that instructional leadership is second only to teaching in influencing student achievement [14]. For example, in Ghana, schools with strong instructional leadership have shown better student outcomes, including higher academic performance and improved student engagement [15]. In South Africa, a study found that schools with effective instructional leadership had higher student achievement in mathematics and science [16]. In Nigeria, schools with strong instructional leadership have shown better student outcomes, including higher academic performance and improved student engagement [17]. These examples highlight the significant impact of inclusive instructional leadership on student outcomes.

Role of Community Involvement

Community involvement is crucial in enhancing the capacity of school leaders to promote inclusive sustainable development. For example, in Ghana, effective school-community partnerships have been established to address the root causes of educational challenges, such as unprepared students and poor teaching quality [15]. In Limpopo, South Africa, a study found that involving the community in school management led to improved school performance and inclusivity [18]. In Nigeria, effective school-community partnerships have been established to address the root causes of educational challenges, such as unprepared students and poor teaching quality [19]. These examples demonstrate the importance of community involvement in promoting inclusive sustainable development in schools.

Professional Development Programmes

Professional development programmes for African school leaders should be designed to address the unique challenges and contexts of the region. For instance, the African Centre for School Leadership has developed blended professional development programmes that combine online and face-to-face training to ensure accessibility and scalability [15]. The ADDIE instructional design framework, which stands for Analyze, Design, Develop, Implement, and Evaluate, is recommended for developing these programmes [15]. Additionally, collaboration between governments and professional development providers is essential to achieve transformative outcomes. Programmes should also address cross-cutting themes such as gender, equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper has explored the integration of inclusive education principles into instructional leadership, the challenges faced by African school leaders, and the impact of inclusive leadership on student outcomes. The research questions guiding this study focused on how inclusive education principles can be effectively integrated into instructional leadership, the specific challenges faced by school leaders in Africa, and the strategies that can be employed to overcome these challenges. Additionally, the study examined the role of community involvement and the design of professional development programmes to equip school leaders with the necessary skills to promote inclusive education.

The findings highlight the importance of inclusive practices in creating equitable and effective educational environments. For instance, the implementation of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria emphasizes inclusive education by integrating students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms and providing necessary support services and resources [20]. This demonstrates how inclusive

education principles can be practically implemented to foster an environment that values diversity and promotes equity.

The study also identified several challenges faced by African school leaders, including funding constraints, access and inclusion issues, and inadequate teacher education. In Nigeria, many schools struggle with insufficient funding, which affects their ability to provide necessary resources for inclusive education [12]. To address these challenges, targeted interventions such as improving resource allocation, enhancing teacher training programmes, and developing inclusive curricula are essential. The Nigerian government's efforts to allocate more funds to education and implement teacher training programmes focused on inclusive practices are steps in the right direction [20].

Furthermore, the research underscores the positive impact of inclusive instructional leadership on student outcomes. Schools with strong instructional leadership in Nigeria have shown better student outcomes, including higher academic performance and improved student engagement [17]. This highlights the significant role that inclusive instructional leadership plays in enhancing student achievement and overall school performance.

Community involvement emerged as a crucial factor in promoting inclusive sustainable development in schools. Effective school-community partnerships in Nigeria have been established to address the root causes of educational challenges, such as unprepared students and poor teaching quality [19]. These partnerships have led to improved school performance and inclusivity, demonstrating the importance of community engagement in achieving sustainable educational outcomes.

Finally, the study emphasizes the need for professional development programmes tailored to the unique challenges and contexts of the region. The African Centre for School Leadership's blended professional development programmes, which combine online and face-to-face training, aim to equip school leaders with the skills needed to promote equity and inclusion in their schools [15]. These programmes are essential for achieving transformative outcomes and addressing cross-cutting themes such as gender, equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

In conclusion, the integration of inclusive education principles into instructional leadership, coupled with community involvement and targeted professional development, is vital for creating more equitable and sustainable educational environments in Africa. By addressing these issues, policymakers, educators, and researchers can work towards achieving sustainable

educational outcomes and promoting inclusive education across the continent.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While this study offers significant contributions to the field of educational management, it is important to acknowledge its limitations. The geographical scope of the study primarily focuses on Nigerian schools, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other African countries with different educational contexts and challenges. Although the study provides valuable insights, the unique socio-economic and cultural factors in other regions may require different approaches to inclusive instructional leadership.

Another limitation is the sample size. The research has a limited sample size, which could affect the robustness of the findings. Larger and more diverse samples would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issues. Future studies should aim to include a broader range of schools and educational settings to enhance the validity of the results.

The data collection methods used in the study may also introduce biases or limitations in capturing the full scope of the challenges and successes of inclusive instructional leadership. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including qualitative and quantitative data, could provide a more holistic view of the impact of inclusive instructional leadership. The temporal scope of the study's findings is based on data collected within a specific timeframe. Educational contexts and policies are dynamic, and the relevance of the findings may change over time. Longitudinal studies would be beneficial to track the long-term effects of inclusive instructional leadership and the sustainability of the implemented practices. Lastly, while the study emphasizes the role of instructional leadership, it may not fully capture the contributions of other factors, such as curriculum design, teacher motivation, and student socio-economic backgrounds, which also play crucial roles in achieving inclusive sustainable development. Future research should consider these additional factors to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the pathways to inclusive sustainable development in education.

By acknowledging these limitations, the study provides a transparent and balanced view of its findings, paving the way for future research to build on its insights and address these gaps.

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