



INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT VARIABLES AS CORRELATE OF TEACHERS' INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY IN SPECIAL NEEDS SCHOOLS IN CROSS RIVER STATE: IMPLICATION FOR SUSTAINABLE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT



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Abstract

Over the past decade, the concept of inclusive education has gained global acceptance. However, ensuring the educational development of children with special needs remains a significant challenge for teachers, necessitating intervention. This study explored institutional management variables and their impact on teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State, specifically focusing on the relationship between professional development, instructional supervision, and instructional delivery. The study employed a correlational research design and involved a population of 191 teachers from 26 special needs schools in the state, using a census method. A questionnaire, titled "Institutional Management Variables and Teachers' Instructional Delivery Questionnaire (IMVTIDQ)," was used for data collection. The instrument comprised two sections: Section A gathered demographic data, while Section B assessed institutional management variables and teachers' service delivery. The questionnaire was based on a four-point Likert scale, and its validity was confirmed by experts from the Department of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Calabar. Reliability was established through a trial test on 20 teachers outside the study area, yielding a high Cronbach Alpha coefficient ranging from .81 to .83. Data analysis was conducted based on the null hypotheses that guided the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between professional development, instructional supervision, and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools. This highlights the importance of continuous professional development and effective instructional supervision in improving teachers' effectiveness. Based on these findings, it is recommended that educational authorities in Cross River State invest in tailored professional development programs to enhance teachers' pedagogical and classroom management skills.

Keywords: Institutional Variables, Instructional Delivery, Professional Development, Instructional Supervision, Special Needs Schools.

Introduction

Education plays a fundamental role in empowering individuals, fostering social development, and driving national growth by equipping learners with the essential knowledge, skills, and values necessary for meaningful societal contributions. In Nigeria, secondary education acts as a critical

transition between basic education and higher learning, preparing students for tertiary education, vocational training, and holistic personal development, thereby contributing to economic progress. This underscores the significance of education at this level (Ejom, Onyebu, Eji, & Ayi, 2024; Ngene, Oweikpodor, & Obona, 2025).

Special needs schools are educational institutions specifically structured to support learners with disabilities or learning challenges by providing specialized teaching methods, resources, and support systems. These schools implement Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), utilize assistive technologies, and employ trained professionals such as special education teachers and counselors to address the varied needs of students with physical, intellectual, emotional, or sensory impairments. Their primary objective is to establish an inclusive environment that nurtures academic, social, and personal growth while preparing students with the necessary life skills for independence and integration into society. The effectiveness of teachers' instructional delivery plays a vital role in achieving these goals (Obona, Uguba, Otuu, & Ejom, 2025).

In the context of special needs schools, teachers' service delivery refers to the quality, consistency, and effectiveness with which educators carry out their responsibilities to address the diverse cognitive, emotional, and physical needs of students with disabilities. As noted by Madukwe, Dede, and Obona (2024), service delivery entails fulfilling designated tasks to achieve specific educational goals. Koko and Nabie (2019, as cited in Obona, Udang, & Egwu, 2023) describe it as the execution of responsibilities within a defined timeframe. Ayoro, Onyeike, and Jack (2023) further emphasize that teachers' service delivery reflects their meaningful contributions toward the realization of school objectives. Thus, effective service delivery transcends classroom teaching—it includes cultivating a responsive, inclusive, and equitable learning environment that ensures all learners, regardless of ability, can succeed.

The effectiveness of teacher service delivery in special needs schools is evaluated using several interconnected indicators. These include the development of individualized instructional plans that align with each student's unique learning profile to enhance academic performance; the application of adaptive teaching methods and the integration of technology to cater to various learning styles and challenges; and the fostering of collaborative relationships among educators, parents, and specialists to create a holistic support system. These strategies not only improve academic outcomes but also promote social and emotional development, contributing to equitable and long-term success for students with disabilities (Garcia & Patel, 2023). Furthermore, service delivery encompasses teachers' ability to manage inclusive classrooms, communicate effectively with stakeholders, and ensure the overall growth and inclusion of students. As noted by Onaolapo, Olajiga, and Onaolapo (2019), the quality of service delivery is ultimately determined by the extent to which educational goals are achieved.

In recent years, the concept of inclusive education has gained widespread acceptance as a transformative approach to teaching and learning. It emphasizes creating an inclusive school culture, formulating supportive policies, and developing practical strategies that promote the participation of all learners (Angeloska Galevska & Ilic Pesic, 2018). Effective teacher service delivery is therefore crucial, as it underpins the creation of learning environments that are responsive, nurturing, and capable of addressing the complex needs of learners with special educational requirements.

Inclusive education practices have been adopted across schools in Nigeria, supported by government policies and legislation aimed at providing appropriate education and support for children with special needs according to their abilities. This shift has led to a steady increase in the enrollment of students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Consequently, teachers are now responsible for instructing and evaluating students with special needs alongside their typically developing peers. However, concerns have been raised about the declining quality of teacher service delivery, drawing attention from researchers and education stakeholders (Ayoro, Onyeike, & Jack, 2023; Onaolapo et al., 2019; Okoye, 2017; Obona et al., 2023). Assessing the progress of students with disabilities remains a significant challenge, and teachers frequently express the need for clear guidance on implementing assessment practices within inclusive settings (Angeloska Galevska & Ilic Pesic, 2018). Teachers, particularly those in special education, face numerous obstacles, including insufficient administrative support, limited resources, and low morale. Similarly, Aiyaleso (2016) identified systemic challenges in

Nigeria's special education system, such as inadequate funding, deteriorating infrastructure, poor working conditions, and the absence of incentives for teachers in special schools.

The situation is particularly alarming in special needs schools across Cross River State, where numerous teachers exhibit poor attitudes toward their duties. Many report to work late, while some frequently skip work and classes altogether. Additionally, a number of teachers fail to maintain healthy professional relationships with their students. Some students have complained that certain teachers prioritize selling personal goods during official hours, neglecting their instructional responsibilities. This clearly indicates a decline in teacher performance, which has had far-reaching negative effects on the quality of individuals produced by the education system. Over time, this trend has contributed to a rise in graduate unemployment, moral decay, a lack of respect for authority, increased drug abuse, and an unhealthy dependency on Western nations (Babalola, 2007 as cited in Odigwe, 2019; Oluwaseun, 2016).

Additional issues include truancy among teachers, irregular attendance, poor classroom management, and neglect of administrative responsibilities. These lapses in professionalism and dedication severely compromise the quality of educational service delivery and have raised alarm among stakeholders. Such inefficiencies contribute to low morale among staff, high rates of absenteeism, and hinder the grooming of capable future leaders who are crucial for national development (Luthans, 2002 as cited in Obona et al., 2023; Kinyua & Munyi, 2018; Oluwaseun, 2016 as cited in Obona et al., 2023). Immediate intervention is therefore necessary to prevent further deterioration of educational standards for learners with special needs.

Teachers' job performance has remained a key concern for educational stakeholders and researchers alike. Evidence suggests that teachers are more likely to perform effectively when they operate in a conducive environment with appropriate working conditions (Obona, Udang, & Egwu, 2023). This highlights the need for efficient management of institutional variables to enhance instructional delivery and overall service quality in special needs schools across Cross River State.

Institutional management variables refer to the key organizational and administrative elements within a school system that influence its operations and effectiveness. Arop, Ekpong, and Owan (2018) describe school management variables as distinctive attributes that set schools apart and influence teacher effectiveness. These variables, which must be carefully studied and managed, are categorized by Oregano (2020) into extrinsic (pull) factors which are external incentives like better salaries, job security, and leadership as well as intrinsic (push) factors which refers to internal dissatisfactions such as stress, poor management, and bureaucracy. Barnard and Rodgers (2018) emphasized that push factors often result from frustration with internal conditions. Proper management of these variables, including leadership, work environment, administrative support, communication, staff development, and motivation, is crucial for achieving overall school effectiveness and sustainability. These variables collectively shape the teaching and learning environment and significantly impact teachers' motivation, performance, and instructional delivery. However, this study will examine professional development, and instructional supervision.

Professional Development and Teachers' Service Delivery

Professional development refers to administrative strategies aimed at enhancing the knowledge and skills of employees to improve job performance. In the educational context, it involves equipping teachers with updated instructional techniques and strategies, thereby boosting their competence and effectiveness, which ultimately leads to improved student learning outcomes (Akinwale, 2020). To remain relevant and effective in addressing evolving educational challenges, teachers must engage in continuous professional development. School principals are instrumental in facilitating such opportunities not only for teachers but also for the broader staff, including themselves. This commitment fosters a culture of lifelong learning within the school environment.

One of the key strategies for improving the capacity of special education teachers is the provision of targeted training for both pre-service and in-service educators. Such training helps them operate effectively in inclusive settings alongside their general education counterparts (Drelick et al., 2024; Norwich & Nash, 2011, as cited in Alsudairy, 2024). Research has consistently shown that well-

structured training programs enhance teachers' competencies, which in turn lead to increased job satisfaction and a higher level of commitment.

Sultana (2013) investigated the impact of training on workforce productivity among 250 employees in Dhaka and found a significant positive relationship. In a related study, Okeleke, Uzoka, and Oladejo (2017) examined the link between training, demographic factors, and job performance in public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria. Their large-scale study involving 4,080 participants revealed a strong correlation between professional development and staff performance. Nevertheless, the focus on tertiary institutions underscores the need for further research within the secondary school context, which this study seeks to provide. Additionally, Mduma and Mkulu (2021) conducted a mixed-methods study in Nyamagana District, Tanzania, to evaluate the role of professional development in teacher performance. Based on a sample of 91 educators, their findings confirmed that training significantly enhances teaching strategies and overall job effectiveness. This supports the current research's emphasis on the importance of professional development in Nigerian secondary schools.

Instructional Supervision and Teachers' Service Delivery

Instructional supervision involves the systematic evaluation and improvement of teaching practices through classroom observations, mentoring, and constructive feedback. It serves as a key mechanism for enhancing teacher effectiveness and ensuring high instructional quality. According to Asiyai (2020), consistent and supportive supervision in Nigerian secondary schools contributes significantly to teachers' professional growth, improves lesson delivery, and boosts student academic performance. Supervision plays a crucial role in strengthening the educational system by improving teachers' job performance. It encompasses offering guidance, evaluative support, and feedback aimed at enhancing instructional practices and professional behavior (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007). When supervision is characterized by collaboration and constructive dialogue, it tends to increase teachers' motivation and satisfaction (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2014). Such a supervisory approach promotes continuous professional development and helps teachers adapt to emerging educational needs.

Empirical studies support the positive relationship between instructional supervision and teacher performance. In Nigeria, Ofoegbu and Alonge (2016) used a survey design to assess the impact of supervision on job performance in public secondary schools. Drawing data from 200 teachers, their findings revealed that regular supervisory visits especially those offering constructive feedback and developmental assistance greatly improved teachers' effectiveness. Similarly, Mette et al. (2017) examined teachers' perspectives on culturally responsive teaching and the influence of supervision on their instructional decisions. Conducted in two culturally diverse U.S. schools using a qualitative case study method, the research showed that effective supervision encouraged teachers to adopt culturally relevant teaching approaches. However, the study also found that the success of supervision depended on the supervisor's understanding of cultural dynamics and their ability to provide tailored support. In instances where supervision was rigid or disconnected from teachers' needs, it led to reduced engagement and weaker performance.

In Malaysia, Azumi and Abu Bakar (2018) used a mixed-methods design to investigate the effects of instructional supervision on teacher performance. The study involved 150 teachers in a quantitative survey and included interviews with 20 teachers and 10 supervisors for the qualitative component. Findings indicated that mentorship, regular feedback, and ongoing professional development significantly improved instructional performance. Teachers emphasized the value of having approachable and supportive supervisors, noting that such leadership fostered a positive, motivating work atmosphere.

The results of the literature review revealed that there is a relationship between the identified independent sub-variables and the dependent variable, namely teachers' service delivery. However, several gaps were observed in the reviewed literature, particularly in terms of geographical location, research scope, and methodology. Notably, most of the cited studies were conducted in foreign countries or in regions of Nigeria other than the study area. Furthermore, the methodologies, instruments, and procedures employed in those studies differ from those adopted in the present research. In light of these identified gaps, the researchers deemed it necessary to undertake the current

study titled "Institutional Management Variables as Correlate of Teachers' Instructional Delivery in Special Needs Schools in Cross River State." Thus, this study aims to bridge the gap in the literature and contribute meaningfully to the existing body of knowledge.

Statement of the problem

Special needs schools are educational institutions specifically established to support learners with disabilities or learning challenges by providing specialized teaching methods, resources, and support systems. Teachers in these schools are expected to deliver instruction to learners with diverse abilities, interests, and educational needs, while also managing them effectively within the classroom and broader school environment.

However, it has been observed that many teachers in special needs schools in Cross River State tend to exhibit unprofessional behaviors that hinder effective service delivery. For instance, some teachers frequently arrive late to school, others absent themselves from classes, and some engage in personal business ventures during official school hours often to the detriment of the special needs students under their care. Over the years, these developments have become a significant concern to the government and have prompted educational researchers to investigate the underlying factors contributing to such poor attitudes and job performance. In response, the Cross River State Government has introduced several measures, including the provision of textbooks, recruitment of more teachers, renovation of classroom facilities especially through the Universal Basic Education (UBE) platform and the prompt payment of monthly salaries.

Despite these efforts, teachers in special needs schools continue to underperform in their professional roles. There appears to be no noticeable improvement in student behavior, classroom engagement, interpersonal relationships, or terminal examination outcomes. This persistent challenge has led the researcher to question whether the root of the problem lies in the management of institutional variables. Therefore, the central problem of this study is expressed in the form of a question: What is the relationship between institutional management variables and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State? The desire to answer this question is what gave rise to this study.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated relationship between institutional management variables and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to find out the relationship between:

1. Professional development and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.
2. Instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.

Research hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided study:

1. Professional development does not significantly relate to teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.
2. Instructional supervision does not significantly relate to teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.

Methodology

The study adopted a correlational research design. This design was deemed appropriate for the study as it aimed to investigate the relationship between institutional management variables teachers' instructional delivery. The population of this study comprised all the 191 teachers in 26 special need schools in Cross River State. Census method was used in this study. A census is a study of every unit, everyone or everything when the size of the population is small. Therefore, census method was adopted in involving the entire population of 191 teachers found in all the special need schools in the study area.

The instrument used for data collection was a questionnaire titled “Institutional Management Variables and Teachers’ Instructional Delivery Questionnaire (IMVTIDQ).” The instrument consisted of two sections. Section A was designed to collect demographic data, including age, gender, marital status, and educational qualifications. Section B contained 18 items that measured the sub-variables of Institutional Management Variables, specifically professional development, instructional supervision and teachers' service delivery. The questionnaire was structured on a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Before administering the questionnaires, the items were submitted to research experts for validation. These experts included three lecturers from the Department of Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. Based on their input, irrelevant items were either removed or modified. Of the 24 items initially designed, six were discarded, leaving 18 items for the final study. Reliability, of the instrument was established through a trial test conducted on 20 teachers selected outside the study area. Data collected were coded and subjected to a reliability test using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient. The reliability coefficient obtained ranged from .81 to .83, indicating a high level of reliability. Statistically, the instrument was deemed appropriate for data collection.

To ensure effective data collection, 7 research assistants were recruited and trained on the study’s objectives and proper administration of the questionnaires. Prior to distribution, permission was obtained from school administrators, and the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study. They were assured that all information provided would be used strictly for research purposes and treated with confidentiality. The researchers and assistants distributed the questionnaires and later collected them. The study achieved a 100% questionnaire return rate. Upon collection, the questionnaires were reviewed to ensure completeness. They were then organized based on the variables they were designed to measure. Positively worded items were scored as follows: Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, Agree (A) = 3 points, Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point. For negatively worded items, the scoring pattern was reversed. Respondents' scores on the sub-scales were summed and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Data analysis was conducted based on the null hypotheses that guided the study. Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and discussion

Hypothesis one

Professional development does not significantly relate to teachers’ instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are professional development and teachers’ instructional delivery. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 1. Table 1 showed the correlation coefficient between professional development and teachers’ instructional delivery. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers’ service delivery ($r = .64, p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis one is rejected in terms of teachers’ teachers’ instructional delivery. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between professional development and teachers’ instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.

Table 1

Summary of correlation between professional development and teachers’ instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. (N=191)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	r	Sig.
Professional development	19.38	3.40		
Teachers’ Instructional delivery	19.18	4.38	.64*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ $df = 189$

Hypothesis two

Instructional supervision does not significantly relate to teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. The two variables in this hypothesis are instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis and the result of the analysis is presented in Table 2. Table 2 showed the correlation coefficient between instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery. The correlation coefficient is statistically significant for teachers' service delivery ($r = .86, p < .05$). Since $p(.000)$ is less than $p(.05)$, hypothesis two is rejected in terms of teachers' teachers' instructional delivery. The result of the analysis implied that there is a statistically positive significant relationship between instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State.

Table 2

Summary of correlation between instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. (N=191)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	r	Sig.
Instructional supervision	18.40	4.62		
Teachers' instructional delivery	19.18	4.38	.86*	.000

*Significant at $p < .05$ df=189

Discussion of findings

Hypothesis one which stated that, professional development does not significantly relate to teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State, was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The findings indicate a significant high positive relationship between professional development and teachers' instructional delivery suggesting that as teachers engage more in professional development activities, their effectiveness in delivering instruction improves. This result is not surprising because professional development equips teachers with updated knowledge, innovative teaching strategies, and improved pedagogical skills, all of which are essential for effective classroom practice. Also, the implication is that continuous investment in relevant and well-structured professional development programs can lead to enhanced teaching quality, which ultimately supports improved student learning outcomes.

The finding of this study is consistent with those of Sultana (2013), who investigated the impact of training on workforce productivity among 250 employees in Dhaka and found a significant positive relationship. Similarly, the result aligns with the study by Okeleke, Uzoka, and Oladejo (2017), which examined the relationship between training, demographic factors, and job performance in public colleges of education in Southwest Nigeria, revealing a strong correlation between professional development and staff performance. Furthermore, it corroborates the findings of Mduma and Mkulu (2021), who reported that training significantly enhances teaching strategies and overall job effectiveness.

Hypothesis two which stated that, instructional supervision does not significantly relate to teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State, was rejected while the alternate hypothesis was accepted. The findings reveal a significantly high positive relationship between instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery, indicating that effective supervision practices are strongly associated with improved teaching performance. This finding is not surprising because regular and constructive instructional supervision provides teachers with feedback, guidance, and support that help refine their teaching methods and classroom management skills. The implication is that when school leaders strengthen supervisory systems by ensuring that supervision is continuous, supportive, and focused on professional growth, it can lead to enhanced instructional quality and better student learning outcomes.

The finding agrees with that of Ofoegbu and Alonge (2016), who used a survey design to assess the impact of supervision on job performance in public secondary schools. Their study revealed that regular supervisory visits particularly those that offered constructive feedback and developmental assistance greatly improved teachers' effectiveness. Similarly, Mette et al. (2017) found that effective supervision encouraged teachers to adopt culturally relevant teaching approaches. However, their study also emphasized that the success of supervision depended on the supervisor's understanding of cultural dynamics and their ability to provide tailored support. Furthermore, the finding aligns with that of Azumi and Abu Bakar (2018), who reported that mentorship, regular feedback, and ongoing professional development significantly enhanced instructional performance. Teachers in their study highlighted the importance of having approachable and supportive supervisors, noting that such leadership fostered a positive and motivating work environment.

Institutional Management Variables and Teachers' Instructional Delivery in Special Needs Schools in Cross River State: Implication for Sustainable National Development

The findings of this study have important implications for sustainable national development, particularly in the context of inclusive education. The positive relationship between institutional management variables, specifically professional development, instructional supervision and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State highlights the critical role of effective school management in enhancing educational outcomes for learners with special needs. Sustainable national development depends largely on the capacity of the education system to equip all learners, including those with disabilities, with the skills and knowledge needed to participate fully in society. Therefore, investing in continuous professional development and strengthening instructional supervision practices in special needs schools will not only improve teaching quality but also promote equity, inclusion, and human capital development which are key pillars of national growth and sustainability.

Conclusion

This study highlights the significant relationship between institutional management variables, specifically professional development and instructional supervision, and teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. The findings underscore the importance of ongoing professional development and effective instructional supervision in enhancing teachers' ability to deliver quality instruction to students with special needs. These variables provide teachers with the necessary skills, knowledge, and support to improve their teaching effectiveness. Therefore, it is essential for educational administrators and policymakers to prioritize and strengthen professional development programs and supervisory practices in special needs schools to ensure that teachers are adequately equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students, ultimately contributing to improved educational outcomes and inclusive education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Educational authorities should assist school administrators in Cross River State to invest in continuous, tailored professional development programs for teachers in special needs schools to enhance their pedagogical and classroom management skills.
2. School heads should focus on implementing regular, constructive instructional supervision in special needs schools, and always provide teachers with targeted feedback, mentorship, and ongoing developmental support to improve instructional delivery and student performances.

Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to knowledge by highlighting the significant role of institutional management variables, specifically professional development and instructional supervision, in enhancing teachers' instructional delivery in special needs schools in Cross River State. The findings provide empirical evidence that effective professional development and regular instructional

supervision are key factors that improve the teaching practices and overall performance of teachers in special education settings. This research adds to the existing body of literature by emphasizing the importance of these management practices in the context of special needs education, offering insights that can guide educational policy, teacher training programs, and school management strategies aimed at improving the quality of education for students with disabilities.

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