IMPACT OF ADMINISTRATIVE STRATEGIES ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SPECIAL EDUCATION CENTRES IN OGOJA EDUCATION ZONE IN CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Special needs students, like all learners, have unique abilities and educational needs, making their inclusion vital in every educational setting. Effective administrative strategies play a crucial role in improving their academic performance, as strong leadership practices create a more supportive and inclusive learning environment. Ensuring these students succeed contributes to a more equitable society and strengthens the educational system as a whole. Recognizing this, a study was conducted to assess the impact of administrative strategies—specifically instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making—on the academic performance of special needs students in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.The study used a correlational research design and involved 123 students and administrators across 14 special education centres within five Local Government Areas: Obanliku, Bekwarra, Obudu, Ogoja, and Yala. A census method was used to include all schools and students in the study. Data were gathered using a 15-item questionnaire (ASSAPQ), which was validated by educational experts and found to be reliable with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients between .79 and .82. Data analysis employed Pearson Product Moment Correlation and Simple Linear Regression at a 0.05 significance level. Findings revealed a significant positive relationship between both instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making with students' academic performance. The study concluded that effective supervision and collaborative decision-making enhance learning outcomes. It recommended that school administrators prioritize these strategies to improve teaching quality and support the academic success of special needs students in special education centres.

Key Words: *Administrative Strategies, Instructional Supervision, Inclusive-decision Making, Student's Academic Performance, Special Education Centres.*

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental pillar of national development, serving as a catalyst for individual empowerment, economic growth, and societal transformation. It equips individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader society. As noted by Ossai (2021), education is instrumental in building a united, independent, prosperous, and egalitarian society that upholds its traditions and values. It is necessary to note that education is important and a fundamental right every child. At the heart of any educational system are the students, who are both its purpose and driving force. Their active engagement, curiosity, and development not only shape the learning environment but also influence the evolution of curricula and teaching methodologies. This is particularly true for students with special needs, whose inclusion enriches the educational experience for all and underscores the importance of equity and accessibility in education. Recognizing all students as active contributors rather than passive recipients fosters a more inclusive and effective educational experience, ultimately benefiting society at large. Special needs students often encounter diverse challenges which affect their overall development. Consequently, monitoring and supporting their academic performance becomes a critical responsibility for educational managers and policymakers.

In this context, academic performance refers to the extent to which learners achieve their short- and long-term educational goals, typically measured through continuous assessments, examination scores, and cumulative grade point averages (CGPA). Römhild and Hollederer (2024) defined it as their achievements and progress in educational outcomes relative to their individualized learning goals and standards. According to Francisco et al. (2020) its significance lies in ensuring equitable access to quality education that support the educational success and future opportunities of learners with special needs in all public primary schools. Some indicators of academic performance for students with special needs are Continuous Assessment Scores and Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA). Continuous assessments, encompassing quizzes, assignments, and class participation, provide real-time feedback on a student's learning progress, enabling educators to tailor instruction to individual needs, which is particularly beneficial for students requiring special education services. On the other hand, CGPA offers a comprehensive measure of a student's academic achievement over time by averaging grades across multiple subjects and semesters, highlighting long-term academic trends and informing necessary adjustments in educational strategies. Together, these metrics offer a holistic view of a student's academic journey, facilitating timely interventions and support mechanisms tailored to individual needs.

In the United States, the treatment of children with disabilities underwent a significant transformation during the twentieth century, shifting from neglect and exploitation to a focus on inclusive education (Mutsoli & Kikechi, 2024). This change was largely driven by the enactment of key legislation, such as the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA) of 1975 and its successor, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These laws required public schools to offer special education services, guaranteeing the right to education and individualized support through Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), while also encouraging active parental involvement and the provision of adequate instructional resources (Mitchell & Sutherland, 2020, as cited in Mutsoli & Kikechi, 2024). Providing personalized learning plans, supportive services, and inclusive learning environments has been shown to foster holistic development, social integration, and equal educational opportunities for all learners, including those with special needs (Alnahdi et al., 2024). These efforts underline the importance of improved academic performance as a means of enhancing student well-being. Nevertheless, in many developing countries, poor academic performance remains a major challenge, particularly among students with special needs.

In Nigeria, secondary school students encounter a range of challenges that impede their educational development. These issues include inadequate funding, which leads to poor infrastructure, outdated teaching materials, and insufficient instructional resources. Many schools suffer from overcrowded classrooms due to a shortage of facilities and qualified teachers, resulting in high student-to-teacher ratios and diminished learning outcomes. Leadership inefficiencies and weak administrative processes further exacerbate these problems, undermining effective school management. Consequently,

many institutions struggle to fulfill the objectives of the National Policy on Education, which aims to equip students with the skills necessary for self-reliance after graduation. The cumulative effect of these unfavorable conditions hampers the holistic development of students across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains (Osha et al., 2024; Kingsley et al., 2025; Nwokonko, 2024; Obona et al., 2024).

Government bodies, parents, and other stakeholders in education anticipate that school leaders will operate effectively to enhance students' academic performance. As the chief executives of schools, principals are entrusted with the critical responsibility of managing school operations to ensure educational effectiveness. Their leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering an environment conducive to learning and academic excellence. Lydiah and Nasongo (2009) emphasize that effective leadership is crucial for enhancing students' academic performance. Premised on this, school administrators are encouraged to adopt strategic administrative practices to provide comprehensive education and produce high-quality students. Building upon this background, the present study investigates the impact of administrative strategies on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Administrative strategies as used in this context refers to the deliberate plans, procedures, and decisions employed by school administrators and educational leaders to effectively manage resources, staff, and teaching practices in pursuit of academic objectives. Difoni et al. (2025) defined it as the strategies and actions implemented by educational administrators to effectively manage staff and enhance their performance. The implementation of inclusive administrative measures such as ongoing teacher training, adaptive learning environments, and the provision of specialized educational tools, by administrators can boosting the overall school effectiveness. However, this study focused on other administrative strategies, namely, instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making that can foster a supportive atmosphere that accommodates the unique learning requirements of special needs students, thus enhancing their academic involvement, and performance. Students are vital stakeholders and primary beneficiaries of educational outcomes. They also play a crucial role in determining examination results. Therefore, it is essential to examine the factors that promote their academic performance within the school system.

Statement of the problem

The academic performance of learners with special needs is crucial for ensuring equitable access to quality education and achieving educational goals. In the Special Education Centres within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria, there is growing concern among parents, guardians, and stakeholders regarding the persistent educational challenges faced by students with special needs. These challenges significantly hinder their engagement, participation, and performance in both internal and external examinations.

Although the government has implemented various initiatives such as the provision of assistive devices like Braille machines, hearing aids, and mobility tools to support learners with disabilities, many students continue to face exclusion and limited support. In response to these ongoing issues, this study examines the impact of administrative strategies on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The study **Assessed the impact of** administrative strategies on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to examine:

1. The impact of instructional supervision **on** academic performance of students in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.
2. The impact of inclusive decision-making on academic performance of students in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Research question

These research questions guided the study

1. What is the relationship between instructional supervision **and** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State?
2. What is the relationship between inclusive decision-making and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses guided the study:

1. Instructional supervision does not have any significantly impact on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.
2. There is no significant impact of inclusive decision-making on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Theoretical background

The study is anchored on the Systems Theory, introduced by Ludwig von Bertalanffy in 1949. The theory was initially designed to explain the interrelated components within biological systems but has since been applied to fields like management and education. Bertalanffy argued that systems—whether natural or social—function effectively through the coordinated interaction of their parts, and that analyzing parts in isolation cannot explain the behavior of the whole. In education, the theory offers a comprehensive view of schools as systems made up of interconnected elements such as inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback (Bertalanffy, 1968). The key assumptions of Systems Theory include the interdependence of subsystems, the necessity of coordination among parts, the impact of changes within any part on the whole system, the need for equilibrium through feedback, and responsiveness to both internal and external environments (Skyttner, 2005). Applied to education, these assumptions suggest that changes in administrative strategies can significantly influence teaching practices and student academic performance.

In relation to this study, Systems Theory is useful in explaining how administrative strategies—such as inclusive planning and instructional supervision, act as inputs that shape educational processes and outcomes. Especially in special education settings, the theory underscores the need for coherence and adaptability in administration to improve student learning. It supports the idea that well-integrated and responsive administrative practices are vital for boosting academic achievement among learners with special needs.

Empirical review of literature

Instructional supervision and student academic performance

Instructional supervision is an important tool for schools as it helps them in ensuring that their vision and mission are achieved by supervising, training, and empowering teachers so that they can create valuable experiences for their students (Madukwe et al., 2024). Some basic frameworks for supervision are clinical, peer coaching, and developmental supervision. According to Ifedili (2015), instructional supervision involves studying and improving the conditions that affect student learning and growth, as well as enhancing the teacher's ability to deliver effective teaching. Nakpodia (2011) opined that modern instructional supervision focuses on creating a conducive teaching-learning environment for teachers and learners. Madukwe et al. (2024) mention that effective supervision helps teachers develop their teaching skills, while inadequate supervision instruction will have negative impact on student performance and of course hinder the attainment of set educational goals and objectives.

In a study, Awandia (2023). investigated the influence of teaching practice supervision on student teachers' skills acquisition in government teachers training colleges in South West Region of Cameroon. The research design for this study was survey. The target population of this study was 887

students and teachers of government teacher training colleges that are functioning effectively in the South West Region of Cameroon. The accessible population of this study was drawn from five teacher training colleges consisting of 285 class three students and 167 teachers teaching class three. The sample size of this study was 90; comprising of 80 students and 10 teachers. The simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample size. The instruments used for data collection were questionnaire for students and interview guide for cooperating teachers. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Data from student teacher questionnaire were analysed using Pearson's product moment while thematic analysis was used to analyse data collected from the interview guide. The findings revealed that supervisors have a positive influence on student teachers' skills acquisition in government teacher training colleges in South West Region of Cameroon.

Similarly, the findings of Allida et al. (2018) confirmed that instructional supervision entails that the principal should conduct a "closer, periodic and continual internal supervisory practice" so that the school meets its objectives. The researchers also that emphasized the need for regular classroom observation which they said should not be done only when there is a need. In another study Madukwe et al. (2024) investigated the Impact of Instructional Supervision on Skills Acquisition and Job Creation Tendency among Students in Public Secondary Schools in Calabar Metropolis: Implication for Economic Recovery. The population was 4,379 students while 500 students were sampled for the study using purposive sampling technique. Data collection was done using a 30-items questionnaire titled "Instructional Supervision, Skills Acquisition and Job Creation Tendency Questionnaire (ISSAJCTQ)." Simple linear regression was employed in testing the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and 480 degree of freedom. The findings of the study revealed that instructional supervision have a significant impact on skills acquisition and job creation tendency among students in public secondary schools in Calabar metropolis, Cross River State, Nigeria.

Inclusive decision-making and student academic performance

Inclusive decision-making positively influences student academic performance by fostering a sense of belonging, motivation, and responsibility among learners. Lakkala (2024) emphasizes that meaningful student participation—across psychological, pedagogical, organizational, and socio-political dimensions—is vital for developing a strong sense of agency, which directly contributes to improved academic outcomes. Similarly, Özdemir and Sungur (2018) argue that incorporating inclusive practices in education helps create learning environments that not only accommodate diverse student needs but also celebrate that diversity, ultimately boosting student engagement and academic achievement. Together, these perspectives highlight the importance of inclusive decision-making as a catalyst for enhancing both the learning experience and academic performance of students.

Mati et al. (2016) conducted a study involving twelve public day secondary schools in Embu West Sub-County, Kenya, to explore students' perspectives on how their participation in decision-making impacts their education. Specifically, the study focused on student involvement in selecting the schools they attend and in creating school rules and disciplinary measures. The findings revealed that when students are actively engaged in such critical decisions, they develop greater motivation, a sense of ownership, and a stronger commitment to adhere to rules. This engagement also fosters a personal and collective drive toward achieving academic goals, ultimately leading to improved academic performance.

Oni and Adetoro (2015) conducted a comparative analysis across 12 universities in South-West Nigeria to assess the effectiveness of student involvement in university leadership and decision-making. Their findings revealed a significant positive relationship between student participation in decision-making processes and leadership effectiveness. The study concluded that inclusive decision-making practices contribute to improved teaching and learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of student engagement in governance structures. A study by Teshome and Kebede (2022) explored the perspectives of student representatives at Addis Ababa University regarding their participation in institutional decision-making. The research identified various models of student participation, including

democratic political and collegiate models, and found that meaningful student involvement positively influenced academic-related decisions. However, challenges such as information gaps and role confusion were noted, suggesting the need for clearer frameworks to enhance student participation's impact on academic performance.

Difoni et al. (2024) examined the decisive role of school administrators in promoting equity and inclusion for students with disabilities in Nigerian public secondary schools. The study emphasized that administrators who implement inclusive decision-making practices—such as aligning policies with inclusive legislation and engaging communities—significantly enhance the academic performance of students with special needs. The research underscores the critical impact of leadership in fostering inclusive educational environments.

Although existing studies have shown that instructional supervision and student involvement in decision-making can enhance academic performance, there is a lack of research specifically examining how administrative strategies—such as instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making—affect students' academic performance in Special Education Centres within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. This study seeks to fill that gap and contribute to the existing body of knowledge.

Methodology

The study adopted correlation design. The research area is Ogoja Local Government Area, one of the 18 local government areas in Cross River State, Nigeria. Population of the study was 123 special education students and school administrators across 14 special education centres located in the Ogoja Education Zone, which comprises five Local Government Areas: Obanliku, Bekwarra, Obudu, Ogoja, and Yala. The census method was employed to include all schools and students in the study population. The reason was because the researchers consider the population not too large to be studied completely. Data were collected using a 15-item instrument titled "Administrative Strategies and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (ASSAPQ)." The questionnaires were structured on a four-point modified Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) and these responses were scored 1,2,3,4, as their weights. The questionnaire was face and content validated by three research experts from the department of Educational Management, and from Measurement and Evaluation, faculty of Educational Foundation Studies, University of Calabar. To establish the reliability of the research instrument, a trial test was first carried out on 50 students selected from three special education centres in Ikom Education Zone which was outside the study area. The reliability was determined through Cronbach alpha technique and the index ranges between .79 to .82. Statistically, the instruments were considered reliable for data collection. The researchers and five trained research assistants engaged in the administration of the questionnaire. The copies of the questionnaire were administered and after some time, the researchers retrieved them back for data analysis. The questionnaire recorded 100% return rate. The research questions were analyzed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while the null hypotheses were tested using Simple Linear Regression at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research questions one

What is the relationship between instructional supervision and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State? This question was answered with Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) and the answer is in table 1. Table 1 presented the mean and standard deviations which indicated the response rate of the respondents to the question concerning the relationship between instructional supervision and students' academic performance. The standard deviations obtained in all the sub-scales were moderate. This indicated that the respondents were consistent in the pattern of their responses to the items of the research instrument. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients of .52 between instructional supervision and students' academic performance implied that there was a positive statistical relationship between instructional supervision

and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between instructional supervision **and** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State (N=123)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Decision
Instructional supervision	19.81	3.04		
Students' academic performance	19.54	2.88	.52*	Positive Relationship

*Significant at p<.05 df=121

Research question two

What is the relationship between inclusive decision-making and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State? This question was answered with Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) and the answer is in table 2. Table 2 presented the mean and standard deviations which indicated the response rate of the respondents to the question concerning the relationship between inclusive decision-making and students' academic performance. The standard deviations obtained in all the sub-scales were moderate. This indicated that the respondents were consistent in the pattern of their responses to the items of the research instrument. Furthermore, the correlation coefficients of .54 between inclusive decision-making and students' academic performance implied that there was a positive statistical relationship between inclusive decision-making and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation on the relationship between instructional supervision and students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State (N=123)

Variables	$\bar{X}$	S.D	R	Decision
Instructional supervision	18.66	4.17		
Students' academic performance	19.54	2.88	.54*	Positive Relationship

*Significant at p<.05 df=121

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis one

Instructional supervision does not have any significantly impact on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The result is presented in Table 3. The result in table 3 showed that instructional supervision has a significant impact on students' academic performance as shown by the simple linear regression coefficient (R) of .521 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .272 obtained. The R^2 (R^2=.272) meant that instructional supervision contributed 27.2% of the total variance in students' academic performance while the remaining percentage score 72.8% was predicted by other external factors outside instructional supervision. This showed that the independent variable (instructional supervision) has significant impact on the dependent variable (students' academic performance), F 45.161, p (.000) <.05. Referring to the coefficients in table 3, the unstandardized coefficient for instructional supervision is .494. This meant that for every point increase in students' academic performance, there is .854 increase in instructional supervision scores from the questionnaire instrument used. Based on this result, the null

hypothesis which stated that Instructional supervision does not have any significantly impact on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, was rejected while the alternate hypothesis accepted.

Table 3

Summary of simple linear regression analysis on the impact of instructional supervision on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

Anova[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	275.210	1	275.210	45.161	.000[b]	Rejected
	Residual	737.375	121	6.094			
	Total	1012.585	122				

*Significant p<.05; R=.521; R^2 =.272; Adj. R^2=.266

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	9.753	1.473		6.622	.000
	Instructional supervision	.494	.073	.521	6.720	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students' academic performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Instructional supervision

Hypothesis two

There is no significant impact of inclusive decision-making **on** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The result is presented in Table 4. The result in table 4 showed that inclusive decision-making has a significant impact on students' academic performance as shown by the simple linear regression coefficient (R) of .554 and a coefficient of determination (R^2) of .272 obtained. The R^2 (R^2=.307) meant that inclusive decision-making contributed 30.7% of the total variance in students' academic performance while the remaining percentage score 69.3% was predicted by other external factors outside inclusive decision-making. This showed that the independent variable (inclusive decision-making) has significant impact on the dependent variable (students' academic performance), F 53.682, p (.000) <.05. Referring to the coefficients in table 4, the unstandardized coefficient for inclusive decision-making is .383. This meant that for every point increase in students' academic performance, there is .854 increase in inclusive decision-making scores from the questionnaire instrument used. Based on this result, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant impact of inclusive decision-making **on** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, was rejected while the alternate hypothesis accepted.

Table 4

Summary of simple linear regression analysis on the impact of inclusive decision-making **on** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State

Anova[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
1	Regression	311.179	1	311.179	53.682	.000[b]	Rejected
	Residual	701.406	121	5.797			
	Total	1012.585	122				

*Significant p<.05; R=.554; R^2 =.307; Adj. R^2=.302

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	12.391	.999		12.401	.000
	Inclusive decision-making	.383	.052	.554	7.327	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Students' academic performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Inclusive decision-making

Discussion of findings

The finding of hypothesis one revealed that instructional supervision **has a significant impact on** students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. This finding is not surprising possibly because school administrators ensures that effective instructional supervision ensures that teaching strategies are continuously improved, curriculum standards are upheld, and teachers receive the necessary support to address the unique learning needs of the special education students. In such centres, where students often require individualized instruction and specialized interventions, consistent supervision helps teachers remain accountable, innovative, and responsive. The implication of this finding is that educational administrators must prioritize and strengthen instructional supervision frameworks in special education institutions, as doing so can directly enhance student outcomes and promote inclusive, quality education for all learners.

The finding corroborates the conclusion of Madukwe et al. (2024) instructional supervision is an important tool for schools as it helps them in ensuring that their vision and mission are achieved by supervising, training, and empowering teachers so that they can create valuable experiences for their students. It is similar to the findings of Awandia (2023) who investigated the influence of teaching practice supervision on student teachers' skills acquisition in government teachers training colleges in South West Region of Cameroon. The findings revealed that supervisors have a positive influence on student teachers' skills acquisition in government teacher training colleges in South West Region of Cameroon.

The finding of hypothesis two revealed that inclusive decision-making has a significant impact on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State. The finding is possibly because inclusive decision-making promotes a sense of shared responsibility, encourages collaboration among stakeholders, and ensures that the unique needs of special education students are adequately addressed. Also, teachers, parents, support staff, and administrators contribute to decisions affecting teaching, learning, and student welfare, which results to more practical, student-centered policies and practices. This collaborative approach helps create a more supportive and responsive learning environment that positively influences academic achievement. The

implication is that school leaders and education authorities should adopt and strengthen inclusive decision-making processes as a strategy to improve educational outcomes, particularly in special education schools where diverse insights are essential for effective planning and intervention.

The finding of this hypothesis agrees with similar findings of Lakkala (2024) emphasizes that meaningful student participation—across psychological, pedagogical, organizational, and socio-political dimensions—is vital for developing a strong sense of agency, which directly contributes to improved academic outcomes. Similarly, Özdemir and Sungur (2018) argue that incorporating inclusive practices in education helps create learning environments that not only accommodate diverse student needs but also celebrate that diversity, ultimately boosting student engagement and academic achievement. Together, these perspectives highlight the importance of inclusive decision-making as a catalyst for enhancing both the learning experience and academic performance of students. It supports Mati et al. (2016) findings that when students are actively engaged in such critical decisions, they develop greater motivation, a sense of ownership, and a stronger commitment to adhere to rules. This engagement also fosters a personal and collective drive toward achieving academic goals, ultimately leading to improved academic performance. The finding also aligns with that of Difoni et al. (2024) who emphasized that administrators who implement inclusive decision-making practices—such as aligning policies with inclusive legislation and engaging communities—significantly enhance the academic performance of students with special needs. The research underscores the critical impact of leadership in fostering inclusive educational environments.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that administrative strategies—specifically instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making—have a significant impact on students' academic performance in Special Education Centres in the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria. Effective supervision of teachers, combined with the active involvement of key stakeholders such as teachers, parents, and support staff in decision-making processes, promotes more informed, responsive, and effective educational practices tailored to the unique needs of learners with special needs. Therefore, fostering a participatory leadership culture within special education settings is essential for enhancing academic success and advancing the goals of inclusive education.

Recommendations

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

1. School administrators should prioritize the implementation of robust instructional supervision frameworks like regular classroom observations, peer coaching, mentoring programs, feedback and appraisal systems, as well as professional development workshops tailored to the needs of special education teachers. These strategies ensure that instructional delivery is continuously monitored and improved, enabling educators to adopt effective teaching methods that cater to the diverse learning needs of students in Special Education Centres.
2. Policymakers should actively involve teachers, parents, and support staff in school governance, as their collaborative input can lead to more effective and context-sensitive educational strategies that enhance learning outcomes for students with special needs.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence that highlights the significant role of instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making in enhancing students' academic performance in Special Education Centres. Specifically, it offers context-specific insights from the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, Nigeria, thereby enriching the discourse on effective administrative strategies in special education. The study underscores the importance of participatory leadership and targeted supervision as key drivers of academic success among learners with special needs, offering a valuable reference for future research, policy formulation, and educational practice in similar contexts.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions

1. The study was conducted solely in Special Education Centres within the Ogoja Education Zone of Cross River State, which may not reflect the experiences or practices in other zones or states. Therefore, future studies should expand the geographical coverage to include multiple education zones or states to enhance the generalizability and comparative relevance of the findings.
2. The study examined only instructional supervision and inclusive decision-making, excluding other administrative factors that could also influence academic performance. Subsequent research should consider a broader range of administrative strategies such as resource allocation, staff motivation, and leadership style, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of factors affecting student performances in special education.

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