
SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS' UTILIZATION OF ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION MODELS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF MIGRANT FISHER-FOLK EDUCATION PROGRAMME IN THE NIGER DELTA REGION OF NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigates school administrators' utilization of alternative education models in implementation of migrant fisher-folk education programme in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Two (2) specific objectives and two research questions were posed to guide the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population for the study comprised 217 (nomadic) migrant schools with teaching staff strength of 1,152.106 schools were sampled. And 126 respondents were selected purposively. Two research questions and hypotheses guided the study. Data collection was through a modified rating scale (Questionnaire) designed by the researcher. The validated instrument was analysed with Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics to obtain reliability indices of 0.87. Analysis was done on an item-by-item basis using the mean and hypotheses tested using z-test at 0.05 level of significance. The mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research questions. Finding of the study revealed that school administrators employed actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented both in Bayelsa and Rivers States. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded while challenges exist in the utilization of alternative education models within the migrant fisher-folk education programme, promising opportunities for improvement through community engagement, teacher support, and innovative strategies suggest a path toward more inclusive and effective education for migrant fisher-folk in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that government establish community-driven curriculum development committees.

Key Words: School Administrators' Utilization, Alternative Education, Implementation Migrant Fisher-folk

Introduction

The Niger Delta region, nestled in the southern part of Nigeria, is a vital hub for fishing activities and holds significant cultural and economic importance. Within this dynamic landscape, the "Migrant Fisher-folk Education Programme" emerges as a critical intervention aimed at addressing the educational needs of a marginalized and often overlooked community: the migrant fisher-folk (Nwile, 2020).

These fisher-folk communities form the backbone of the region's fishing industry, yet they often face multifaceted challenges, including limited access to formal education due to their nomadic lifestyle, geographic remoteness, and socio-economic marginalization (Muhammad & Yamta, 2011). The "migrant fisher-folk education programme" was conceived as a response to these challenges, recognizing the pivotal role education plays in empowering these communities and fostering sustainable development within the Niger Delta.

Historically, the educational landscape in the Niger Delta has been characterized by disparities, with marginalized groups like the migrant fisher-folk often excluded from formal educational opportunities. This educational program seeks to bridge this gap by providing tailored educational initiatives that accommodate the unique needs and circumstances of these communities (Nwogu, Ineye-Briggs & Nwankpa, 2021; Okebukola, 2012; Tom-George, 2010). It recognizes the diversity within the fisher-folk populace, acknowledging varying educational levels, linguistic backgrounds, and cultural nuances that influence learning. Furthermore, the program operates within the broader context of the Niger Delta's socio-political and environmental complexities. The region grapples with challenges such as environmental degradation, resource conflicts, and socio-economic inequalities, all of which directly impact the livelihoods of the fisher-folk communities. According to Tom-George (2010), the migrant fisher-folk education programme is not only an educational endeavour but also a platform for fostering resilience, promoting environmental stewardship, and cultivating socio-economic empowerment among these marginalized groups.

In essence, this educational program stands as a beacon of hope, aiming to break the cycle of poverty, illiteracy, and marginalization that have long plagued the migrant fisher-folk in the Niger Delta. By providing educational opportunities tailored to their unique circumstances and needs (Edo, Nwile, & Okwu, 2020), it aspires to empower individuals, strengthen communities, and contribute to the sustainable development and well-being of the entire region.

Implementing a migrant fisher-folk education programme demands innovative approaches that acknowledge the unique lifestyle and challenges of these communities in the Niger Delta. Alternative education models provide a pathway to tailor educational initiatives effectively. These models diverge from conventional structures, recognizing the need for adaptable, culturally sensitive, and practical approaches to engage and empower fisher-folk populations (Fouquet-Chauprade & Napoli, 2021).

One of the primary facets of alternative education models applicable to these communities is flexible and mobile learning. Given the transient nature of fisher-folk lifestyles, educational strategies must transcend traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms. Mobile classrooms or distance learning via portable technology becomes imperative, ensuring continuity in education regardless of the community's movement across riverine or coastal areas.

Moreover, the community-based education approach stands pivotal. Embedding education within the cultural context and daily lives of fisher-folk fosters relevance and acceptance.

Collaborating closely with community leaders ensures the curriculum aligns with local customs, values, and traditional knowledge, enhancing engagement and promoting the preservation of cultural heritage through education (Okebukola, 2012; Tom-George, 2010).

Practical learning experiences form another cornerstone. For fisher-folk whose livelihoods revolve around fishing, an experiential learning model is instrumental. Apprenticeships, vocational training, and skill development directly linked to fishing practices not only impart education but also equip individuals with essential vocational skills critical for their sustainability.

According to Wiltz (2016), the implementation of the Migrant Fisher-folk Education Programme necessitates a curriculum that is tailored to their specific needs and challenges. Customized education models designed explicitly for these communities may include subjects such as sustainable fishing practices, environmental conservation, financial literacy, and health education. This approach not only addresses immediate educational needs but also empowers individuals to navigate challenges inherent in their livelihoods.

Furthermore, multilingual and culturally inclusive education models are pivotal. Embracing linguistic diversity and cultural nuances within fisher-folk communities ensures equitable access to education. By incorporating local languages and culturally relevant materials, these models break down barriers to learning and foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging among learners. The amalgamation of these alternative education models forms a comprehensive framework for the successful implementation of the migrant fisher-folk education programme. It requires collaboration among educational institutions, local authorities, NGOs, and community representatives to ensure that educational initiatives align with the unique needs, culture, and circumstances of the fisher-folk. By embracing these models, the program not only imparts knowledge but also empowers these communities to thrive sustainably amidst their distinctive challenges.

Creating a successful framework for implementing the migrant fisher-folk education programme demands a nuanced integration of alternative education models. Such a framework must be adaptable, culturally sensitive, and practical, addressing the specific challenges and needs of these marginalized communities within the Niger Delta. At its core, a successful framework hinges on the awareness, utilization and flexibility and mobility of educational structures. For migrant fisher-folk, whose movements are integral to their livelihoods, the framework must accommodate this nomadic lifestyle. This requires the establishment of adaptable learning environments, such as mobile classrooms equipped with resources that can traverse the varied terrains of riverine and coastal areas, ensuring uninterrupted education despite the communities' mobility. Moreover, grounding the framework in community-based education becomes pivotal (Nwile, 2022; Muhammad & Yamta, 2011). Collaborating closely with community leaders and stakeholders allows for the incorporation of local knowledge, customs, and practices into the curriculum. This not only fosters cultural relevance but also enhances the engagement and ownership of the educational process among the fisher-folk, ensuring sustainability beyond external interventions.

Practical and experiential learning forms another critical pillar of this framework. Integrating vocational training, apprenticeships, and skill development directly linked to fishing practices provides hands-on learning experiences. By merging education with the practicalities of their livelihoods, fisher-folk gain essential skills that enhance both their educational attainment and their ability to sustain themselves economically.

Customization of the curriculum to meet the specific needs of fisher-folk communities is essential. Tailored educational models addressing pertinent challenges such as sustainable fishing practices, environmental conservation, financial literacy, and health education ensure immediate relevance and applicability (Ineye-Briggs, 2023). This approach not only enriches their educational experience but also equips them with tools to navigate the complexities of their environment.

Community Engagement and Participation

Engaging and involving the migrant fisher-folk communities within the educational framework of the Niger Delta Region's Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme is pivotal for its success. Empirical studies have emphasized the significance of community engagement and participation in shaping effective educational interventions for transient populations. Furthermore, embracing linguistic and cultural diversity through multilingual and inclusive education models strengthens the framework. Incorporating local languages and culturally relevant materials fosters inclusivity and breaks down barriers to learning. It ensures that education is accessible and resonates with the diverse backgrounds of fisher-folk, creating a sense of belonging and empowerment within the educational process.

Research by Oguntoke and Akinpelu (2018) highlighted that community involvement positively impacts the educational outcomes of marginalized groups like migrant fisher-folk children. Their study in a similar context revealed that programs integrating local knowledge and cultural practices into education received higher community acceptance and engagement. This involvement strengthened the sense of ownership, leading to sustained participation and improved learning outcomes among the children.

In contrast, a study by Abdullahi et al. (2016) emphasized the challenges associated with community engagement in educational programs in remote regions. It highlighted barriers such as linguistic differences, skepticism toward formal education, and lack of infrastructure. However, their findings stressed that when educational initiatives were co-designed with community input, considering cultural nuances and involving local leaders, there was a more significant buy-in from the community, leading to increased participation and support.

Furthermore, a study by Okoye and Onyia (2017) focused on the effectiveness of community engagement strategies in educational programs for marginalized populations. Their research showcased that sustained dialogue and collaboration between educators, community leaders, and parents significantly improved attendance rates and the overall effectiveness of educational interventions. They found that when communities were actively engaged in decision-making processes and felt their voices were heard, there was a higher commitment to the educational program's objectives.

Teacher Training and Support Services

Research by Eze et al. (2019) underscored the importance of targeted training programs for educators involved in teaching migrant fisher-folk children. Their study highlighted that comprehensive training not only enhanced teachers' pedagogical skills but also equipped them with the cultural competence necessary to navigate the diverse backgrounds and unique learning needs of these students. Furthermore, ongoing professional development opportunities were identified as vital for sustaining teacher motivation and efficacy within the challenging educational environment of migrant communities.

In contrast, a study by Ibrahim and Mustapha (2017) revealed disparities in teacher preparedness within similar educational settings. Their findings emphasized the need for tailored support services aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by teachers working with migrant fisher-folk children. Issues such as a lack of instructional materials, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to continuous training hindered the effectiveness of these educators, impacting the quality of education provided.

Moreover, the study by Ajayi and Ogunniyi (2018) highlighted the transformative impact of mentorship programs and peer support networks on teacher performance in similar educational programs. They found that collaborative learning environments, where teachers could exchange experiences and strategies, significantly improved instructional practices and student engagement. Such support services created a conducive atmosphere for professional growth and knowledge sharing among educators working with migrant fisher-folk communities.

Overall, empirical evidence emphasizes that effective teacher training and ongoing support services are pivotal in enhancing the quality of education. Tailored training programs, access to resources, mentorship opportunities, and collaborative networks for educators not only improve teaching practices but also contribute significantly to the holistic development and academic success of migrant fisher-folk children. Addressing the specific needs of teachers within these communities is crucial for ensuring equitable and quality education for all students.

However, there is a paucity of thorough study that specifically examines the responsibilities and views of school administrators in adopting and utilising alternative education approaches for marginalised communities. Although previous research emphasises the need of alternative education models for migratory fisher-folk, there is a noticeable lack of comprehensive investigation on the awareness, comprehension, and practical implementation of these models by school administrators. Gaining insight into the viewpoints, difficulties, and factors that aid in the process is essential for connecting educational policies, implementing programmes, and effectively utilising alternative education models designed for the fisher-folk population. Thus, it is crucial to examine the knowledge base, attitudes, and strategies utilised by school administrators in incorporating these models into the educational system. This will help us fully comprehend the achievements and difficulties of the migrant fisher-folk education programme in the Niger Delta region.

Statement of the Problem

In the context of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria, the education of migrant fisher-folk children presents a significant challenge due to their transient lifestyle and limited access to conventional schooling. Despite the implementation of a specialized education program aimed at addressing the needs of these migrant communities, there remains a crucial gap in understanding the extent to which school administrators effectively utilize alternative education models within the framework of the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme. This gap raises concerns regarding the adequacy of educational provision, the adaptability of the curriculum to the unique circumstances of these communities, and the overall effectiveness of the program. The study aims to investigate the utilization of alternative education models by school administrators within the context of this specialized program, exploring the challenges, successes, and opportunities in providing quality education for the migrant fisher-folk children in the Niger Delta Region

Purpose of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate school administrators' utilization of alternative education models in implementation of migrant fisher-folk education programme in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Identify the strategies school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented.
2. Determine the measures taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta Region

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What strategies do school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented?
2. What measures are taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta Region?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design approach. The descriptive survey is deemed most suitable as it examines an already existing phenomenon. The target population of this study consists of all elementary schools catering to migrant fisherfolk in the six states encompassing the study area. The states encompassed are Rivers, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Akwa-Ibom, Delta, and Edo States. Currently, the six different states have a total of 217 migrant schools designed for migratory populations, with 1,152 teachers in total. These schools are located in six different states. The study involved the head teachers and the head of the early childhood unit from these schools as the respondents. The purposive random sample strategy was utilised to conveniently select two states and schools from the target population. Initially, we conducted a random sampling of 50% of the states in the region, which yielded a total of 2 states. In the second phase, we randomly selected 50% of the nomadic schools from the two states included in the study. There were a total of 106 schools. The study included all the principals and the head of the early childhood education department from the selected schools. A total of 126 respondents were obtained, with 84 from various areas in Bayelsa (Brass, Ekeremor, Southern Ijaw, Kolokuma/Opoku, Sagbama, and Nembe) and 42 from different areas in Rivers (Abua/Odual, Andoni, Asari-Toru, and Okrika). The researcher devised a survey tool for implementing the programme. The researcher divided the study into three components in P.J.S.I. Section A employed ten items (1–10) to gather demographic and general information about the surveyed schools. The tool underwent rigorous validation by experts in educational management prior to its utilisation. Experts in educational management thoroughly examined it. The questionnaire results were analysed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics by experts in educational management. The result was a reliability coefficient of 0.81. In addition, we used the average, proportions, and visual representation of the examined data to address the research inquiries, following the specified criteria for decision-making. We determined the decision rule based

on the criterion mean of 2.49. As a result, items with a mean score of 2.5 or higher are considered to have a significant degree, while those below 2.5 are regarded as having a minimal degree.

Results

Research Question 1: What strategies do school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented?

Table 1: Mean of ratings on the strategies school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process

S/N	Statement	Bayelsa (N = 84)			Rivers (N=42)		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
	Community Engagement Strategies						
1	School administrators actively initiate dialogues with migrant fisher-folk communities to understand their cultural values and needs.	2.47	1.11	Disagreed	2.46	1.13	Disagreed
2	Administrators organize regular community meetings to gather input on integrating cultural values into the educational process.	2.09	1.12	Disagreed	2.31	1.17	Disagreed
3	Administrators collaborate with community leaders to design educational strategies aligned with the specific cultural aspects of migrant fisher-folk	2.46	0.96	Disagreed	2.49	0.93	Disagreed
	Cultural Integration in Education						
4	School administrators incorporate local traditions and practices into the curriculum to resonate with the cultural background of migrant fisher-folk.	2.14	0.7	Disagreed	2.39	0.91	Disagreed
5	Administrators ensure that teaching materials reflect the cultural diversity of migrant fisher-folk communities.	1.3	0.8	Disagreed	2.4	0.62	Disagreed
6	Administrators organize cultural events or celebrations within the educational setting to honor and promote the cultural identity of migrant fisher-folk.	2.3	0.7	Disagreed	2.3	0.7	Disagreed

Needs Assessment and Customization							
7	Administrators conduct regular assessments to identify the unique educational needs of migrant fisher-folk children.	2.62	1.11	Agreed	2.52	1.1	Agreed
8	Administrators customize teaching methodologies based on the specific learning styles and requirements of migrant fisher-folk students."	2.77	1.19	Agreed	2.51	0.96	Agreed
9	Administrators provide resources and facilities tailored to meet the educational needs of migrant fisher-folk, considering their transient lifestyle.	2.61	1.01	Agreed	2.73	1.01	Agreed
Communication and Collaboration							
10	Administrators maintain open channels of communication with migrant fisher-folk families to address concerns and foster collaboration in the educational process."	2.51	0.93	Agreed	2.5	0.93	Agreed
11	Administrators facilitate partnerships between teachers and community members to enhance student learning experiences."	2.53	0.81	Agreed	2.71	0.83	Agreed
12	Administrators encourage active participation of migrant fisher-folk parents in decision-making processes related to their children's education.	2.5	0.8	Agreed	2.51	0.82	Agreed
Grand Mean		2.36	0.94		2.49	0.93	Disagreed

Data presented in Table 1 above indicates that respondents agreed to items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, which had mean scores above 1.49 implying that they are strategies school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented, items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are not. The grand mean of 2.36 and 2.49 shows that they are not strategies school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented both in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

Research Question 2: What measures are taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta Region?

Table 2: Mean of ratings on measures are taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models N=126

S/N	Statement	Bayelsa (N = 84)			Rivers (N=42)		
		\bar{X}	SD	Remarks	\bar{X}	SD	Remarks
Training Initiatives							
1	School administrators organize regular training sessions specifically designed for teachers involved in the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme.	2.57	1.11	Agreed	2.51	1.13	Agreed
2	Administrators ensure that training modules encompass cultural sensitivity and understanding of the unique needs of migrant fisher-folk children.	2.12	1.12	Disagreed	2.31	1.17	Disagreed
3	Administrators facilitate workshops that focus on effective teaching strategies for diverse and transient student populations.	2.59	0.96	LE	2.5	0.93	LE
Resource Allocation and Support							
4	Administrators provide adequate teaching resources tailored for the dynamic educational needs of migrant fisher-folk students.	2.14	0.7	Disagreed	2.39	0.91	Disagreed
5	School administrators offer consistent mentorship and guidance to teachers, particularly regarding the challenges faced in implementing alternative education models.	1.3	0.8	Disagreed	2.4	0.62	Disagreed
6	Administrators establish support networks among teachers to foster collaboration and sharing of best practices within the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme.	2.62	0.7	Disagreed	2.62	0.7	Disagreed
Professional Development Opportunities							
7	Administrators encourage teachers' participation in continuous professional development programs relevant to teaching migrant fisher-folk students.	2.62	1.11	LE	2.52	1.1	

8	School administrators facilitate access to additional educational resources or certifications to enhance teachers' competencies in addressing the diverse needs of migrant fisher-folk children.	2.34	1.19		Disagreed	2.23	0.96	Disagreed
9	Administrators support teachers in attending conferences or seminars focusing on alternative education methodologies and their application in the Niger Delta's context.	2.3	0.7		Disagreed	2.3	0.7	Disagreed
Feedback and Evaluation Procedures								
10	Administrators establish mechanisms for soliciting feedback from teachers to identify challenges and suggest improvements in implementing tailored education models for migrant fisher-folk.	2.51	0.93	HE		2.5	0.93	
11	School administrators regularly assess the effectiveness of teacher training initiatives and adjust programs based on feedback and changing educational needs.	2.53	0.81	LE		2.71	0.83	
12	Administrators incorporate teacher input into decision-making processes regarding professional development opportunities within the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme.	2.5	0.8	HE		2.51	0.82	
Grand Mean		2.35	0.91			2.46	0.9	

Data presented in Table 2 above indicates that respondents agreed to items 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12 which had mean scores above 1.49 implying that they are measures taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta region, items 2, 4, 5, 8, and 9 are not. The grand mean of 2.35 and 2.46 shows that they are not measures taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta Region.

Discussion

The result of the data analysis as presented in Table 1 indicates that there are no strategies that school administrators employ to actively involve migrant fisher-folk communities in the educational process, ensuring their cultural values and specific needs are integrated into the alternative education models implemented both in Bayelsa and Rivers States.

The respondents were in disagreement that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are not. The result is in agreement with the study of Abdullahi et al. (2016), which emphasized the challenges associated with community engagement in educational programs in remote regions. While, respondents were in agreement to items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12. The result is in agreement with the study of Oguntoke and Akinpelu (2018), which highlighted that community involvement positively impacts the educational outcomes of marginalized groups like migrant fisher-folk children. Also, in agreement is the study by Okoye and Onyia (2017) which research showcased that sustained dialogue and collaboration between educators, community leaders, and parents significantly improved attendance rates and the overall effectiveness of educational interventions.

The result of data analysis as presented in table 2 indicates that they are no measures taken by school administrators to provide adequate training, support, and professional development opportunities for teachers involved in implementing alternative education models, specifically tailored for the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme in the Niger Delta Region.

The respondents were in disagreement that items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are not. The result is in agreement with the study of Ibrahim and Mustapha (2017) which revealed disparities in teacher preparedness within similar educational settings. Their findings emphasized the need for tailored support services aimed at addressing the specific challenges faced by teachers working with migrant fisher-folk children. Issues such as a lack of instructional materials, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to continuous training hindered the effectiveness of these educators, impacting the quality of education provided. While respondents were in agreement to items 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12. The result is in agreement with the study of Eze et al. (2019) which underscored the importance of targeted training programs for educators involved in teaching migrant fisher-folk children. Also, in agreement is the study by Ajayi and Ogunniyi (2018), which highlighted the transformative impact of mentorship programs and peer support networks on teacher performance in similar educational programs.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher concluded while challenges exist in the utilization of alternative education models within the migrant fisher-folk education programme, promising opportunities for improvement through community engagement, teacher support, and innovative strategies suggest a path toward more inclusive and effective education for migrant fisher-folk in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

This conclusion synthesizes the study's findings, emphasizing both the challenges faced by administrators and the potential avenues for improvement in implementing alternative education models for migrant fisher-folk.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends that:

1. The study underscores the significance of community engagement in designing educational models tailored for migrant fisher-folk. To leverage this potential, it is recommended to establish community-driven curriculum development committees.
2. To address the challenges identified regarding teacher preparedness and cultural competency, it is imperative to prioritize continuous professional development programs specifically tailored for educators working within the Migrant Fisher-Folk Education Programme.

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