

## **Utilization Of Diagnostic And Formative Assessment Techniques For Learners With Special Needs In Inclusive Public Junior Secondary Schools In Rivers State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

The study investigated utilization of diagnostic and formative assessment techniques for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. Two research questions and the corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Descriptive research design was adopted. Population of the study was 824 teachers in selected public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State for 2020/2021 academic session. Sample was 300 teachers (150 males and 150 females) selected from 4 schools with record of practicing inclusive educational setting using simple random sampling technique. Assessment Techniques Usage for Learners with Special Needs Questionnaire” (ATULSNQ) developed by the researchers was used for data collection. The face and content validity of the instrument was two experts in Special Education and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. Test-retest method was used to obtain the reliability coefficient of 0.79. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at the 0.05 level of significance. Results showed that both diagnostic and formative assessment techniques are used by teachers for learners with special needs in inclusive public junior secondary schools in Rivers State. It was recommended that: Diagnostic assessment should be done covering the three domains of learning- affective, psychomotor and cognitive, and that formal assessment should be done continuously starting from the learners’ attributes and objective to his/her leaning ability.

**Keywords:** Utilization, Diagnostic assessment, Formal assessment, Inclusive Education, Special Needs

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## **Introduction**

Schools are pillars for overall socio-economic and technological development and advancement of societies. Pepple and Ndimele (2019) described school as an organized place where people (students or pupils) go to learn and acquire relevant skills, knowledge, values in order to be useful or functional members of the modern society. However, the peculiarity of citizens in the society demands inclusiveness in the provision of schools and learning opportunities. Inclusive education is such that provides all students with access to flexible learning choices and effective paths for achieving educational goals in spaces where they experience a sense of belonging. In an inclusive education environment, all children, regardless of ability or disability, learn together in the same age-appropriate classroom. The advocacy for inclusive education setting or environment is based on the understanding that all children and families are valued equally and deserve access to the same quality education environment and opportunities to learning. In 2006, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of People with Disability granted every child the right to be and to study in a regular school environment, and compelled governments at all levels to remove obstacles against inclusive education, and since then, many European countries have changed their legislation and practice.

However, despite the longstanding or more recent incentives, many children remain either excluded from adequate educational opportunities or are being raised in separate educational environments (Galevska, & Pesic, 2018). The number of children that are being labelled as having "Special Educational Needs (SEN)" seems to be alarming particularly children from ethnic minorities or less favorable socio-economic circumstances with the risk of underachieving and falling out of the educational system early. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development observed that one in five children has serious difficulties with reading, writing and mathematics in primary school (Feruzi, & Yang, 2019).

In the environment where inclusive education is professed, assessment of learners with some kinds of learning or developmental problem prior to and during their schooling is a major problem. In many countries where inclusive education is not yet a right or not common practice (e.g. Belgium, Romania, Hungary, the Netherlands), access to regular schooling still depends on sufficiently high results on cognitive, behavioral, language and achievement tests. Nigeria, alongside some other African countries was a party and signatory to the Salamanca declaration, and pledged to put in place the necessary apparatus and mechanisms needed for effective implementation of Inclusive Education.

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2013) stated that persons with special needs shall be provided with inclusive education services in schools which normal persons attend, in age appropriate general education classes directly supervised by general teachers. The according to the National Policy on Education, the aims of Special Needs Education are to provide access to education for all persons, in an inclusive setting and also to equalize educational opportunities for all persons irrespective of their genetic composition, social, physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities. This implies that Nigeria as a Nation is fully committed to the adoption of inclusive education, as a measure toward equalizing the educational opportunities for all irrespective of one's status. It is as a result of this commitment that prompted the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) to lay emphasis

on the effective implementation of the inclusive education by embarking on training and re-training of all categories of teachers in the regular schools.

The assessment of learners with special needs is very critical in an inclusive learning environment. Assessment is an important ingredient in the whole process of inclusive education. Assessment is a technique that is not only used by a teacher in the classroom to make decisions about students' learning outcomes or next steps in the pupils' learning programme, it is also the process through which the teachers, evaluator or researcher gets feedback about the quality of teaching and learning, and for the purpose of selection, placement, monitoring of standards and diagnosis of students as well as administrative functions/ decision making. Different forms of assessment can be used for pupils' placement, provision and support allocations. Observation, screening, referral, evaluation, identification, and individualized education plans relate to the assessment process. Often, assessment is utilized for placement and detection of what the child knows or does not know. In most cases, they are curriculum based on assessment which is frequent, systematic, and measured learned tasks (Beattie, et. al., 2010).

However, in Nigeria, where inclusive education is a right, traditional assessment may contribute to educational underachievement, when low scorers, given a diagnostic label, carry an assumption of low potential, entailing a risk of creating low educational expectations, a self-fulfilling prophecy or a Pygmalion effect. Based on the foregoing, this study investigates into the assessment practice for learners with special needs in an inclusive setting in government schools in Rivers State.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Inclusive education is seen as the most suitable and desirable educational system, that is capable of solving the problems of persons with special needs/disabilities. It is unfortunate that after many years of the declaration and pledge, Nigeria is still far from being tagged a country where Inclusive education is being practiced. This fact is not far-fetched going by what is obtainable in government owned regular schools Nigeria and Rivers State in particular considering the level of proper implementation of this unique and wonderful educational idea. The researchers' observation as classroom teachers for several years, tend to show that a few teachers in some government schools in Rivers State have positive dispositions, while majority have negative dispositions toward the assessment of learners with special needs/disabilities, which could be attributed to lack the knowledge about the uses or benefits of effective assessment of the learners. It is on this backdrop that this study is considered imperative, as it hopes to unravel the extent to which teachers utilize selected assessment techniques for learners with special needs in public schools in Rivers State.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

The main aim of the study was to investigate how teacher use assessment techniques for learners with special needs in an inclusive setting in public schools in Rivers State. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the extent to which teachers use diagnostic assessment technique for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.
2. Examine the extent to which teachers use formative assessment technique for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

## Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do teachers use diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State?
2. To what extent do teachers use formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State?

## Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

## Conceptual Review

### Inclusive and Inclusive Education

Inclusion has been defined and described differently by different authors in the area of special education. Deinner (2009) stated that mainstreaming; integration and inclusion are interchangeably used by some. Deinner went further to indicate that there are fundamental differences in each of them. The author opines that, in mainstreaming, there is an already existing programme and the children with special needs who were not originally part of the programme are being added to those in the programme with minimal support. Integration is an interaction between two groups of children with adequate support so that all children can participate. It is thus an opportunity for children with special needs to participate in academic, physical, or social activities with their non-disabled peers.

The author emphasized that inclusion as a latest concept appears to have taken care of most of the criticisms of the earlier concepts. For her, inclusion means that all children, regardless of their developmental level or disability, are always included in whatever setting is appropriate and available to other children of their age. Taken this way, inclusive education would afford every child the opportunity to interact and learn from one another and hence there is speedy adjustment and elimination of negative labeling. It is also the view of Ozoji, (2003) that inclusive education is a transverse issue cutting across all education initiatives right from early childhood through primary, vocational, adult, teacher's education to curriculum developments. It is also to be found in spheres related to cultural and social developments.

Inclusive education therefore has to do with giving education to both non disable and the disable in the same school and class with support and attention to realize the goal of learning. Inclusive education, as viewed by Okobah (2005) is that which provides specially designed instruction and supports for students with special needs in the context of regular education system". This definition is so much concerned with the setting for a child provided he/she is given education in the regular education setting. It is a process of allowing all children the opportunity to fully participate in regular classroom activities regardless of disability, race or other characteristics (Encarta, 2006). Encarta explained that in a process known as inclusion, educators provide a variety of classroom activities and experience designed so that all students ... can attend conventional schools. It also noted that inclusion is a controversial method.

Inclusive education assessed from this viewpoint conveys the notion that it is an approach to providing education for children with special needs in regular schools.

Ozaji (2003) pointed out that inclusive education is both a process and a method of education delivery in special needs education and viewed also as a placement option. The idea of placement is based on the principle of least restrictive alternative of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). This act mandates that children with special needs be educated in a setting that least restrictive. This setting is operationalized as the regular classroom. Most restrictive placements constrict or exclude the learner from the mainstream either permanently or temporarily. Such settings include half-day placement in regular classroom and in special education resource rooms, special education classroom within regular schools, separate school for children with special needs, home bound or hospital educational settings/programmes. Inclusive education is also viewed in some quarters as the goal of special education which is an unfortunate fallacy. This belief is so held sometimes directly as if it is what special needs education should pursue in the education of children with special needs. For instance, the 2004 National Policy on Education states that “pursuing a programme of inclusiveness and access in education” is one of the aims of objectives of special education. Sometimes, this belief is implied from the volume of publications on inclusive education that what education ought to do is to pursue the programme of inclusive education for the children.

Kavale and Mostert (2003) observed that inclusive education that is, participating exclusively in the general education classroom using the general education curriculum is not a goal of special needs education. If this should be the goal of special needs education, what becomes of those who necessarily must receive their education other than through regular school setting., The literature and practice of special needs education still recognize the relevance of most restrictive environments such as hospital settings when the need warrant their use. Rather than see inclusive education as a goal, it should be captured as an approach through which some children with special needs can be educated.

### **Inclusive Classroom Setting**

Inclusive classroom is a classroom where teachers and learners interact to achieve individual learner's educational goals (Muhammed & Musa, 2005). Inclusive classroom is defined as a learning environment where learners participate in the classroom activities through the guidance of a teacher (Ndoh, 2008). Inclusive classroom is a learning place in which all available resources are collaboratively utilized to meet the educational needs and challenges of all children who reside in its attendant area (Ademokoya & Oyewumi, 2001). Chukuka (2006) described inclusive classroom as the learning environment that offers every member of the society an equal opportunity to acquire basic education in the regular neighborhood school environment. Teachers should therefore exhibit instructional skills such as assessment skills, communication skills, management skill and motivational skills to learner in inclusive classroom for effective teaching. Inclusive classroom in the context of this present study is a learning place in which all available resources are collaboratively utilized to meet the educational needs and challenges of all primary school children.

### **Special Needs Education**

Special education is education within general education designed to render specialized services directed towards meeting the. Individual needs of exceptional persons

(Okeke, 2001). In Nigeria, special education is not new but dates back to the sixteenth century. According to him, special education developed with the culture of the people. But special education in its modern (formal) form did not begin until early 1950s when the missionaries and other voluntary agencies started to arrive in the country. The following decade witnessed the establishment of many special schools.

Ozaji (2003) observed that right from the beginning, the partnership between voluntary agencies and the government formed the basis for formal form of special education. This is because the government allowed the agencies the free hands to determine and establish special schools; approved schemes meant for special education, grant-aided the agencies and provided other forms of moral support. On 1st October 1974, Major General Gowon declared during his broadcast, the interest of the government in providing education and care for the handicapped. Following this declaration, a number of developments evolved and one of which is the devotion of a whole section of the National Policy on Education (section 8) to special education.

Special educators are teachers who teach in persons with special needs. Special educator is a teacher who educates students with special needs in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs (Nisret, 2010). Special educator is a teacher who helps learners with special needs achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and their community (Parow, 2012). Herit (2009) opined that special educators are teachers that educate exceptional children and adult to enable them benefit maximally from the educational programmes planned for them. These teachers are trained in such way that they use signs to help the special need children. In the context of this study therefore, special educator is a trained person who provides, directs, and guides the activities and materials in order to promote learning of special need children.

Special education refers to all the educational programmes designed for those who by the reason of significant deviation from the majority of the children cannot benefit from regular school programme. The latest edition of National Policy on Education (2013) described special education as "a formal special educational training given to; disabled, disadvantaged and gifted and talented adults and children. Special programmes include early intervention programme, education programme, vocational training programme, gifted education programme, homebound programme and hospital instructional programme (Ozaji 2003)

The importance, which the government attaches to special education, is clearly seen in the aims/objectives of special Education (NFE 2004, section 10) as follows;

- i. To give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- ii. To provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.
- iii. To provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented children to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.
- iv. To design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all beneficiaries.

The policy also stated among others that all necessary facilities that would ensure access to education inclusive education, regular census, special equipment and materials, training and retraining of personnel, ideal teacher/pupil ration in special schools, funds and conducive physical environment should be provided. In their study, Unachukwu et al. (2009) discovered that: only 24.6 percent of the head teachers have heard of inclusive education, most of the categories of students for inclusive education are not found in the schools, and that the personnel needed for inclusive education in the primary schools in Nigeria are not available. Unachukwu et al. (2009) also noted that most of the primary school environments are found to be friendly for inclusive education in Nigeria, and necessary assistive technologies, hence they reiterated the need for head teachers to be exposed to the area of special education through the studies in schools, professional training and workshops.

### **Assessment of Learners with Special Needs**

Ndimele and Eremie (2019) viewed assessment as the process of finding out an individual's ability or capacity to carry out a given task or instruction within a given time frame. Assessment of student learning is defined as process by which we ascertain through data collection if students have learned the skills, content, and habits of mind that will make them successful; if students are not learning, decide on changes in the curriculum or teaching strategy to improve learning (Dwyer, 2008). Checking and assessing students' achievements are almost indivisible from one another. These are two types of activities that always run in the same order: each checking ends with some evaluation - each evaluation is preceded by a check. There is almost no check for itself, nor can anything be evaluated without first checking. There are several types of checking and evaluation according to the purpose and timing of the performance:

- i. **Diagnostic Assessment:** One type of diagnostic check is done at the beginning of the school year. It is a check and assessment of the quality of knowledge from the previous education which is considered to be the necessary basis on which new knowledge from a certain field will be upgraded. This also includes entrance exams and qualifying exams. Diagnostic testing is not related only to the beginning of the school year. It is also performed during the year - before the implementation of each new stage of learning.
- ii. **Formative Assessment:** Formal testing/formative assessment in the true sense of the word should be understood as a continuous process of monitoring and checking (controlling) the performance of students' achievements in teaching, in order to collect data for evaluating them. Formative assessment was introduced as an ongoing process of evaluating students' learning, improve the curriculum content delivery and to provide feedback for improvement of instruction and learning outcomes in school setting. Formal assessment and verification must be carried out continuously so that it can also intervene over the course of the event process. Formal checking starts from the individual attributes (subjective and objective) of each student, and therefore teaching must be adapted to those possibilities. Formal checking does not end with an assessment, especially with an officially summative assessment and registration of the numeric grade. Formative assessment can help to reveal a person's ability.
- iii. **Summative Assessment:** Summative assessment is carried out at the end of certain stages or periods of the teaching process, such as so-called classification periods, such as semester or end of the school year. The purpose of this checking and assessment is to fully understand the results of the students, i.e. summarizing the

achievements and assessing their quality. Depending on when and to what purpose the summative check is carried out, one can speak of the following types:

- a. Micro-summary checks and evaluations;
- b. Formal stage micro-summary checks and evaluations;
- c. Final checks and evaluations.

Summative assessment is bound to administrative decisions and assigning grades to the tests. Summative assessment is intended to summarize students' attainment at a particular time, whereas formative assessment is intended to promote further improvement of students' attainment (Crooks, 2001).

Checking and assessment performed by teachers themselves who teach at school is called internal checking and assessment. It is a regular and dominant practice present in all countries. Internal checking and assessment has a number of good sides and advantages apart from external checking and evaluation. Above all, it is continuous and is performed as an integral part of the teaching process. It is a check and assessment performed by outsiders (experts, supervisors, and inspectors). As a rule, it is performed at the end of the school year and has the character of final summative checking and assessment. However, it can be performed at any time of the school year depending on the purpose of the checking (Popovski, 2005).

### **Methodology**

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 824 teachers in selected public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State as obtained from the Rivers State Universal Basic Education Board (UBE, 2022) for 2020/2021 academic session. The sample of the study was 300 teachers from six randomly selected public junior secondary schools in Port Harcourt Metropolis of Rivers State. The selected schools are those with record of practicing inclusive learning or educational setting. In selecting the respondents, simple random sampling technique was adopted. An instrument titled: "Assessment Techniques Usage for Learners with Special Needs Questionnaire" (ATULSNQ) was developed by the researchers for data collection. The instrument was prepared on a four point responses scale ranging from Very High Extent (4 points) to Very Low Extent (1 point) with the mean criterion of 2.5. The face and content validity of the instrument was two experts in Special Education and Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Psychology, Guidance and Counselling, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt. The experts checked the quality and relevance, appropriateness, clarity and sufficiency of the items of the instrument and made moderations which formed the basis for the final print out of the instrument. For the reliability coefficient of the instrument, test-retest method was adopted. First, 20 copies of the instrument were administered to 20 respondents who did not partake in the main study. After two weeks, the instrument was re-administered to the same respondents and the two set of scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation which yield the reliability coefficient of 0.79. Mean was used to answer the research questions, while the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistic at the 0.05 level of significance with the aid of SPSS Version 26.

### **Result and Analysis**

**Research Questions 1:** To what extent do teachers' use diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State?



**Table 1: Mean scores of teachers on the use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State**

S/N	Statements	Male Teachers (n = 150)			Male Teachers (n= 150)		
		Mean	SD	Remarks	Mean	SD	Remarks
1.	Teachers use diagnostic assessment to ascertain learners' previous knowledge	2.91	0.98	High Extent	2.86	0.89	High Extent
2.	Teachers use diagnostic assessment to show which student have low score compared to grade-level benchmarks	2.83	0.79	High Extent	2.74	0.71	High Extent
3.	Teachers use diagnostic assessment to provide information about students' classroom behaviours	2.98	0.90	High Extent	2.88	0.97	High Extent
4.	Teachers use diagnostic assessment to provide information about students' performance in classroom assignment	2.74	0.86	High Extent	2.84	0.93	High Extent
5.	Teachers use diagnostic assessment to provide in-depth details about students' skills in specific domain	2.82	0.72	High Extent	2.86	0.78	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>		<b>2.86</b>		<b>High Extent</b>	<b>2.84</b>		<b>High Extent</b>

**Source: Field Data, 2022**

**Criterion Mean = 2.50**

Table 1 presents the mean scores of teachers on the use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. Data in Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of the respondents (teachers) on all the five items (items 1 to 5) are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50 and are all remarked as high extent. This indicates that, to a high extent, teachers use diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

**Research Questions 2:** To what extent do teachers' use formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State?

**Table 2: Mean scores of teachers on the use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State**

S/N	Statements	Male Teachers (n = 150)		Remarks	Male Teachers (n = 150)		Remarks
		Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
6.	Teachers use formative assessment to support goals setting within classroom curriculum	2.86	0.95	High Extent	2.77	0.94	High Extent
7.	Teachers use formative assessment to provide answers to questions about students learning	2.78	0.78	High Extent	2.84	0.99	High Extent
8.	Teachers use formative assessment to reflect on the goals and intention of the teachers and students	2.76	0.70	High Extent	2.68	0.76	High Extent
9.	Teachers use formative assessment to make changes in teaching and learning based on needs of learners.	2.81	0.68	High Extent	2.72	0.75	High Extent

10. Teachers use formative assessment as a communicative process to finding out what learners know and what they do not	2.73	0.79	High Extent	2.79	0.85	High Extent
<b>Grand Mean</b>	<b>2.79</b>			<b>2.76</b>		

**Source: Field Data, 2022.**

**Criterion Mean = 2.50**

Table 2 presents the mean scores of teachers on the use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. Data in Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of the respondents (teachers) on all the five items (items 6 to 10) are higher than the criterion mean of 2.50 hence they are all remarked as high extent. This implies that teachers use formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State to a high extent.

**HO1:** There is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

**Table 3: Z-Test Analysis of Difference in the mean ratings of teachers' use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit	$\alpha$	Remarks
Male Teachers	150	2.86	0.85	298	0.222	1.960	0.05	Not Sig.
Female Teachers	150	2.84	0.86					

**Source:** Field Data, 2022.

From the results in Table 3, it can be observed that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 degree of freedom, z-calculated value = 0.222 and z-critical value = 1.960. Since the z-calculated value of 0.222 < z-critical value of 1.960, the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State is therefore accepted. This implies that the both male and female public junior secondary school teachers in Rivers State are in agreement that diagnostic assessment are used for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools to a high extent.

**HO2:** There is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State.

**Table 4: z-Test Analysis of Difference in the mean ratings of teachers' use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers Stat**

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit	$\alpha$	Remarks
Male Teachers	150	2.79	0.78	298	0.333	1.960	0.05	Not Sig.
Female Teachers	150	2.76	0.86					

**Source:** Field Data, 2022

Data in Table 4 for hypothesis 2 show that at 0.05 level of significance and 298 degree of freedom, z-calculated value = 0.333 and z-critical value = 1.960. Since the z-cal < z-crit (0.333 < 1.960), the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State is therefore accepted. This implies that both male and female teachers in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State

are in agreement that they use formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools to a high extent.

## **Discussion of Findings**

From the data for research question 1 as presented in Table 1, it was found that teachers in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State use diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools to a high extent. Results for null hypothesis 1 further showed that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of diagnostic assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. This shows that diagnostic assessment technique is highly incorporated into the teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Rivers State. Diagnostic assessment is crucial in the education or learning process of a child due to its ability to reveal knowledge of a child which is considered to be the necessary basis on which new knowledge could be upgraded. Diagnostic assessment practices include entrance and qualifying examinations.

Results for research question 2 showed that teachers in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State use formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools to a high extent. Furthermore, it was found from the test of hypothesis 2 that there is no significant difference in mean ratings of teachers' use of formative assessment for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. This indicates that formative assessment technique has become part and parcel of teaching and learning process in public secondary schools in Rivers State due to its role in learners' learning outcomes. This result buttressed that fact that formative assessment is continuously used for monitoring and checking (controlling) the performances of students in a given area of instruction for improvement, as well as quality delivery. Assessment of students' learning is important in every education system. This is because it helps to ascertain through data collection if students have learned the skills, content, and habits of mind that will make them successful; if students are not learning, decide on changes in the curriculum or teaching strategy to improve learning (Dwyer, 2008).

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that diagnostic and formative assessment

techniques are used by teachers for learners with special needs in inclusive public schools in Rivers State. Hence, the utilization of diagnostic and formative assessment techniques could have influenced the enrolment of learners with special needs in public junior secondary schools in Rivers State, making most schools in the state inclusive.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study and conclusion drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. Diagnostic assessment should be done covering the three domains of learning-affective, psychomotor and cognitive.
2. Formal assessment should be done continuously starting from the learners' attributes and objective to his/her leaning ability

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