

### DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN, NIGERIA

# DYNAMICS OF Special Education Practice

In Honour of PROFESSOR MOJI OYEBOLA

> Editors: Prof. O. A. Fakolade Dr. A. Osisanya Dr. A. F. Komolafe

# **Dynamics of Special Education Practice**

#### A book of Readings in Honour of Professor Moji Oyebola

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#### EDUCATING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN THE 21ST CENTURY THROUGH APPROPRIATE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES FOR RELEVANCE AND DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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#### Abstract

Education is a tool for National development. The development of any nation technologically, socially, politically and economically is largely dependent on the education the citizens. Every member of each nation, notwithstanding the age, background, sensory, physical or psychological impairment, should have equal access to education in order to achieve the goal of education for all. This paper therefore, examined education as a tool for empowering persons with special needs, educating persons with special needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for relevance and development, inclusive education as appropriate educational programme for persons with special needs, factors affecting successful implementation of inclusive education for persons with special needs and vocational/entrepreneurship education for persons with special needs. Persons with special needs should be given sense of belonging in the society by empowering them educationally and vocationally.

Key words: entrepreneurship education, Inclusive education, persons with special needs, vocational education.

#### Introduction

The place of education in national development cannot be underestimated. The social, economic and political development of any nation is largely dependent on the education of the people that makes up such nation. No wonder, the developed nations like the United States of America and Canada spend a reasonable percent of their annual budget on education. These nations see education of all, irrespective of physical, sensory or psychological conditions, as a vital tool for national development. In essence, both persons with special needs and their counterparts without disabilities have equal access to quality basic education in developed nations like United States and other western nations.

To this end, Gerison (2004) observed that globally, efforts to create an inclusive society through education of persons with special needs are the concern of developed nations. According to him, the United States America and other western nations have improved tremendously in the way persons with special needs are viewed and treated. Provision of education for persons with special needs depend on the way they are viewed. The antecedent of the societal attitudes towards persons with special needs still make access to quality education a bit difficult in developing countries like Nigeria. Masakwe (2004) posited that negative attitudes of the society to persons with special needs are counter productive to promoting their education and well being. According to him, obtaining appropriate education, entering the work force, and being accepted in society are difficult to achieve when persons with special needs are viewed negatively or dismissed out of hand.

Although, it has become the concern of every nation that all her citizens have access to quality basic education. Their concerns are backed up with various policies such as, Education for All (EFA) and Universal Basic Education (UBE) in Nigeria. These policies are commendable, but they are poorly implemented. Masakwe (2004) said that resolutions are passed which recognize the basic humanity of persons with special needs, but government lacks the ability (or the will) to implement action. According to him, disability-related issues remains the least prioritized and inadequately favoured section of the national budget and planning. This however, shows that governmental policy statement in connection with special needs education in most African countries fail to reflect actual practices in schools and rehabilitation centres (Eva, 2004). Consequently, majority of people with special needs are left out in most educational programmes in developing nations of Africa like Nigeria. Ajuwon (2008) found out that low income countries like Nigeria are now recognizing the gross inadequacies in educational opportunities for persons with special needs.

• Looking at the present deplorable state of provision of education to persons with special needs in the society, it is of paramount importance that

they are empowered through appropriate educational programmes such as inclusive education and vocational training. Empowerment, according to Lee (1997) is the process by which people who have been rendered powerless or marginalized developed the skills to take control of their lives and their environment.

Since persons with special needs form an appreciable part of the community and they have the right to be educated and trained **vocationally**, they need to be educated for acquisition of skills that will enable them contribute meaningfully to the growth of the society. This paper therefore, examined educating persons with special needs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through appropriate educational programmes for relevance and development in Nigeria.

#### The Persons with Special Needs

Persons with special needs are the set of people who require different educational and vocational needs. In other words, their education is based on the recognition of individual differences. They are those who have one impairment or the other such as mental, physical, sensory or emotional. They also include those with special gifts or talent. Isaiah and Adekanmi (2009) posited that persons with special needs are those who need help from professionals as a result of their impairment, in order to function socially and educationally as their counterparts who are without disabilities. They differ from other children and adults to the extent that they require help from professionals like special educators, psychologists, speech therapists, audiologists and social workers. According to them, the following categories of disabilities require attention: autism, hearing impairment, developmental delay, emotional disturbance, intellectual impairment, multiple disabilities, orthopedic impairment, other health impairment, specific learning disability, speech or language impairment, traumatic brain injury and visual impairment.

# Educating Persons with Special Needs In The 21st Century for Relevance and development

Recently, nations are of the opinion that persons with special needs should, as a matter of policies, be included in their educational plans and vocational training. In South Africa, for instance, the government published a key policy dealing with disability in 1997. This is known as Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS). The policy passed comments on how learners were educated in mainly in special schools, resulted in about 70% of children with special needs of school age. The policy outlined the principles for providing quality basic education for learners with special needs The policy further stressed that the learners with special needs should receive education and training in as normal an environment as possible, and they must be provided with the resources needed to reach their highest potentials.

In Nigeria, in 2004, the Federal Government enacted the Universal Basic Education (UBE). According to Ajuwon (2008), UBE is compulsory basic education for all children, irrespective of their disabilities. He stressed that through UBE children and youth in general, have every right to an education that will inculcate in them the requisite knowledge and skills in the society, it poses a challenge to all stakeholders in education that if persons with special needs are to be included in Nigerian's educational programmes, all the available resources, human and non-human, should be harnessed towards the achievement of this goal.

Furthermore, Obani (2006) posited that with the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme and the stipulation that it is compulsory for every child of school age to be in school, the school population will consist of a varied collection of learners with different capacities, needs, problems, styles and difficulties, including persons with special needs in regular school. This is stated in a plain language in the Salamanca statement and framework for action (1984) that regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Apart from that, persons with special needs should be empowered to have economic independence when they leave schools and enter the world of work. It therefore, becomes very important that they are given access to education, so that they can contribute their quota to national development.

#### Inclusive Education as an Appropriate Educational Programme for Persons with Special Needs

Inclusive education is the process of enabling all students, irrespective of impairment in regular education system. It refers to an unconditional placement of children with special needs in regular education system. Ajuwon (2004) posited that it is currently implemented in industrialized world. Inclusive education can be interpreted as the philosophy and practice for educating students with disabilities in general education settings. According to him, the practice anchors on the notion that every child should be an equally valued member of the school culture. In other words, children with special needs benefit from learning in a regular classroom, while their peers without disabilities gain from being exposed to children with diverse characteristics, talents and temperaments.

Inclusive education has a lot of benefits for persons with special needs. According to Ajuwon (2008) they are:

- Children are more likely to learn social skills in an environment that approximates to normal conditions of growth and development.
- It promotes a sense of cooperation and feeling of togetherness among the learners.
- Inclusive education provides a means of building a cooperative school community, where all are accommodated and able to participate.

However, the environment must be designed in such a way that all learners could be accommodated. Ajuwon (2008) opined that failing to accommodate the environmental and accessibility needs of persons with special needs in the society will inevitably inhibit their participation in educational, social, recreational and economic activities.

# Factors Affecting Successful Implementation of Inclusive Education for persons with special needs

Audu (2005) identified the factors that could affect successful implementation of inclusive education, these factors are:

- Architectural barriers. School buildings should be designed for easy access for persons with special needs.
- Lack of adequate average awareness about the relevance of inclusive education to children with special needs by members of the public.
- Inadequate equipment and materials for successful implementation of inclusive education.
- In adequate fact and figures of the number of people with special needs.

These barriers, when removed will help professionals to implement inclusive education for person with special needs.

# Vocational/entrepreneurship education for Persons with Special Needs

Vocational education is very essential as a tool for empowering persons with special needs. This is because most employers are not disposed to employing them as a result of the societal attitude towards them. Bruvere (2002) observed that in general, the vocational adjustment of persons with special needs has been characterized by limited salable work skills, low income and underemployment. Vocational education will, afford the persons with special needs to acquire skills that will make them to be self-reliant through self-employment. They should be trained in vocations that will afford them the opportunity to be economically independent. In developing nation, like Nigeria, unemployment is a major problem confronting the people especially, among graduates. This makes the available jobs very competitive. Hence, it becomes more difficult for persons with special needs to get jobs, because their disabilities impose certain limitations on them. Therefore, vocational/entrepreneurship education should be part of the curriculum so that persons with special needs can acquire the skills that will make them stand on their own: peradventure they find it difficult to get jobs. They could be trained in vocations such as; agriculture (livestock, farming, horticulture, and animal husbandry), carpentry, and art/craft. This will enable them to be independent economically. To this end, street begging will be reduced to the barest minimum among them.

#### Conclusion

Persons with special needs can be educated as their counterparts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, if they are provided with appropriate educational programmes. They can equally maximize their potentials. Therefore, all hands must be on deck to ensure that this becomes a reality.

#### Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered based on the observations made in this paper:

- inclusive education should be given adequate publicity, so that members of the public could embrace it.
- there should be adequate campaign against negative attitude of the society against persons with special needs.
- no child should be denied admission on account of disability.

Anybody found discriminating against access to education should be severely penalized.

- more rehabilitation centres should be established in the country for the training of persons with special need in vocations of their choice.
- Vocational/entrepreneurship education should be included in the curriculum of persons with hearing impairment

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