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National Centre for Exceptional Children

GLOBALIZATION AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

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Published in June, 2011

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ISBN: 978-31064-2-4

Published and Bound in Nigeria by: Glory -Land Publishing Company. 66, Gbadebo Street, Mokola, Ibadan. Tel: 08035830802, 07031051956 E-mail: emman_20078@yahoo.com

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Adjustment Programmes for Adults with Acquired Hearing Loss during the Period of Global Economic Melt Down

ISAIAH, OLUGBENGA O. & EZELE, N. E.

Introduction

Loss of hearing is a health problem affecting millions of people across the globe defining the extent of loss and its possible effects on social, psychological educational and vocational adjustment of an individual involves many factors. The environment we live in today makes every one to be risk of acquired hearing loss. In the light of this, Wiley (2000) opined that it is a noisy world, as the number of people and machine increase the types of noise in our environment; hence most people are at risk of hearing loss.

Hearing loss could occur at any stage of human development that is, from birth, childhood to adulthood. No matter the stage at which hearing loss occurs, it has negative effect on an individual. For instance, a child who suffers hearing loss before the acquisition of language hearing will have delay in speech and language development.

Also, serious acquired hearing loss will produce deterioration in speech sounds because the child can no longer perceive his accurate sound production by listening. Similarly, hearing loss among adults which could be as a result of ageing or job hazard could also have affects on their coping with the present economic melt down. The reason for this is the fact that, several employers do not believe that persons with hearing impairment could perform very well on the job as their counterparts who are without hearing loss.

Individuals with hearing impairment as a consequence of their disability have reduced apability of activity that causes many difficulties to life work and studies. At present in Nigeria, there is no doubt that unemployment is one of the greatest problems facing both young and adult. Consequently people living with one form of disability or the other are badly affected as a result of the poor attitude of the public towards them.

In developing countries like Nigeria, poverty is associated with disability. This is because, individuals with poverty are considered ad second as second class citizens, who can not offer any meaningful contribution to the economy (Isaiah, 2009). Nwolise (2004) supported this statement by concluding that people living with disabilities are excluded from gaining access to the labour market. According to him after women, children and youths, people living with disabilities constitute one of the next categories of neglected and marginalized sectors in the contemporary Nigeria and Africa. Also, they are among the poorest and most socially excluded members of our society today.

Empowering adults with acquired hearing loss should be a concern of all, if they are to contribute their quota to the economy of the country. This makes vocational rehabilitation programmes very important to their in the present global economic melt 'down. These programmes will enable in learning new skills, training in the use of assistive devices like hearing aids, psychological adjustment and social competence skills. All these will hence their vocational adjustment. The trust of this paper therefore is to examine the adjustment programmes for adults with acquired hearing loss during the present global economic melt down.

Hearing Loss among Adults and its Consequences on them

Hearing loss is a common health problem among people of different ages. It is well known that hearing loss increases with age consequently, there are higher percentages of people with moderate and severe or profound hearing loss in the older age groups than the younger. This will consequently lead to increase in the numbers of people with hearing impairment. (Davis, 1995). According to him, research has shown that prebycusis (hearing loss that is associated with ageing) affects about 30% of the population aged 65 and over and that have of over 75 year old people have significant hearing loss Cruickshanks, 1998). In essence, people aged 65 and older are more likely than any other group to have hearing loss. Consequently, Oyer and Oyer (2006) identified the following consequences of hearing among elderly people:

- Embarrassment caused by mishearing or misunderstanding and leading to withdrawal from communication situations.
- Fatigue caused by trying to hear and trying to make oneself understood by others who do not hear well.
- Increased irritability associated with experiences of failure
- Increased tension: particular increased marital tension
- Avoidance and withdrawal by individuals with hearing impairment due to fear of failure and by those who must interact with them for fear of being misunderstood.
- Increased endangerment to bodily safety: caused by failure to hear alarm signals or locating signals.
- Boredom: an individual with hearing impairment may engage in monologue so as to avoid questions thus becoming a social boredom, boredom may also develop as a result of channels of communication being closed to the person with hearing impairment.
- Social rejection: as a result of inability to understand what is being said.
- Increased vulnerability: To promises of restored hearing- similar to that of other people with disabilities who hope for cures for their condition.
- Depression: hearing loss can lead to suspiciousness an paranoia.
- Acting upon misinformation: older people with severe acquired hearing loss may respond inappropriately to cues, and others who interact with them may similarly respond inappropriately to cues generated by them.
- Negativism: slowness to respond or lack of response which may be interpreted as such.
- Diminished opportunities to assume leadership roles: a result of retirement which is caused by hearing loss.
- Reducing in amount of information compounded by hearing loss in older people.

In addition, Oyer and Oyer (2006) posited that hearing impairment has a detrimental affection the quality of life of adults with hearing impairment. They equally observed that severe acquired hearing loss may deter people from remaining at work. They concluded that hearing loss lowers the quality of life of adults with hearing impairment.

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Concept of Adjustment

The term adjustment is as old as man. Everyone needs to adjust to self or environment, in order to cope maximally with life situation. Richard (2004) and Falaye (1997) refer to adjustment as the holistic adaptation of an individual to the environment. It involves several spheres of activities such as, adjustment within family, school, work-place, self and larger society. Again, according to Richard (2004) adjustment means the process by which an individual strives to satisfy his personal needs as well as deal with the demand and constraints that are placed on him by his environment.

Specifically, adjustment means the way by which an individual attempt to adapt to the physical, psychological and social environment.

In view of this, adults with acquired hearing loss need some vocational programmes that could afford them opportunity to compete favourably with their counterparts, who are without hearing loss, in the labour market. Apart from that, such programmes will enable them form very good self concept despite their disabilities.

Vocational Adjustment and Adults with Hearing Impairment

Vocational adjustment is one of the greatest needs of adults with hearing loss in Nigeria. This is because; hearing impairment imposes restriction on them in the world of work. Vocational adjustment means all the coping strategies employed by an individual to adapt to the work environment. It is an aspect of the reliability process of adults with acquired hearing loss. Every individual needs to adjust to his or her environment in order to fit into the scheme of things.

When it comes to the issue of vocational adjustment, the adults with hearing mpairment need to fit to their environment as far as their vocations are concerned, otherwise they will depend on others for economic survival. Adjustment in this sense involves the attempt of an individual to get along or survive in his social and physical environment. Ogbeba (2009) opined that adjustment is a state in which the needs of the individual on one hand and the environment on the other hand are fully satisfied. According to him, if they are not fully satisfied, there will be maladjustment among the organisms of the environment. It also involves adaptation to one's environment. In view of this, adjustment means one's ability to get used to an environment or one's ability to adapt, regulate or accommodate oneself to a particular situation or environment. According to him, it also means failure to assume the proper or conforming position for adequate function.

Looking at the issue of vocational adjustment of adults with hearing impairment closely in Nigeria context, one could rightly say that, most adults with hearing impairment are far from being vocationally adjusted. This is so because; most employers are not interested in employing them or keep those of them who are employed. This situation is worse in the present global economic meltdown, when the few jobs that are available in the labour market are very competitive. The attitude of the employers and the general public negate the fundamental human rights which give room for persons with disabilities as well as their able bodied counterparts to be gainfully employed. To this end, Mba (1995) stated that employers often deny persons with disability the right to work on the ground of certain preconceived notions and barriers. According to him, such barriers include the following:

- The deplorable economic situation which makes employment opportunities very competitive.
- Inferiority complex among person with disability
- Persons with disabilities constitute employment hazard
- Persons with disabilities could rarely work hard as their able bodied counterparts and
- Trade unions might exclude them from being members.

In the same vein, Ojelabi (2000) found out that in most countries, one finds that employment opportunities for persons with disability are limited by obstacles namely:

- Negative attitude of the community
- Economic situation of the country
- Resistance of employers
- Attitudes of trade unions and
- Attitudes of persons with disability themselves and their families.

Based on the above reasons for employment discrimination against persons with hearing impairment, they should be empowered for economic independence. This will no doubt enhance their abilities to contribute meaningfully to the economy of the country.

The Need for Economic Empowerment of Adults with Acquired Hearing Loss

In the present global economic melt down, there is a need to empower adults with acquired hearing loss, so that they could have economic independence, and live meaningful lives, because the rate of poverty among them is very alarming. In fact, scholars view poverty and disability as very related, in the sense that, individuals with disabilities have limited access to employment. To this end, Obani (2004) posited that persons with disability are viewed by most employers as not employable. He viewed poverty in terms of having little or no means of supporting oneself, being in want or need, being inadequate, inferior, contemptible, worthless or worthy of pity. He further describes poverty as a state of being poor, helpless and dependent. These characteristics could be a true reflection of majority of adults with hearing impairment, because of limited access to employment which makes it difficult for them to be financially independent.

Kitchen (1998), cited in Obani (2003), found out that persons with disability are one group that is disadvantaged through limited access to the labour market. Again, Doyle (1994), cited in Obani (2004), said that persons with disability are three times more likely to be unemployed, when employed, earn much less than their non-disabled counterparts, and when employed, to be more considered for, or over represented in the manual, unskilled, and semi-skilled cadres, and less represented in the managerial or supervisory cadres. Obani (2004) found out that majority of persons with disability are in low paid, low skilled manual work, and they are more likely to be employed through informal arrangements not covered by formal contracts and legislations, and jobs without prospects of promotions or advancements.

From the foregoing, it is obvious that persons with hearing impairment also have a share of the financial predicaments of persons with disability. The financial predicaments of

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the individual with disability is highlighted by Berthoud (1993) and Kitchen (1998) cited in Obani (2004), that between 50%-70% of persons with disability and their families live below the basic standards of living and low earnings are leading to widespread poverty among the persons with disability.

Based on the above observations made by scholars on the relationship between poverty and disability, it would be sufficient to say that majority of individuals with disability live in abject poverty, because of their limited access to employment opportunities. Hence, the need for poverty reduction programmes for them.

Poverty Reduction Programmes for Adults with Acquired hearing.

Access to vocational training is an avenue by which persons with hearing impairment could be bailed out of abject poverty. In other words, they are expected to be included in all aspects of life in the society especially in the economy. Obani (2004) posited that what individuals with disability need is total inclusion in all mainstream policies and projects, empowerment and enablement through employment skill acquisition and training, so that they can contribute to (as much as possible) and share in the resources, wealth and social benefits available to all citizens.

Looking at the rate of unemployment and limited access to employment by persons with hearing impairment, it is expedient that they are trained in skills that will make them self-employed or employable. The Nigerians with Disability Decree of 1993 mandated employers that at least 10% of the labour force is reserved for persons with disability, but, the fact remains that the policy is on paper only because majority of Nigerians with disability are not employed. The policy is simply not working, because it is not enforced on the employers.

To this end, it becomes very necessary that persons with hearing impairment are trained in skills that can afford them opportunities to be self employed, if paid employments are not forthcoming. Presently, most jobs are highly competitive in Nigeria and it is extremely difficult for persons with special needs to secure jobs. Jobs in this category includebanking, marketing and mass communication. On the other hand, adults with hearing impairment could be employed by engaging in any of the following vocations:

- 1. Agriculture
 - (i) livestock
 - (ii) farming
 - (iii) horticulture
 - (iv) animal husbandry
- 2. Art and Craft including, painting and decoration
- 3. Tailoring
- 4. Carpentry
- 5. Catering and
- 6. Trading

The government and non-governmental organizations should collaborate in order to achieve the goal of making persons with hearing impairment to be self-reliant by providing the equipment and funds needed to get them established. Without any doubt, if such needs are met, they (persons with hearing impairment) will contribute their quotas to the economy of the nation and be independent economically. It is therefore, sufficient to say that, there are various jobs opportunities suitable for persons with hearing impairment. Adelowo (2008) observed that there are jobs everywhere in Nigeria, if competencies are built in our curriculum. In other words, the education of persons with special needs should include skill acquisition that will enable them fit into the world of work after leaving school.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Since it has been discovered through scholars that vocational adjustment is a great need for adults with hearing impairment, it is very imperative that all barriers limiting their access to employment are removed, so that they can contribute meaningfully to the economy of the nation. Again, all stakeholders who are involved in the education and training of persons with hearing impairment should, as a matter of fact, ensure that their (persons with hearing impairment) rights to employment are protected. This includes removal of all social, physical and psychological barriers that could hinder them from gaining access to employment opportunities as their counterparts who are without disabilities.

Recommendations

Based on the observations by the authors, the following are recommended in order to improve the quality of life of persons with hearing impairment:

- 1. The rights to employment of persons with hearing impairment should be protected through relevant legislation by the government.
- 2. Adequate funds should be released by the government for the training of persons with hearing impairment. Such funds should be used for the procurement of assistive technological devices in vocational rehabilitation centers. This would afford them the opportunity to acquire basic vocational skills, which would enable them compete with their hearing counterparts in the labour market.
- 3. There should be adequate public awareness by the government and professionals in the field of special needs education, about the worth of persons with hearing impairment. This could be done through the mass media like, radio, television, magazine and newspaper.
- 4. Persons with hearing impairment should be allowed, under the fundamental human rights, to constitute themselves to lobbying and advocacy groups saddle with the responsibility of demanding their rights for good standard of living from the government.
- 5. The government, through the various financial institutions, should assist persons with hearing impairment by giving them soft loan for private business. This will enhance self employment among them.
- 6. More vocational rehabilitation centres should be established in the country through the efforts of individuals, governmental and non-governmental organizations, for training of persons with special needs. Again, the existing ones should be well equipped with modern assistive technological devices to meet the demand of the labour market.

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- The programmes of the National directorate of Employment (NDE) should also include 7. adults with hearing impairment.
- There should be social inclusion of adults with hearing impairment through the efforts 8. of stakeholders in the field of special needs education . In other words, they should be included in all aspect of the society.
- There should be census of adults with hearing loss in the country, so that the 9, government could provide social services for them.

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