



Exceptionality and inclusive education in global perspective: Challenges facing the practicability of inclusive education in Nigeria and psychological implications

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Abstract

This paper defined the term 'exceptionality' and 'inclusive education' and explained the history of inclusive education in global perspective. It also discussed the challenges facing the practicability of inclusive education. This bordered on the stakeholders such as the government, the special educators and parents of exceptional children. The paper went further to highlight the psychological implications in terms of professional psychotherapists needed to address the challenges confronting the practicability of inclusive education in Nigeria. These challenges include: identification and census taking (head count) of persons with disability by census officials; enrolment of exceptional children in the inclusive education classes; involvement of psychotherapists and medical personnel, special educators and social workers in the enrolment exercise; the enlightenment and sensitization of parents, community leaders and the public; and the involvement of professional counsellors and social workers in the sensitization exercise. This paper posits that if the above psychological implications are addressed, the implementation and practicability of inclusive education will eventually materialize and can become functional in Nigeria. Thus, the solution to Education For All (EFA).

Keywords: exceptionality, inclusive education, practicability, challenges, psychological implications

1. Introduction

The truism which highlights expression readily in global democratic settings is that "All men are born equal". It is in pursuance of the realization of such a lofty idea that led to the emergence of special education for exceptional children and the concept of inclusive education or Education for All (EFA). In order to enhance selflessness, the philosophy of Nigerian education is based on the integration of the individual into a sound and effective citizen and equal educational opportunities for all citizens of the nation. (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004).

The quest for the care of exceptionalities, according to Usman (1999) ^[25], dates back even to the Hebrew Law, centuries before Jesus was born. The Law recognizes the needs of the handicapped, the blind, the deaf and widows that were to be met by the community. Jesus Christ showed us by example. He cured the deaf, the blind and lepers as shown in Mark 10: 46; Mark 8:22; Matt 9:27; 20:30; Luke 7:21; and John 9. The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (Peace be on him) preached that giving charity to the disabled is serving one's turn to the Prophet of God. Not only this, John Lock's idea (1632-1708) was that, the concept of the mind is an empty slate and experiences sensations concurrently. Aristotle's principle of distributive justice requires that equals be treated equally, while the unequal be treated unequally. These justify the development of individual including people with exceptional needs and introduction of inclusive education (Usman, 1999) ^[25].

Historically, inclusive education emerged as a result of the clarion call made on the global community by the United Nations to give each child the opportunity to achieve and maintains an acceptable level of learning. According to the United Nations Educational Scientific, Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in 2007 and World Health

Organization (WHO), in 2007, 600 million people with disabilities exist worldwide, all of whom encounter physical and social boundaries within cultural life. Of the total, it is estimated that 80% of people with disabilities live in developing countries. One hundred and fifty million of these children with disabilities of which less than 2% are receiving rehabilitation. (UNESCO, 2007) ^[22].

Recent statistics indicate that approximately, 72 million children are unable to exercise their rights to education due to rising levels of poverty, unemployment and discrimination (i.e gender, ethnicity, language and disability). There is also an indication if no action is taken appropriately, then by 2015, 56 million children will still be out of school. (UNESCO, 2010) ^[22]. The current trend in the Sub-Saharan Africa shows that 23 million of the present 32 million children will still be out of school in 2015, despite the progress being made. This accounts for 47 percent of out-of-school children worldwide. The analysis further stated that one in every nine of the above statistics is a Nigerian child. Enrolment rate in primary schools in Nigeria is placed at 68 percent (Development Financial Institutions (DFI), 2008) ^[2]. Of children who are of school-going age, 87 million are currently out of school in Nigeria Five million of aforementioned statistics are aged 6-11 years and do not have access to primary education. This has placed Nigeria as one of the countries most unlikely to meet the Millennium Goals set for 2015 (UNESCO, 2010; Lazarus and Ajibade, 2012) ^[23, 11].

The government has invested in establishing at least two institutions in each of the 36 states of the federation, including the Federal Capital Territory, that were meant to meet the needs of children with disabilities (Abang, 2015) ^[1]. States across Nigeria has also made effort to provide services for children with disabilities. Formally, the UBE

scheme was declared in 1999 by the government and passed into law (FRN., 2004) to instigate a conducive environment for learning at primary and junior secondary school levels, so as to eradicate illiteracy. On the same platform, the emergence of inclusive education was given a fillip by the world conference on Special Education which took place in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994. (UNESCO, 1994) ^[21]. Several attitudes towards persons with disabilities, which range from guilt, shame, low expectations, patronizing view of family and society to negatively indecision, fear, lack of confidence and lack of adequate number of professionals, lack of learning and teaching facilities and lack of knowledge and skills on the part of teachers, political instability, changing policies and resource constraints have all constituted impending challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria. This paper is therefore meant to discuss the concept of exceptionality and inclusive education and to highlight constraints of inclusive education in Nigeria. It is also meant to advance psychotherapeutic devices to address the psychological implications there in, so as to bring into lime light, the practicability of inclusive education in Nigeria.

The concept of exceptionality

Exceptionality refers to people who have a range of differences, from specific learning disabilities to severe restrictions of movement or communication (United State Department of Education, 2000). Exceptionality is a significant deviation (departure) from the presumed function or physical characteristics. It is used as a generic term to describe the significant departure from the normal trends in development and to imply the associated needs (arising from the departure) of an individual that makes special education imperative for such a person if he must live a useful life in the society. In this respect, little or average deviations are not considered exceptional. For instance, in an achievement test, students that score 98% and 10% are said to have deviated substantially from the presumed pass mark of 40%. In the class where majority of the children are 6ft tall, few others of 3ft and 9ft tall respectively, are said to remarkably deviate (are exceptional) from the average height of the class. Similarly, a deaf child is exceptional in terms of auditory functioning (i.e. he does not hear sound at all) just as the gifted child is in terms of high intellectual ability. Some of these exceptional children require special learning needs to make education worthwhile, as some may be impaired children when (organ of sight, hearing, walking, talking) is damaged by accident or disease. They are referred to as disabled children impairment which significantly reduced the ability to perform certain tasks. If this happened, the child becomes handicapped suffering the undesirable consequences of non-functioning. (Ozaji, 2003, Lazarus and Ajibade, 2012) ^[11].

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education represents the latest attempt in the provision of placement options or alternative programmes for children with special needs. The United Nation's Declaration on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 focused on integration initiatives and equity issues for all including those with special needs. To achieve the goal of "Education for All", the Jomtien conference called on each nation to take immediate steps to implement the recommendations contained in the documents on "World

Declaration on Education for all.

The European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education (EADSNE) (2011) ^[3] revealed that subsequently, other international declarations and conventions built upon the call for Education for All. In 2000, the World Declaration on Education for All was re-affirmed in the Dakar Framework for Action which recognised that education deficits restrict social, economic and cultural development, reducing the capacity of individuals, communities and nations. It was also recognized that there was an unequal distribution of education within and between nations. The commitment to Education for All was further developed in the International Conference on Education in Geneva. While the UNESCO's Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education was adopted in 1994 (UNESCO, 1994) ^[24], The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in particular, article 24 on Education, also provides clear support for Inclusive Education (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, (2011).

In its present form, the emergence of inclusive education was given fillip by the World Conference on Special Education which took place in Salamanca, Spain, in 1994. At this conference, twenty-five (25) international organizations and ninety-two (92) governments developed a "bold and dynamic statement" that called for inclusion to be quite simply the norm. The Salamanca Statement and its accompanying framework for action is arguably the single most important international document in the field of special education.

In Nigeria, the development of education took a turn for the better with the introduction of education reform. Most significantly, the Nigerian government passed into law, the Compulsory, Free, Universal Basic Education Act in 2004, which demonstrated the strong political will of the Nigerian government to drive national development through education sector – wide – reforms by first ensuring universal access to educational opportunities at all levels: basic, post – basic, tertiary as well as non – formal, including special needs groups of children, youths and adults. In 2006, the implementation of the education sector was initiated and this involved setting up of eleven task teams to critically examine three pillars of the inclusive education reform process namely; access, equity and quality (Federal Ministry of Education, 2008) ^[4].

Essentially, the Nigerian government has adopted inclusive education as a policy and through the Federal Ministry of Education, Nigeria as a country, has characterized policy guidelines for inclusive education that targets the three groups (the disabled, the disadvantaged and the gifted or talented), with greater focus on desegregation, anti – discrimination, and enforcing the fundamental human rights of these special needs groups (Federal Ministry of Education, 2008) ^[4].

Challenges of inclusive education

Most of the parents and special educators in Nigeria are not aware of the features, nature and programmes of inclusive education. For instance a research conducted by Olayunju and Aranmolate (2012), on the awareness level, attitudes and perception of stakeholders on inclusive education practice in Africa (Nigeria), the researchers used 20- items institution for parent and teachers in Lagos Ogun and Oyo

states. The result of the research indicated that inclusive education in Nigeria has implementation and logistic problems. This pertains inadequate teaching and learning materials, population of children and structures. In another research by Ozegya and Babudoh (2012) ^[16], on teaching children with hearing impairment, they discovered that children in the inclusive education programme have problem of communication and language. That in Nigeria, majority of the hearing impaired are either using the American British or localized (crude) sign language which makes it difficult.

Furthermore, were children with hearing impairment are in the midst of normal children in inclusive class, teacher will not be able to pay attention to the unique needs of the hearing impaired. As such, the support special teacher will have to create time outside the normal lesson period to give the children with hearing impairment the required attention. Santrock (2004) ^[19] asserted that portfolio entries constituted a great challenge in the inclusive education in Nigeria. Portfolio entries are the assessment formula and procure used by special education, children and parent. They include writing samples, journal entries, video tapes, pictures, teachers, comments, posters, interviews, poetry, test result, problems, solutions, books read, self-assessment, children's' skills and accomplishments.

Lazarus and Ajibade (2012) ^[11] submitted that the features of inclusive education in Nigeria are not yet put in place and this constitutes challenges to its implementation. These features include: collaborative team work of state holders, a shared frame work and inclusive curriculum programmes, family involvement, general educator ownership, meaningful Individual Education plan (IEPs) and procedures for everlasting effectiveness. These education assessment centres should be in each local government for identification, referral to relevant service, and supply of adaptive materials. Nwazoke (2010) observed that in Nigeria coming together of normal children and children with disabilities into the same school or class has taken place in very few states in Nigeria and at secondary school level. (Girl's High school, Akabo, Imo state; Emekuku Boys High School, Emekuku in Owerri, Imo State and; Ijokodo High School, Ibadan, Oyo state) He decried that inclusive education is bound to fail because public schools as well special schools in Nigeria are understaffed, not adequately equipped and facilities are obsolete. Galadima (2011) ^[8] added that Sight Savers International in conjunction with Ministries of Education, Social Welfare and Health in Sokoto, Kwara States (Nigeria) developed an inclusive education project document state in 2006 on pilot basis for a period of 3 years. Galadima reported that the teacher in these schools were enthusiastic in the new inclusive programme at the same time, they were skeptical of the workability of inclusive education arrangement in the schools. Problems of devaluation abound, as behavioral configuration which consists of poor acceptance, negative attitude, contempt, discrimination ridicule and rejection were manifested in reactions to handicapped persons.

Furthermore, the architectural design of school structures in terms of stairs, steps narrow doors, toiletry are obvious barriers that keep disabled people out of many of our public and private schools. Problems are also encountered by children with disability in respect of transportation, particular from home to school. Kick and run drivers may feel that the blind and those using wheel chairs will waste

their time in boarding an deboarding in and out of their vehicles. Many children with disabilities are also exempted from enjoying recreational facilities in schools since they are not provided or not sufficient. Eleri (1993) lamented that out of the numerous Universities and Colleges of Education in Nigeria none offers adaptive physical education as a separate course. Children without disabilities also suffer to enjoy job opportunity. Seeing that in Nigeria, most normal graduates are unemployed and destitute, the parents and children are likely to be discouraged in the enrollment exercise in the inclusive education programme.

Psychological Implication

Inclusive education entails children with and without disability will have to learn in the same class room, learning almost the same lesson under the same teachers. The period of them coming to integrate with each other would succumb these children to some psychological imbalance, stress anxiety, tension and emotional disturbance. Some of these children could experience transition from one class to another, from primary to secondary, thereby experiencing new environment, new teaching and learning materials and even seeing new teachers different from those they are familiar with. Casper and Leuchovive (2005) recommended the application of effective remedial and intervention programmes to address children experiencing new environment and meeting different people. They postulated that the use of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy strategies as intervention programme will help these children to adjust and adopt more easily, with minimal stress. This strategy enhance emotional well being, self-motivation and performance.

Emotional intelligence has been described as a form of social intelligence that involves the ability to monitor one's on well-being as well as other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. Emotional intelligence has implication for how problem are tackled, for prevention activities in physical and mental health care, for effective intervention in schools and communities, as well as business and organizations. (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) ^[20].

According to Mayor, Salovey and Caruso (1993) ^[12], skills in emotional intelligence include identifying, understanding, using and regulating emotions. This corroborates with the view point of Goleman (1995) ^[10] when he emphasized that five components of emotional intelligence comprised: self-awareness, management motivation, recognizing emotions in others (empathy) and handling relationship among children with and without disability. This according to him, will determine individual's preparedness and competence. Goleman also went further to explain that 80% of the general competences that set apart superior from average performers depend on emotional intelligence. Therefore, there is the need to adopt emotional skill development among children in the inclusive education which is designed to improve achievement, academic success and by extension, transitional adjustment. In this respect, School Adjustment Scale (SAS) instrument should be used for these children. It is an adaptation of the College Adjustment Scale (CAS) by Auton and preed (1991). It consists of twenty-five items covering the perceive problems that could be encountered by children.

The use of self-efficacy is another regulatory measure that

can be adopted for children with or without disability learning in the same environment. Self-Efficacy is a multi-dimensional construct which influences human functioning directly and indirectly through its effects on other determinants such as motivation, self – regulation, attribution and emotion. A strong sense of efficacy enhances human accomplishment and personal well-being in many ways. People with high confidence in their capabilities approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such efficacious outlooks foster intrinsic interests and deep commitment. They heighten and sustain efforts in the face of failure. Often, people with self – efficacy quickly recover their sense of efficacy after failures or setbacks. They attribute failures to insufficient effort or deficient knowledge and skills to be acquired. Such an efficacious outlook produces personal accomplishment, reduces stress, and lowers vulnerability to depression (Bandura, 2001).

Empirical evidence on determinants of self – concept, social stigma and determination among children with or without disabilities is associated with language, body image, parental behaviour and peer relationship which can lead to self – esteem (Rosenberg, 1979) [18]. Fox (1972) [7] reported that the locus of control in the mentally retarded children are more external than in children of average intelligence. Garabedian (1981) [9] reported that learning disabled children scored very highly on external locus of control than non – learning disabled and that there was an inverse relationship between the high external locus of control scores and self concept scores. This implies that disabled children have no self – will but are usually externally controlled.

Based on the above, the following counselling techniques are applicable as intervention: Behaviour modification, reality therapy; adjustment therapy; family counselling, referral intervention techniques.

Conclusion

This paper defined the concept of exceptionality and highlighted various people who are categorized as exception need persons including those suffering from physical, social, emotional, intellectual disabilities as well as the gifted. It also explained the emergence of inclusive education and explained the relationship between children with exceptionality and inclusive education in Nigeria. It went further to discuss challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria and the psychological implications. Conclusion and recommendations which include the adoption of emotional intelligence and self-efficacy strategies, and other counselling measures were proffered, such as provision of modern physical structures and facilities, trained special educators, modern teaching and learning materials, collaborative effort needed by stakeholders and provision of school counsellors and medical personnel, so as to meet the challenges of inclusive education in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the above discussions on the title of this paper, the following recommendations are preferred:

- Government should provide the necessary modern physical structures and facilities as well as clinical facilities to meet the demand and requirement of children with and without disability.
- Modern teaching and learning materials should be

adequately provided to make education very effective in the inclusive education.

- More special educators, counsellors and medical personnel should be recruit into the new inclusive so as to cater for the population of children.
- Train the trainers workshops and conferences should be organized to meet the demand of the new education programme.
- Reviewed curriculum of inclusive education should be implemented so that teachers and learners are carried along.

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