

Child Care & Special Needs Education in Nigeria

Volume Two



■ Edited by ■

Akinola Olabisi

Centre for Learning Disabilities
and Audiology (CELDA) 2009

All rights reserved.

Any part of this publication may be reproduced with the prior
permission of the Editor.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors
and not necessarily of CELDA.

Published by:



**CENTRE FOR LEARNING
DISABILITIES AND AUDIOLOGY**

#7 Zaria Road, Alheri off Gada Biu,
PO. Box 10393, Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria
Tel: 234 (0) 803 700 3201; 234 (0) 807 765 8584
E-mail: celda312@hotmail.com
Website: www.celda.org

ISBN 978 - 198 - 068 - 0

10

Administration of Inclusive Education in Nigeria: Issues and Challenges

**Jude, Wisdom Inibehe, B.Ed
Nkang Iniobong Ekong, Ph.D**

Introduction

The universal right to education has recently been extended to all children, youth and adults with or without disabilities or learning difficulties. The philosophy of inclusive education advocates that, in order to achieve education for all; education must be made available and accessible to all types of learners. Thus, as a backdrop of the Salamanca conference (1994), the essence of inclusive education was brought afore, which advocates that no child should be denied inclusion in mainstream education provision and that this provision should offer full range of support of specialist services necessary to give all children their full entitlement to a broad and balanced education (Ozaji, 2003).

Therefore, the universal right to education is extended to accommodate persons with or without disability through the inclusive education programme in Nigeria in support of this, the Universal Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF 2001) asserted that inclusive education adaptation into regular education system is a way of promoting social integration and breaking attitudinal barriers which causes a sense of separateness among children with

special needs. This inclusive education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, become part of the school community. In the field of inclusive education, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and donors have directed effort towards the development of national capacities for policy-making and implementation. Despite these initiatives, the efforts, in general, have been fragmented and limited in scope. Inclusive education is a crosscutting issue in UNESCO'S programme that needs to be the fundamental philosophy throughout the different "Education for All" follow-up efforts. Therefore inclusive should be the guiding principle for the developmental strides by Nigerian government towards ensuring that education is actually an excellent instrument for national development. This brings forward the concerns of marginalized and currently excluded groups, as well as support to the development of inclusive education and improvement of access. Inclusive education should be the guiding principle if the Millennium development goal, education must be achieved by 2010. Today, effective administration of inclusive education becomes imperative because of the fact that, previous philosophy of medical models has given way to sociological models in explaining the problems of special needs children. This is evidence as Unegbu (2007) asserted that there has been a change in the selection of differences considered important for education planning. Inclusive education is based on the pedagogies that seeks to foster the development of personal and social behaviour considered necessary for the learning of all types of special needs children.

The Inclusive Education Project

Leftein (2002) demarcated three stages which inclusive education should be carried out and these include the pilot stage,

national experiment stage and expansion period stage. The question now is what stage is Nigeria today? A research work conducted recently by Jude (2007) on appraisal of the implementation of inclusive education Akwa Ibom State, showed that more than 95% of regular teachers in Uyo were ignorant of the concept of inclusive education. As such, we could say that Nigeria is at the pilot stage. This gross ignorance can only be combated through proper administration of the inclusive programme. This will ensure that the aims under-listed of the inclusive education project are attained.

- To increase access to education for children with special educational needs
- To reduce the rate of drop out and repetition
- To raise level of achievement, through the following:
 - Improving the quality of teaching
 - Improving the physical and social environments of schools and classrooms
 - Developing stronger links with communities

As stated above, these aims cannot be achieved without the programme being adequately administered. For instance, for the dream to increase access to education for all special needs children to become a reality, from the planning level to the implementation of the programme must be taken care of before the children concerned can be reached with individualized instruction. When this programme is well administered, it will definitely reduce the rate of dropout and repetition of classes; as all special needs children will be engaged in education that will motivate and interest them. The achievement level of these children will be raised as they are adequately given special attention. Through the

programme the physical and social environment will be properly structure to meet the individual needs of the special needs children. This will break attitudinal barrier and make them bring out their potential talents. When parents are involved in the inclusive education programme, obviously the communities will automatically support this programme. Hence, it is glaring that proper administration of the programme is the pivot around which the success of this important programme revolves.

Some countries where inclusive education training has been received, enrolment, retention and attendance have improved among children with special needs. This had happened as government set up ways to identify children with special needs and training teachers to work productively with them. Children with severe disability were able to attend the National Rehabilitation Centre and later returned to their own regular schools because of how he programme was administered.

In Nigeria, the priority of inclusive education programme should ensure that the poor and marginalized groups are included in all aspects of education and training. Other vulnerable and under served groups including ethnic minorities, girls, house wives and exceptional children, fall within he framework of inclusive schooling. This is in line with Ozoji (2006) who opined that inclusive education is a policy that allows all children and young people (with or without disabilities or difficulties) learn together in ordinary pre-schools, schools, colleges, polytechnics and universities with appropriate network of support. The question is: How is the administrative structure effective, in ensuring the delivery of appropriate network of support services for inclusive education in Nigeria.

Iwuama (2003) asserted that the full interaction process is a progressive educational change which involved among other

things retraining of teachers to enable them to cope with the differences in the children, proper screening, modification of the curriculum and the educational environment needs are met through the administration of inclusive education programme. The above stated view: is in line with the objectives of special education as contained in section 10 sub section 95 of the National Policy on Education (2004) which includes:

- To give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing education opportunity for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- 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.
- 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 nations economic and technological development.

To design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all beneficiaries.

Thus, as a means of realizing the above stated objectives, inclusive education becomes the best tool for the actualization of the above objectives. According to Jude (2007). Inclusive education policy came as a brain child from the belief that he school is a micro-form of the society, and any attempt to train persons with special needs separately from their normal counterparts, whom they would definitely stay together in the larger society would amount to continuous stigmatization and

ignorance in the societal attitude to such persons (Pg. 3). Therefore, the working of the organizational structure responsible for service delivery is dependent on the level of effective administration of the inclusive education programme.

Administration of Inclusive Education in Nigeria

Given the fact that, as education is the excellent tool for realization of national development, it becomes imperative that modern introduction of educational programmes like inclusive education be given adequate attention. This is because the integration of such concepts and the interaction of persons and ideas are aspect of education geared towards national development. According to section 5 of the National Policy on Education (2004) the bases of Nigeria's philosophy of education are to achieve:

- a) Development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen
- b) Full integration of individuals into the community and
- c) Provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels (both inside and outside the formal school system).

The essence of x-raying the administrative aspect of inclusive education cannot be over emphasized. This is because it deals with the process of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, supervising and controlling the effort of various stakeholders in the inclusive education philosophy towards the special educational objectives as earlier stated. This includes creating

effective/successful interaction between inclusive teachers/learners and material resources.

In view of this, Akpan (1995) asserted that administration entails the coordination of human and material resources towards the attainment of predetermined objectives.

Administration of inclusive education approach in Nigeria entails the following procedure as postulated by Ozoji (2006) that before an inclusive programme is adopted in any school the following steps should be considered.

Procedures

- A feasibility study of what is and should be if inclusive school is to be provided, must be ascertained.
- A well planned training manual for the major stakeholders in inclusive education must be developed.
- The administration of inclusive education programme should establish pilot schools first, for pilot testing.
- Awareness campaign on children with special needs should be created in different Nigerian languages ensure that all tribes understand who exceptional children are and can support the inclusive programme.
- Administrative machinery that coordinates the inclusive programme should be put in place.
- Necessary implementation strategies should be developed.

Issues and Challenges in the Administration of Inclusive Education

In this paper, the challenges of administration of inclusive education will be looked at in the following capacities:

- a) Planning
- b) Organizing
- c) Assembling resources
- d) Supervising
- e) Controlling the programme

Planning and designing programme for inclusive education which will be beneficial to the Nigerian education system is very crucial. The style of inclusive education practiced in another country might not quite fit the Nigerian educational situation. Hence, the need for a carefully designed and indigenous blue print for the schools.

For instance, the recent white paper-valuing people (DOH 2001) spelt out how government should partner with local councils, the health services, voluntary organizations and most importantly with people outlined three key principles of "Rights" for special needs persons. These include 'independence', 'choice', and inclusion (MLD Network,2001, P 3). However, such principles are considered during the stage of planning for inclusive education based on the Nigerian context or situation. This could lead to outright improvisation or adjustment where necessary.

This aspect of effective planning will check the problem of non accessibility to local schools by special needs children and also make provision for multi-category personnel to be appointed on full-time bases as resource teachers. This will improve the quality of support services rendered.

In addition, according to Iroegbu (2007) Education for All (EFA) campaign should not become 'education for all minus a category of persons'. He further explained that if EFA is to become a reality in Nigeria, inclusive education needs to be nurtured. The foregoing implies that there has not been adequate administration in the aspect of planning for the inclusive education programme in Nigeria.

For Inclusive Education Programme to be successful, organizing various human and material resources network to help in implementing the programme at the grassroots' levels, setting up personnel structure and training workshops to achieve inclusive

educational objectives become imperative. This entails exposing regular teachers to necessary adaptations and support services. Although, Simmons & Bayliss, (2007) are of the view that the profound and multiple disabled should not be given full-time placement within a mainstream setting with all necessary adaptations and support services. Instead, a commonly proposed model set out to provide education within mixed ability groupings in existing special school provision with some opportunities for part time inclusion is thought appropriate. Hence, there should be organization of personnel and materials to meet the inclusive needs of the profound groups adequately.

It is the duty of the administration, to ensure that methodologies for service delivery in an inclusive setting, is mapped out and set in motion based on the Nigerian situation. This entails planning guidelines for teachers and how to manage special needs children in an inclusive education program. Organizational structure put in place for the training and retraining of staff, irrespective of their location suburb or urban. Assembly of resources has to do with arranging for finance, facilities and other related services for the inclusive education programme. Administrators of the laudable programme should liaise with both international and national groups, stakeholders and Non Governmental Organizations to ensure availability of funds continuously. In addition, necessary government parastatal should be partners in this programme. This will ensure the availability of necessary educational facilities that is supportive for the individual needs of these special needs children. School buildings and environment have to be constructed in such a way that they will be adjustable to the needs of the children in inclusive education programme.

Administration of inclusive education must include putting in place necessary structure for effective supervision of the entire

project such as vehicles, committed personnel etc. there has to be some checks and balances in all the sectors to ensure effective implementation of the inclusive education objectives. This will also justify the huge investment put into the project. However, implementation flaws have been the worm that has eaten up the fabric of almost all laudable programmes or projects, introduced in Nigeria. Therefore, for the investment in inclusive educations to be justified there must be a device used for accountability in all the aims of the programme.

The administration should put in place a feed back structure. This will expose the effectiveness of the programme. It will also help in re-planning and boosting aspects of the programme that is weak, and must be replaced. All facilities and infrastructure should be handled by professionally trained hands to sustain the durability of the facilities. Quality in the administration of learners into all educational levels should be based on identification of each learner's exceptionality for proper placement in the inclusive education programme.

Administration of Inclusive Education in Regular Classroom

Inclusive education remains the universal school system where the exceptional child will be taught along side their regular class peers in a general education class directly supervised by general education teacher. This is done using appropriate special education support and assistance as determined appropriate in line with the individualized education programme. (Kanu, 2001). The foregoing implies that regular class teachers are competent and knowledgeable in identifying, managing and administering educational instruction to special needs children appropriately as well as search for professional advice and assistance where necessary.

Thus, the teaching of special needs children calls for the administration of individualized educational instructions based on the need, interest and ability of each child. This is supported by Adewale (2000) who spells out the following measures for inclusive education teachers.

The teachers should allow each child to use his learning strength to master course content. The child should be taught a memory strategy if his disability does not allow him to remember. The teacher should focus on the learning problems caused by each learner's impairment. For instance, reading or writing skills should be taught.

Lessons should be broken down into attainable, specific steps and assignments for the learners should be broken into minute steps. Reinforcement of learners effort should not be compromised at all. As this will motivate them to respond to the lessons.

The teachers should have full control of the class by guarding against distractions and the use of labels on the special needs children by their regular class counterparts.

Based on the foregoing conclusion and recommendations were made.

Conclusion

The administration of inclusive education programme in Nigeria advocates for unified structures that would be able to respond effectively to the diverse needs of learners in the regular classroom. The administration of the unified system involves extensive restructuring and collaborative approach to the inclusive project. Hence, the call for effective plan, organization, availability of both human and material resources, supervision and quality control of the inclusive education programme in Nigeria.

Recommendations

- Regular teachers at all levels of education should be exposed to the nature and demands of special needs children. This could be done through organizing seminars, workshops, conferences for all teachers in each state. Other institutions of learning should be made to offer more course units on special education.
- Persons with special needs found loitering the streets in the cities should be exposed to rehabilitation services and be gainfully employed.
- Awareness campaigns should be mounted to reach all stakeholders in the education of persons with special needs.
- The location of the stakeholders should not be a draw back if this programme is to succeed.
- Adequate planning must be proactive and realistic to the Nigeria education system.

References

1. Adewale S. G. (2000) Counseling exceptional children: a handbook for professionals and parent working with exceptional children. Ibadan: Emola press.
2. DOH (Department of Health) (2001) Valuing people a new strategy for learning disability for the 21st Century. London: DOH
3. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) National Policy on Education. Lagos: NERDC Section 10, 95.
4. Iroegbu, U.V. (2007) An overview of inclusive education for special needs children in Nigeria. *Journal of childhood and primary education* 3(1) 29-31
5. Iwuama B.C. (2003) Exceptional children and special education. In B.C. Iwuama & A.O Ekwe (Eds). Exceptional children Special education. Owerri: Versatile Publishers.
6. Jude W.I (2007) Inclusive education: some implications for the new democratic regime. In J.A Ademokoya (Ed.) Exceptional Nigerians in the new political dispensation. Ibadan: Options Books.
7. Lefstein, (2002) Inclusive education *Albuquerque journal* (<http://eargle.slate.msn.com/politicalcartoons/archives>)
8. Ozoji E.D (2006) Challenges in educating visually impaired children in the 21st century. In E.D Ozoji (Ed). Updates in inclusive education of special need children Jos: Deka publications.
9. Simmons B. and Baylis, (2007). The role of special schools for children: with profound and multiple learning difficulties: is segregation always best? *British journal of special education* 34, (1), 11-12
10. Unegbu J. I. (2007). inclusive education: past, present and future. A paper presented at the 3rd annual national conference on learning disabilities in Nigeria. Abuja 13th - 15th November, 2007.
11. UNICEF (2001) Children and women's right in Nigerian: a wake up call. Abuja: National planning commission & UNICEF Nigeria.