



DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN, IBADAN, NIGERIA

DYNAMICS OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICE

In Honour of
PROFESSOR MOJI OYEBOLA

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SPECIAL EDUCATION PRACTICE

A BOOK OF READINGS
IN HONOUR OF
PROFESSOR MOJI OYEBOLE

Dynamics of Special Education Practice

A book of Readings in Honour of
Professor Moji Oyebola

(c) 2019 O. A. Fakolade, A. Osisanya, and A.F Komolafe

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CHAPTER 1

ASSESSMENT OF CHALLENGES FACING CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN OYO STATE, NIGERIA

By

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Abstracts

This paper, discusses the challenges of special needs schools among physically challenged individuals in Oyo state, Nigeria. Some of these challenges faced by the physically challenged children in Oyo state in attending quality special needs schools are lack of integration, stigmatization, social relations, transition to a regular school, expensiveness of tuition fees, incongruence between learning environment, lack of trained teachers in special education, poor policy implementation, lack of adequate guidance services for the parents of special needs children, poor legal supports system, poor health care system, poor/negative attitude from the society and inadequate plans for the identification of special needs children. Based on these findings it is recommended that teachers should be trained on special education for the benefits of *physically challenged children*; government should enhance teacher education with the infusion of information technology in training teachers at all level on job training and in-service programme on special education. This will go a long way to influence teachers' attitude towards educating the *physically challenged children*. Government should establish special needs schools in every local government area to cater for the physically challenged children.

Keywords: Assessment, Challenges, Special Needs Education, Special Needs Children

Introduction

Special needs schools and programs offer a wide range of approaches and services for kids who have challenges or disabilities that interfere with learning. They provide support that's not normally provided in *general education* programs. These schools and programs tailor learning to address

each child's unique combination of needs. Adaptations are made to allow kids to meet age-appropriate educational goals. They offer a wide range of approaches and services. This may include smaller classes, individualized learning, one-on-one support, self-contained classrooms, resource rooms, and learning aids. In ideal situation, students with special needs are entitled to an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The IEP spells out a child's learning needs, services the school will provide, and how progress will be measured. Two of the main ways schools support special needs students is through the environment and form of support. There are many environments through which special needs support can be delivered. For instance, there are dedicated special needs schools and classes, integrated classes and regular classes with direct or indirect support. There are also different forms of special needs support. The main ones are accommodations, modifications, and remediation. Many schools offer additional services for special needs students, such as speech-language therapy and occupational therapy. These are often based on alternative learning expectations that are specified by an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Special needs schools and programs vary in their costs. There are many types of funding and aid for special needs schools and programs. The main ones are school subsidies (needs-based financial aid), support from community organizations, sibling discounts and government support. In choosing the right special needs school or program, the most important factor is fit. You should consider whether a school supports the special need(s) your child has, the environment it provides this support in, and how it delivers this support. It's also important that the school is the right fit for your family. For instance, you'll need a school that meets your financial and transportation constraints, and that squares with your values. One need to make sure that lots of research, and comparison and analysis of schools are done before one enrolls his/her child. It's also important to visit schools, meet with staff, and ask lots of questions before you make a final decision. There are many great resources to help you in your search for the right school. These include special needs websites, open house events, and private school expos. The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities defines disability as resulting from 'the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (United Nations, 2006).

In view of peculiarities of physically challenged children's conditions the

following challenges are observed:

School Facilities and Infrastructures for Students with Special Needs

A growing body of research has found that school facilities can have a profound impact on both teacher and student outcomes (Usoro, 2007). With respect to teachers, school facilities affect teacher recruitment, retention, commitment, and effort. With respect to students, school facilities affect health, behaviour, engagement, learning, and growth in achievement. Thus, researchers generally conclude that without adequate facilities and resources, it is extremely difficult to serve large numbers of children with complex needs. Majority of special needs schools had need of extensive repair or replacement and almost two-thirds had at least one inadequate building feature such as substandard plumbing, roofing, or electrical systems. Moreover, 58-percent had at least one unsatisfactory environmental condition such as inadequate ventilation, acoustics, or physical security. Some required general maintenance and construction issues, researchers have found most schools lack 21st century facilities in the form of infrastructure, laboratories, and instructional space. More than half do not have sufficiently flexible instructional space for effective teaching to take place. Thus, facility quality is an important predictor of teacher retention and student learning. There are five primary facets of school facilities: acoustics/noise, air quality, lighting, temperature, and space. Noise levels greatly affect teacher and student performance. In fact, excessive noise causes dissatisfaction and stress in both teachers and students. Research has found that schools that have classrooms with less external noise are positively associated with greater student engagement and achievement compared to schools with classrooms that have noisier environments. Thus, building schools that buffer external noise from classrooms can improve student outcomes. Indoor air quality is also a concern because poor air quality is a major contributor to absenteeism for students with asthma. Research also indicates that many schools suffer from "sick building syndrome" which affects the absenteeism and performance of all students. Moreover, bacteria, viruses, and allergens that contribute to childhood disease are commonly found in schools with poor ventilation systems. Indoor pollutants are also emitted from office equipment, flooring materials, paints, adhesives, cleaning products, pesticides, and insects. All of these environmental hazards can negatively

affect children, particularly in schools with poor ventilation systems. Creating private study areas as well as smaller learning centers reduces visual and auditory interruptions, and is positively related to student development and achievement.

Stigmatisation of Special Needs Children

Individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities face stigma, prejudice and significant obstacles that restrict their human rights. Stigma has been conceptualised as a mark of social disgrace in which the targeted individual is discredited based on attributes such as ethnicity, mental health problems, disability or drug use. Four forms of stigma have been delineated in the literature (Lazarus & Oluwole, 2017). The first, public stigma refers to the attitudes held by society about the stigmatised individual. The second, institutional stigma, occurs when policies reduce the choice of the stigmatised person. Self-stigma, the third form, occurs when the stigmatised person becomes aware of, endorses and internalises public stigma. Typically, studies have focused on self-stigma as experienced by the stigmatised person. Often, however, people associated with the target individual are also subjected to stigmatisation. This fourth type of stigma has been referred to as family stigma, courtesy stigma or associative stigma. Relatedly, the construct of affiliate stigma involves the internalisation of stigma by associates of targeted individuals, such as caregivers. This differentiates it from courtesy or associative stigma, which focuses mainly on others' perceptions of associates, but not on how the latter themselves respond to being viewed negatively.

One thing that hinders full participation in the society for the people with disability is stigmatisation. It has internal and external consequences. It impacts on peoples' quality of life and social and psychological well-being. It causes stress, anxiety and further stigma (Lazarus & Oluwole, 2017). It causes reduced acceptance, discrimination, rejection and social exclusion. It causes label avoidance and makes it difficult to pursue employment or access to services. It can result in a lowering of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Nolan, McCarron, McCallion, Murphy-Lawless, 2006). People who perceive themselves as stigmatised may internalise stigmatising ideas (Graham et al, 2003 cited by Nolan et al, 2006). Stigma coping mechanisms include 1) avoidance-withdrawal, 2) education and 3) secrecy (Goffman, 1963 and Link and Phelan, 1991 as cited by Nolan et al, 2006).

People with disabilities may manage their condition in ways that guard against being stigmatized. In addition, people with disabilities may be especially sensitive to signs of possible stigmatizing from their providers. Some people may choose to conceal their disability in public in order to minimize stigma (Jackson, 2002). As a result, they may be reluctant to use assistive devices, such as mobility devices or hearing aids, or to tell others about their diagnosis. They may also forgo some medical services. While some on the other hand, may express pride and a positive identity around their disability as a way to counteract stigma. These individuals may wish to join groups of people who share their disability, where it is no longer stigmatized. They may also opt against medical treatment intended to "cure" their disability because they have developed a positive identity around the condition. Stigma is social in nature and may interfere with social integration. In contrast to "concealment," people may choose to make their disability more evident in order to improve their options for social participation. For example, a person with a mobility impairment may choose to use a wheelchair instead of a walker if the wheelchair would allow him or her to travel to work or family activities without fatigue.

Accessibility and Availability of Special Schools for Special Needs Children

It is widely acknowledged that governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are making efforts to remove barriers in order to sustain progress that has been made with respect to enrolment of children with disabilities in schools; access is still limited to many especially in Nigeria and developing countries. For example, the government be it at local, state or federal government level cannot say with certainty the number of physically challenge children or children with disabilities that were in school talk less of knowing whether the available schools are enough or not. United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) (2007) indicated that there were 200 million children with disabilities worldwide of which 67million were out of school in 2005. Also, according to Aliman (2013), an estimated 150 million children with disabilities throughout the world were deprived of learning opportunities in 2011. The situation appears to be worst in Africa. For example, World Health Organization (2011) indicated that out of 690,000 primary school aged children with disabilities only 0.3% (2,276) in Nigeria were in school in 1997. In Nigeria, UNICEF (2007) discovered that children with

disabilities face inequitable access to education. Also, a study by the Bureau of statistics Department in Nigeria on Management and Service Delivery and Community Based Rehabilitation in 1999 revealed that 60% of children with disabilities who were between 6 and 18 years of age were not in school due to access. Furthermore, a study conducted by the Ministry of Education (2013) indicated that 10% of children without disabilities were out of school compared to 70% of children with disabilities who were out of school (Ministry of Education, 2013). Facilities constitute a strategic factor in organizational functioning." Children with disabilities are likely to participate when facilities are made available to them. The condition of children with disabilities makes it hard for them to travel long distances to access education. Therefore, once facilities are available in the communities, it will encourage children with disabilities to participate or attend school.

Lack of Specially Trained Teachers to Teach Special Needs Children

There are not enough fully special-education teachers to go around, so the government depends on alternative-route teacher certification programs that allow teachers to work toward full trained teachers while teaching with available credentials. But officials and teachers working at the grassroots level say the inadequate number of trained teachers is a major challenge to special needs schools. In Oyo state, there were 825 teachers who have completed B.Ed. in special education and were working in government and aided schools (Balogun, 2012). Almost all the special needs children gave testimony to this inadequacy.

Lack of Support for Special Needs Children:

At a time when many large schools are experiencing high levels of growth, special education teachers are being asked to do more with less incentive. Salaries are not being paid on time in many states and local government areas, and there is often very little in the way of technical assistance provided by school administrations. Some parents of special needs children are disinterested in the welfare of their children and fail to provide them with adequate care (Nolan et al, 2006). Alternatively, they may be overly protective. Both can be problematic for the child and for their teacher. Disinterested parents may have no involvement with their child's education or interaction with their teachers, whereas overprotective parents may have unrealistic expectations from the child and the child's

teachers. Both attitudes can shape children in negative ways. Parental disinterest may make students with special needs less motivated and parents who are overprotective often diminish their child's confidence and make it harder for them to learn.

Transition of Special Needs Children to a Regular Schools

Transition in special education programs, in general, refers to the movement from one program to another. The "official" term, transition to a regular school simply means graduating from elementary level to higher institutional level. However, this is associated with a lot of challenges like the child's meeting with new teachers and/or administrators and new fellow students who have no idea of strengths and strategies that work well for a particular child. Transitions can be even more frightening to the parent when their child faces the transition out of primary school and into secondary and vice-versa to college, vocational, or other programs. Transition programs require that transition planning begin when a child is very young. This planning goes beyond far beyond the educational planning considerations with younger children and includes concerns about independent living, integrated employment, and community participation (Talk, 2012). It may help to begin by exploring the adult services that are available. The primary agencies include vocational rehabilitation, the Social Security administration, state-level agencies, and independent living centers.

Lack of Adequate Guidance Services for Special Needs Children and their Parents

Physically challenged students with learning disabilities require specific counseling needs that often are not addressed in elementary and normal secondary schools. This article looks at what kinds of support students with this profile need, and how school counselors can provide it. School counselors work individually and with other educators to meet the developmental needs of all students, including those with special needs or disabilities. The results of qualitative research carried out among physically challenged students are summarized involving comparative case studies of university students who were learning disabled. These students encountered negative experiences during the elementary and secondary school years due to this exceptionality that affected their social

and emotional development. An in-depth analysis of their educational experiences enabled researchers to probe their perceptions, and a summary of these findings is presented in this write up. Implications for the role that school counselors can play in the identification of students with this profile are discussed, as is the need for the provision of counseling services for this population within the context of comprehensive developmental school counseling programs.

The Counselling Association of Nigéria, should outlined school counselors' role in serving these students, including responsibilities such as serving on multidisciplinary teams to identify the special needs student and collaborating with others to provide social skills training in classroom settings, in small groups, or with individual students. To effectively implement some of these practices, counsellors need to understand the counselling needs of students with specific disabilities. They also need to know how they can incorporate this knowledge into their defined roles in serving students within the context of a comprehensive developmental counselling program. Recent research indicates that elementary school counsellors are well suited to serve a pivotal role in both providing information related to how to identify students with disabilities and overseeing the various collaborative roles associated with working with students of special needs (Isaacs et al., 1998). School counsellors could be extremely helpful for some students, such as twice-exceptional students, who are particularly difficult to identify and who may not receive either the educational or the counselling program services they may need.

Street Begging among Special Needs Children

The disabilities are a serious challenge to a developing country. Poverty as a consequence of disabilities may occasionally lead to destitution and street begging, especially in areas where rehabilitation services are scarce. Street beggars are individuals or group of persons who beg or make a living from the streets by asking people for money, food and clothes as gifts or charity. Street begging is a social challenge and a menace that is rampant in Nigeria and Oyo state in particular. Some poor individuals resort to street begging to sustain their families. This is more pronounced among people who are physically challenged particularly the blind persons and the lamed individuals. Poverty and disabilities are linked in a cycle in developing countries, as poverty is not only a cause but also a consequence of disabilities (Ammani, 2009).

The physically challenged children should be rehabilitated and exposed to vocational training program which could make them to be self dependent instead of depending on others for daily needs through begging. The strategies to be employed include concerted teamwork, training, better management, monitoring and evaluation of rehabilitation centres. These strategies should be a reflection of local needs, based on the assessment of what really needs to be done. The assessment should address not only what or how much to do, but also address the question of how an existing program can be done better.

Conclusion

The author concludes that if all the challenges discussed in this paper like, school facilities, stigma, accessibility and availability of special needs schools for special children, inadequate number of special education trained teachers, lack of support for special needs children, transition of special needs children to regular schools, lack of adequate guidance services for the special needs children and their parents, begging among physically challenged children and that most of special needs schools are located in the urban areas are properly handled and reduced to barest minimum or completely put to halt the physically children will live comfortable and self dependent life.

Recommendations

Based on the discussion of this paper, the author hereby made the following recommendations:

- i) School Facilities and Infrastructures for Special Needs Students should be made available by the government and the NGOs.
- ii) Stigmatisation of Special Needs Children should be stopped hence forth and government should put in place laws that will prevent people from having negative attitude towards physically challenged children.
- iii) Accessibility and Availability of Special Schools for Special Needs Children should be made available in every cities, towns and villages across Oyo state.
- iv) Government should make provision to train teachers that can handle special needs children.

- v) The government, NGOs and privilege individuals should try to support for special needs children in all ramifications.
- vi) Guidance counsellors training institutions should train their students on counselling and guidance services for special needs children and their parents so as to better their lives and be able to live a fulfill life.
- vii) The special education experts should also make sure that the interest of students with special needs should be bore in mind and they seek assistance for these children from relevant authorities.

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