

# **FUNCTIONS OF VOLUNTEER CLUBS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION AND THEIR REQUIREMENT/RECRUITMENT**

**BY**  
**ELEMUKAN, I.O.S.**  
**UNIVERSITY OF IBADAN,**  
**DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, IBADAN**

## **ABSTRACT**

*Volunteers and/or volunteer clubs are not common in Nigeria even if they exist, especially in special education, they have not been fully earnest in the implementation of exceptional programmes. In essence, it is important to have volunteers and volunteer clubs in special education, since they provide both educational, social, recreational and sports opportunities for the disabled in Nigeria. They also serve as 'political lobbyist, for legislation's, on behalf of the exceptional children and enhanced the economic productivity of the disabled lots. Importantly, volunteers can serve as advocates, or form an advocacy group, to fight for the rights of exceptional children, as well, serves as auxiliary teachers/resource persons in schools and rehabilitation centres.*

## **PREAMBLE**

Special Education is quite a new field in Nigeria, which has just began to find its right footings and directions based on the 1997 policy statement. Yet, the services meant for the exceptional children ultimately are not in place due to lack of adequate legislation coupled with haphazard implementations of the non-mandatory policy statements which is not justifiable because its breach may not be successfully challenged in our courts.

Reger, Schroeder and Uschold (1986), defined Special Education "as an area within the framework of general education that provides".

- (a) Appropriate facilities;
- (b) Specialised materials and methods and;
- (c) Teachers with specialised training for children considered handicapped; which may even be positive or negative.

Mba (1990), similarly quoted Garrison and Farce, who cited "Gare" (1959), that the objective of Special Education is to meet the unusual needs that any child may have, without labelling the person as being different from

all other human beings. According to Mba, (1995), the beneficiaries of Special Education are those (exceptional) who deviates from the average or societal, norms.

It is to this sequence, that one found the inadequacies related to the non-utilisation of volunteers and volunteer clubs in Special Education as another great disservice considering their inherent values to Special Education and the exceptional individuals education.

## **HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES AND DEFINITION**

According to Encyclopedia Botanical Volunteers are the individuals that decide to dedicate their lives to the service of humanity, particularly to the less privileged in the society willingly. It is a general term for soldiers who are not professionals and not permanently embodied under arms in peace time. Volunteer could be defined as one of the free services, which emphasized volunteerism. (Voluntary substitutes for militiamen and in separate company units.

Voluntary services started in Great Britain and dates back to 1957 and the middle ages, when bodies of volunteers some times served side by side with the compulsorily enlisted professionals members of general Army or Feudal Lords Army. (Volunteer rifle corps); which later metamorphosed into volunteer formation of clubs in the 17th century. Legislation Act, supported the selective training act of volunteers in the 1940s.

Moreso, educationally, the use of volunteers existed primarily for the mentally retarded groups, in advance countries, who now have volunteers services, for all categories of exceptionality. In Nigeria however, the beginning of deaf education in the early years of 1956, (physically handicapped 1914, Blinds 1953 as cited in Mba, 1995, P. 12); witnessed the services of the volunteered group by the philanthropists, who gathered and played with the deaf children and offer them recreational picnics and later introduced education before

the missionaries finally took over from them the system of education of the handicapped including leprosum services.

In fact, many thousands of volunteers in the world over, are whole-heartedly involved, in the disable programmes, why then not in Nigeria? Who then are these volunteers? Volunteers in a lay man's language, are those who do something out of his/her own free will. It may be something that is dangerous or something that, there is no agreement of any kind. Such a person is not compelled to do it, but only does it, out of his own volitions. In essence, the individual offers himself for a kind of service as in the case of the exceptional lots (handicapped and gifted) services, or other communities' works.

Volunteers include parents, lecturers, teachers, traders, community leaders, choir groups, clubs and societies; as well as business men, administrators, women, clergy-men, high/school/college students, fraternities etceteras. These groups can make up volunteer clubs at the ward, school, local, state and national levels. We may then have lecturers/teachers volunteers club, parents volunteers clubs, school volunteers club, hospital volunteers clubs, women volunteers' clubs, wife of administrators' volunteers clubs.

The study carried out by Fredericks et. al. (1977) significantly supported the use of volunteers clubs in our educational system especially for the handicapped. The study further identify indicators of competencies of teachers of the severely handicapped.

In essence the ability to maximise instructional time is the primary indicator in this study. This is to say that members of the volunteers clubs do expand their time, strength, effort and energy, to help the disabled children without any gratification, rather than the joy of satisfaction, prestige that accompanied such a service.

### **RECRUITMENT AND REQUIREMENT OF VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER CLUBS**

The pre-requisite competency expected of volunteers are that she/he should be the person(s) who:

- (a) Have keen interest of the disabled/gifted youngsters at heart;
- (b) Cares about the disabled and the well being of the exceptional persons;
- (c) Are ready to make handicapped children proud of themselves;
- (d) Are ready to make parents proud of their children;
- (e) Are ready to sacrifice their time, effort and

strength, so as to work effectively and efficiently with the disabled and gifted learners.

- (f) Are resourceful, enthusiastic humorous, purposeful, facilitative and sincere in their approach.
- (g) Are ready to work with the disabled to help them become physically fit and fully adjusted to the society;
- (h) Are ready to inspired the exceptional children in every scope of life.
- (i) Are ready to equip them with the desire to compete, achieved and lead more meaningful lives, especially the handicapped.

Hence the recruitment of volunteers clubs, may be sourced from different sources, which may include; colleges clubs. High school clubs, parents clubs, different associations, women's club, teachers clubs, lecturers' club and other service clubs, like Rotary club, act lion/lioness clubs, doctors clubs, girls guide, boys brigade, boys scout, nurses clubs and other community clubs in the vicinities, including religion and social organisation, as well as wives of governors, president and military officer.

### **FUNCTIONS AND NEEDED TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS AND VOLUNTEER CLUBS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Volunteers are needed to provide among others, the following essential services to the exceptional persons:

- (a) They provide help and supervision in order for the handicapped to meet the activities of daily living skills and possibly economic independence and productivity.
- (b) They support and provide educational, recreational and sports facilities and equipment for the exceptional children (gifted and disabled).
- (c) They assist in supplying needed educational/personal materials to the schools and the exceptional children, such as textbooks, teaching aid materials, relief materials, educational aids and gadgets, used clothes and lavatory materials, supplementary food stuff for boarding students and general resource assistance for the smooth running of the schools and centres.
- (d) They seek necessary assistance from voluntary organisation, philanthropists, governmental and non-governmental bodies as well as from other welfare associations.

- (e) They provide enrichment opportunities to assist in brain storming of the gifted and talented persons.
  - (f) They help in modifying the behaviour of the autistic, and speech impaired through playing and activities oriented programmes.
  - (g) They help in early identification, screening exercises, as well raise the awareness of the public toward better services and needs of the exceptional children.
  - (h) They serve as job seekers for the jobless disabled lots and act as follow up officers.
  - (i) They teach the exceptional some specific skills and train them in vocational, competency skills.
  - (j) They guide as educational and career counsellors in homes and villages to the exceptional children and their parents.
  - (k) They hold clinics for the publics to copy for the needed exceptional treatment of the disabled and gifted learners alike.
  - (l) They serve as lobbyist in government and world organisation levels, as to implement the policy and legislation on special education and welfare services for the exceptional lots by the governmental bodies.
  - (m) They mount campaigns and programmes for the exceptional learners on the radio, television and other news medias; about the disabled, especially in the area of prevention, causes and educational services available.
  - (n) They act as auxiliary and resource personnel in schools and centres.
  - (o) They help in organising social gatherings and lively outings and programmes for the disabled and gifted learners.
  - (p) They assist in erecting public buildings in schools and centres such as hostels, classrooms, laboratory, assembly hall, dinning rooms and can provide the lots of structural needs of the disabled lots in their institutions.
  - (q) They serve as sighted guides to the blinds in different situations.
  - (r) They serve as interpreter club for the deaf on important occasions and gatherings.
1. Specific roles they are to play such as in teaching specific skills of daily activities, behaviour modification, enrichment programmes, physical education, games and sports, recreation, special school curriculum.
  2. Social mobility and orientations for the blinds, sign language for the deaf and interpreting skills.
  3. Learning the causes, prevention and minor assistance to the needy exceptional lots.
  4. Learn how to record/observe performance, in a way that can be communicated easily to the specialists, teachers/organisations.
  5. Learn the different, psychology and educational aspects and needs of various exceptional children that exist in our society. Modified from Dunn & Harris 1979:138).
  6. Learn how to observe the behaviour of the child objectively and in the area of task analysis, which describes the accurate emitted behaviour of the person concerned.

#### PRINCIPLES TO FOLLOW

According to Dunn and Harris (1979) to effectively used a volunteer's club all over the world, including Nigeria, the principles to follows should involve:

- (a) Taken time to train the volunteers in different specific skills.
- (b) Volunteers must be used as task-teaching in the classroom, comparable to their levels of training, such as teacher aids, diagnostician assistant, examination/text facilitators based on the exposed training experience given to the volunteers.
- (c) A simplified system of communication, not requiring verbal interaction, between the teacher and the volunteers, must exist and be inculcated.
- (d) A system of flexible schedules and scheduling of volunteers must be utilized.
- (e) The volunteers must have assess to the handicapped – schools and centre, in order to be initiated, integrated to the need, ability, liability and assess of the handicapped and the gifted; as well as to the total system of the institution, since they are both partners in progress.

The task required a lot of dedication and commitment of the volunteers; hence to effectively perform the onerous task and functions, it is imperative for volunteers to undergo intensive training, coaching and orientations in the following major areas:

## **ADVANTAGES OF VOLUNTEERING PROGRAMME TO THE VOLUNTEERS/DISABLED/COMMUNITY**

1. It serves as an avenue for the individual to contribute his/her quotas to the societal development, as well as serves as a means of helping others in the community or locality to grow healthy and develop his/her potentialities to the fullest.
2. Positive examples are laid for the community and the entire youths to copy such as good habit, moral and community participation.
3. It help the individuals to realise what it means to contribute meaningfully to the communities.
4. The individuals learn to work with young people, their parents officials and other volunteers.
5. It promote social mobility, friendship, happiness and means of relieving stress, emotional worries and it serves as a means of recreation for the individual concerned (outdoor activities).
6. It assists the individuals to acquire the necessary experience and talents to get along with a variety of, activities, people of different ages, interest, needs and the demands of exceptional lots.
7. It serves as means of educating the community in participatory educational needs of the exceptional, as well as providing a good foundations for the posterity to emulate, especially to develop positive attitude toward the disabled.
8. It serves as a significant model of community participation in rehabilitation services for the inclusive learners (as a form of community based effort toward rehabilitation)
9. They help the disabled to succeed and become more independent.
10. They help the handicapped to derive the self satisfaction that come from a willing heart; as well as give the volunteers the satisfaction of helping the youngsters/exceptional, to develop appropriately all round education.

On the whole, the individuals gain status, prestige and personal satisfactions for the rendered services; which culminates to a long live, and, an integrated growth and development, for those that engaged in volunteerism, as well as for those that, will be served by the volunteers.

## **CONCLUSION**

Considering the innumerable functions and advantages of volunteering, and volunteers services to the exceptional and individuals alike. Education experts should intensify all efforts to enlist volunteer services in school, centres and exceptional institutions without any biases since they are both partners in progress rather than competitors.

Volunteers can serve as the catalyst that will act as facilitator for the clamoured needed changes in the routine implementation of special educational programme and policy for the handicapped.

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