

ENSURING EFFECTIVE INCLUSION OF SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS INTO THE REGULAR SCHOOLS FOR A MORE USEFUL LIVING

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Abstract

In this paper, attempts have been made to provide clarification on what inclusive education entails. Besides, expected benefit of inclusive education have been clearly highlighted. Some fundamental strategies for ensuring effective inclusion of special needs children into our regular schools featured prominently in the paper. Finally conclusion is drawn by calling the attention of the regular teachers, special teachers and other stakeholders to have mutual co-operation all with a view to ensuring the success of the inclusion phenomenon.

Introduction

The fact that special needs individuals including those with obvious and visible handicapping condition should be properly and adequately educated can hardly be disputed. Besides, the principle of equality of educational opportunities cannot be fully realized when a segment of the population is either neglected, forgotten or at most marginalized educationally. This is largely due to the fact that every individual whether able bodied or has form of deformity or another, has a role to play in achieving national development. In fact, it has been explicitly stated in the National Policy on Education (2004) that one of the objectives of special education is to give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.

It should be noted that a disable body is not a disabled mind. Certainly, it is not surprising to find hidden talents being harbored in the disabled body. Actually, there is a popular saying which states that “disability is not inability. In view of all these, there is therefore the need to be acquainted with certain strategies that would go a long way in ensuring effective inclusion of special needs persons into our regular schools so that they can develop feeling of worthwhileness, values and dignity instead of educating them in a segregated settings. Additionally, separate provision caters only for a small percentage of the obviously special needs learners (Charles, 2003).

What is inclusive education?

Longman Dictionary of contemporary English (1995), defines inclusion as the action of including somebody or something into a larger group. In education the concept goes beyond that. The term inclusive education has been subjected to various definitions. However despite variations in approach to defining the concept, all the definitions tend to

portray similar meaning. For the purpose of clarify and precision, inclusive education simply refers to the process of enabling students to participate in the life and work of mainstreamed institutions to the best of their abilities whatever may be their needs (Ladipo, 2002). In other world in this arrangement, both the special needs and non-special needs are educated in the some learning environment. By implication as Obani (2002), right observed that our education system has to be restructured in such as a way that it accommodates all learners as much as possible, no matter the difference.

Benefits of inclusive education

Certainly, inclusive education if fully and properly implemented will pave way for some essential benefits one of such benefit is that of creating opportunities for making friends with non-special needs counterparts. This is because scholar like Obani (2002), have rightly posited that inclusion enhances social interaction that creates cooperation and understanding among learners. A typical inclusive classroom has a heterogeneous composition of learners.

Through inclusive education of persons with special needs, societys perception of the children or persons with special needs that had hither to been negative could change. This is based on the fact that through inclusion, the public will have a better understanding of the conditions of the persons with special needs. In essence, change perception will lead to change in attitude (noted, Komolage, 2003).

Inclusion equally has the tendency to reduce if not completely eliminate fears among the special needs learners Adebisi (2003), Postulated in strong terms that through inclusion, learners are able to gain confidence in themselves and related socially and educationally.

A very interesting thing with the inclusion phenomenon is that teachers are likely to acquire a more healthy and positive attitude towards people with special needs on the one hand, and on the other hand doing away with some discriminatory attitudes. Supporting this, Charles (2003), strongly asserted that regular schools with inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes ensuring effective inclusion.

Since inclusive education is believed to have replaced the age long segregation placement (Knight, 1999), and that segregation itself gives room for discrimination, creates avenue for communication gap as well as induces inferiority complex, (Adebisi, 2003), the need for ensuring effective inclusion of special needs learners in the conventional educational arrangement for a more worthwhile living can hardly be contested.

No doubt, adequate teacher preparation will go a long way in ensuring effective inclusion of persons with special needs into our regular schools. Both regular and special teachers should be well trained to shoulder the task of inclusion. In training the teachers, Taura (2011), maintained that emphasis should be placed on helping them to produce instructional materials that will be more relevant to their lesson and needs of the learners.

This is because the teacher is the initiator of the learning skills (Lassa, 1998). He is also regarded as the single most important element of fostering the frontier of knowledge (Adima, 1990).

Provision of needed facilities/equipment that are vital in educating the special needs children is essential and highly desirable. Such materials include wheel chairs, crutches, artificial limbs, special writing tools, bookstand or holder for the physically impaired, magnifying devices for these with low vision, hearing aids for the hearing impaired, typewriters and braille machines for the visually impaired among others (Garuba, 2001).

It is worthy of serious consideration that public enlightenment can serve as the most basic means through which informed materials about learners with special needs particularly those with obvious and visible handicapping condition can be written and disseminated. Ozoji (2003) observed that the essence of such education is to enlighten the public to understand that disability has no “spread effects” and that it limits a person in some defined ways just as it does not prevent the person from doing so many other things people of his age do.

It is a well known fact that poor societal attitudes toward special needs persons tends to make them feel rejected, dejected and psychological unstable. Thus, the need for attitudinal changes on the part of the public can not be over –emphasized. Behind this background, Ozoji (2003), encourages changes in attitude toward the special needs persons essentially through public enlightenment, cultivation of genuine sympathy and fundamentally designing a role playing demonstration a blind followed by a discussion period. This should be borne in mind while handling learners in an inclusive setting

Besides, teaches role to effectively execute inclusion of learners with special needs if worthy of mentioning. Teachers should develop interest in teaching children with special needs. This is because if the teacher is not interested in the lesson, the students will regard him/her as a distract rather than a guide. Accordingly, deliberate effort should be made by regular teachers to call the attention of special teachers to any special needs learner in their class. In order to succeed in accomplishing their task, Garuba(2001) advised that teachers of special needs learners should have patience, courage understanding, emotional balance, resourcefulness among other essential qualities.

While pointing out ways of ensuring effective inclusion, the role of parents can not be ignored. Parents should not see school environment as a dumping ground for their children regular visits should always be paid to them in their school as this will give them a sense of belongingness. The parents should also be able to monitor the progress of the child. Komolafe (2003), observed that this can lead to functional co-operative effort between parents and teacher. The cooperative effort of the parent could be in the area of finding out the child’s progress as well as encouraging both child and the teacher.

Taking into cognizance the importance of scientific knowledge, Okoro (1999) emphasized that parents of the special needs learner should be involved by science

teachers in the teaching of science to these children at home. Many scientific concepts can be handled by the parents of the special needs learners right in their homes, in practical forms through careful assistance to and supervising of these parents by their children's teachers for instance, science teachers can teach parents of special needs learners many practical things they can get their children to do thereby helping them to learn science at home.

Perhaps, it is interesting to posit that for inclusive education to prosper, a review of the curriculum is very crucial. According to Garuba (2001), in most cases, the curriculum of the special needs learners is expanded to include other subjects which are not taught under regular educational arrangement. For instance aspects of braille reading /writing for the visually impaired, sign language for the hearing impaired, while for effective inclusion of the gifted learners an enriched curriculum is needed

Conclusion:

In conclusion, it could be rightly posited that inclusive education is directed towards making the special need, learners feel more confident, sociable and comfortable in the learning situation. This however, can only be achieved if teachers are adequately trained and prepared for the task, necessary facilities /equipment provided, public enlightenment been mounted, curriculum been modified and fundamentally cultivation of genuine sympathy aimed at doing away with negative unhealthy and damaging attitudes toward the special needs individuals.

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