



WWJMRD 2018; 4(3): 128-132

www.wwjmr.com

International Journal

Peer Reviewed Journal

Refereed Journal

Indexed Journal

UGC Approved Journal

Impact Factor MJIF: 4.25

E-ISSN: 2454-6615

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Strategies for Improving Institutional Security for Special Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Special education in Nigeria has been misunderstood and this has affected its programmes and services as persons with disabilities suffered all forms of abuse and discrimination. This study investigated strategies that guaranteed security for special education in Nigeria. The study adopted survey as its design, guided by a research question and questionnaire was designed by the researcher, validated by experts in special education, educational research and measurement and used as instrument for data collection. Two hundred Participants were purposively sampled and used for the study, Descriptive statistics was used to analyzed data from the field and findings revealed that 82 (41% =SA), 59 (30%= A) of the participants agreed that, collaborative mechanism, formation of people with disabilities organizations, improved funding, professional associations, establishment of ministry or commission for special education and improved awareness/advocacy promotes security for special education. On other hand 38 (19%=SD), 21(10%=D) disagreed that aforementioned strategies does not contribute to security of special education. Considering the number and percentage of responses criteria, the study concluded that the above mentioned strategies promote security of special education and by implication protects persons with disabilities from abuse and discrimination. It was recommended among others that stakeholder particularly government should promptly put in place workable network for effective collaboration in the provision of security for special education and persons with disabilities in Nigeria.

Keywords: security, collaboration, special education, disability

Introduction

The history of special education and persons with disabilities world over is characterized by inhuman treatment of various degrees especially in developing countries. In traditional African society including Nigeria the birth of a child with disability was adequate reason for sanctions. Obi (2011) observed that the presence of a special needs child in most parts of Nigeria was characterized by accusations from members of the family and parents. Shock, shame, sorrow, anxiety, depression, resentment, denial resulted to marital instability. However, the advent of missionaries was a relief to parents, families and children with disabilities through their awareness, advocacy and establishment of schools and vocational centers to primarily educate and empower them with skills. The unique feature of missionary intervention was that its curriculum and programmes were limited and seen as well as moral obligation as well as tool for evangelism or cooperate social responsibility (CSR). TO consolidate efforts of the missionaries the then military government led by General Yakubu Gowon promulgated a decree that empowered government to established special schools to educate children with disabilities. Subsequent government built on this land mark decree but institutions that should champion the course of special and its clients were and are still weak due to lack enforceable legislations, poor funding among others. This resulted to gross failure in the discharge of their duties of providing policy frame work that would have laid the foundation for the provision security for special needs children and the overall development of the field.

In Nigeria institutions like schools, ministries, agencies, Non- governmental organizations and the likes are established to provide the needed support for the seemingly neglected area had no enabling environment. For instance, there is provision for special education in all

versions of National policy on education but these provisions as wonderful they are remain mere promissory note. Iheanacho (2014) rightly pointed out that this cannot provide security for special education and children with disabilities in global standard. Institutional security for special education as conceived in this discourse broadly means protection, safe guard, regulatory policy, directives and care initiated, pursued to develop, improve special needs education and prevent persons with disabilities from physical, social, emotional, and psychological injurious harm in the society and school. It also encompasses measures that will protect teachers and other stakeholders from false accusations that may endanger their jobs. Considering the cardinal nature of this subject matter and the cost of special education especially in an ICT driven society the task should be collective responsibility of all partners. Institutional collaborative approach should be the platform to pursue this obvious and essential task because special education and its clients cut across all facet of the society hence the philosophy that no one profession/professional can do it alone. Concern professionals in Nigeria are worried about how best institutions can improve the security of PWDs and development of special education primarily to empower the target population for self and development of the society as well compete with their peers globally. It is on this basis that collaborative mechanism, formation of DPO, improved funding, establishment of ministry of special education or commission and assertive awareness/ advocacy, professional associations among others are considered as potential strategies for improvement of institutional security for special education and PWDs in Nigeria

Review on Strategies for Improving Security for Special Education in Nigeria

Institutions are formal establishment or organizations by government or individuals charge with specific responsibilities to provide services for the society. These services could be educational, social, economic, cultural, security among others and cannot be provided in isolation thus, the need for effective institutional collaboration become obvious. Institutional security in this paper means protection, defense, care, and safe guard provided in line with laid down rules or mandate of the respective institutions, it is not conceived solely as protection of life and property. Principally, every institution works within the compass of it legal provisions and network with others in the entire system. This is very particular about special education and its clients because disability is the construct of the society. Institutional security for special education could further be conceptualized as policies, decisions, enforceable rules, protection and care provided in accordance with specific institutions mandate to protect children and adults with disabilities either in school or society as well as enhance optimal development of special education services and practice (orim,2016). This subject matter is also subsumed in policy, plan, programme, training, devices, and rules that focused on securing the practice of special education, it clients and other relevant stakeholders. From the foregoing, it implies that the concept is a multidimensional compass on which all aspects of special education revolve. Further analysis of this definition will show that if security is be provided by any institution for special education it policies and rules must be:

- ✓ Enforceable with or without sanctions
- ✓ Disability friendly and focused
- ✓ Inclusive
- ✓ Collaborative and emphasize equality, access to resources and facilities among others
- ✓ Meet global best practices/benchmark

According to Andy (2014) reliable and functional institutions must be registered and recognized by laws within its operational environment, has specific purpose(s), values, relatively permanent, has contacts which can be online with official site or physical address and motivated staff and good management. The vulnerability of children with disability requires that adequate security should be provided by well-structured institutions. As security measure the authors maintains that efforts must be aimed at preventing the target population from inhuman treatments, abuse of rights and denial of access to required services. In line with this, Knight Security system (2016) observed that in Texas, US senate Bill 507 has been signed into law to guarantee the security of children with special needs in school and prevent teachers from false accusations. The law was a direct response the cases of abuse, maltreatment and false accusations against teachers' as well unauthorized access to personal identifiable data of children with disabilities. This law among other provisions requires that all classrooms or schools in Texas running special education programmes should have video surveillance cameras to check abuses and prevent false accusations. Although this device is a good security measure it is not common in Nigerian classroom. However, this study holds that it is a welcome development that will optimally guarantee security for children with disability especially female with hearing impairments who are often victims of these abuses.

Federal government of Nigeria (2011) studied the role of institutions in the development children with special needs and special education it was revealed that institutional networking otherwise called collaboration is key factor to providing this essential service and a best strategies to satisfactorily achieve its goal with minimum cost. From the study it is observable that although government ministries, agencies and Non NGOs share common aspirations for PWDs their activities are not properly collaborated, some see theirs as mere moral obligation. It is instructive from this study that a well-structured collaborative mechanism among institutions/ stakeholders be designed to foster better understanding of role, areas of partnership for improved security and other essential services. This has become paramount because of the vast and cardinal nature of security for special education and its clients, this requires that all hands should be on deck. Formation of DPOs and professional associations perhaps as pressure groups with well-defined networking capacity and compass will not only compliment efforts of government but it will also records more achievements in the desired direction(s). It could be recalled that the name learning disabilities as it is known now was the direct efforts of an organization in its formative years. Ola (2016) study activities of DPOs in Nigeria and found out that formation alone categories of disabilities and their operation to some extent hinders success because clashes of personal interest and politics. The author position is that each could have identity but work under umbrella body to achieve better results. United

Nations (2011) note that in some West African country like Mali marginalization, abuse, isolation and poverty among PWDs has been reduced due to activities of umbrella organization, Federation Malienne Des Association de Perssonnes Handicapees (FEMAPH).

Professional associations are potent tool for development and provision of security for special education. These are organizations formed by professionals in special education and people from allied professions. In Nigeria, a 27 year old National Association for Exceptional Children (NAEC) and National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) among others have promote, contribute to the development of the field and PWDs through activities and events like workshops, seminars, researches, exhibitions and conferences. NAEC (2015) acknowledges that the ongoing research on Tertiary institutions and special education in Nigerian is initiated to comprehensively evaluate all aspect of special education including the issue of abuse of children with disabilities in Nigeria. NASSET in own capacity is concerned with development of teachers to meet the varied and challenging needs of inclusive classroom as well as manpower need in Nigeria. It is hope that these efforts will yield results like that National Association of Exceptional Children in America, Learning Disabilities Associations in Canada and America (LDA, LDAC).

Provision of security for special education and persons with disabilities especially in the 21st century where cutting edge technology is requires is capital intensive and adequate funding. Unfortunately Nigeria has not been able to comply with the statutory quota of 25% recommended by UNESCO to fund education. This trend of underfunding has direct effect on the provision technologies and related services that could enhance security of special education and it clients. It is instructive then that efforts in area of funding of special education should be pursued with sense of vigor and direction because it is the life wire of any institution. Awareness and advocacy is a salient factor in provision of security and related services for special education. As a strategy for security, stakeholders are responsible for creating and speaking for those who cannot defend their course. It is actually bringing to someone notice and knowledge what he/she is ignorant about while advocacy entails speaking, and agitating for something on behalf of the vulnerable. This has recorded good successes for special education in many countries. In New York, US Advocate For Children (AFC) has successes in protecting and promoting the rights of students with disabilities for the past 40 years. Their activities cover areas such as litigations where children rights are denied (few of these include Jose P vs. Mills, L.V. Vs. New York City Department of Education among others), education, employment, family education, health etc. Advocacy group is always a team without personal interest but are passionate about welfare of PWDs. It will be rational and educative if Nigeria can have robust advocacy network to defend and promote security of special education and move the public from traditional to scientific attitudes towards issues in special education security matters (Ozaji, 2005).

In Nigeria institutions ministry of education is directly responsible for education including special education however, other ministries such as women affairs, Youths, sports development and welfare occasionally on event like world disability day pull resources together to address

issues that concern special education and PWDs, they do this as moral will not statutory commitment. This is so because none of these ministries is primarily responsible to PWDs and special education. Thus, if a ministry and commission of special is created with principal mandate to handle all issues concerning special education the era of other ministries doing "Christmas" for people with special needs will cease to exist as the ministry will operate as an institution with a core mandate for special education. According to Young (2016), countries with sister ministry and moral will approach to special education often create a gap that negatively impact on special education. The need for ministry and commission for special education in Nigeria is portrayed by frequent neglect of the area in allocation of national resources mostly because it just a unit in ministry. The proposed framework if well-structured with departments such legal, monitoring/evaluation, planning/ research, funding, among others will bring the much desired development of special education in Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Through assertive and consistent advocacy and awareness special education and PWDs have relatively gain adequate prominence in the society however, it progress and practice is still experiencing myriad of institutional hiccups in many areas including provision of services that prevent discrimination, abuse and neglect of special education programmes and services in Nigeria. The passage of laws on special education and Individuals with disabilities in some states has not help the situation. Institutions like schools, ministries NGOs etc that should have champion the course of special education are still weak due to systemic challenges. Arising from the foregoing children disabilities of school age are denied admission, abused, undervalued, unauthorized persons have access to personal identifiable data and false accusation stakeholders especially teachers. Considering that these trends cannot promote and develop special education and provide security for the present and future of individuals with disabilities, this study is design to investigate strategies that could possibly provide secured future for special education and its valuable clients in Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The main thrust of this paper is investigates strategies that could guarantee security for special education and children with disabilities in the society especially in schools. The focus is on what institutional strategies will develop special education and protect its vulnerable clients from discriminations, abuse among others.

Research question

This study was guided by a research question framed thus, what institutional strategies will guarantee security for special education in Nigeria?

Methodology

In this study, survey research design was adopted primarily to give the researcher opportunity to use large sample and enhance generalization of findings to larger population. A 21 item questionnaire with four response scale was designed by researcher, validated by experts in special education and educational research, it reliability of 0.78 was determined using test-retest method. Participants

consist of 200 hundred purposively sampled special education practitioners and PWDs across Nigeria. Their consent was formally sought for and approval received, other ethical issues were complied with. The instrument was directly administered by the researchers and descriptive statistics was used to analyze data from the field.

Presentation of Results

Research question

What strategies will institutions use to provide security for special education in Nigeria?

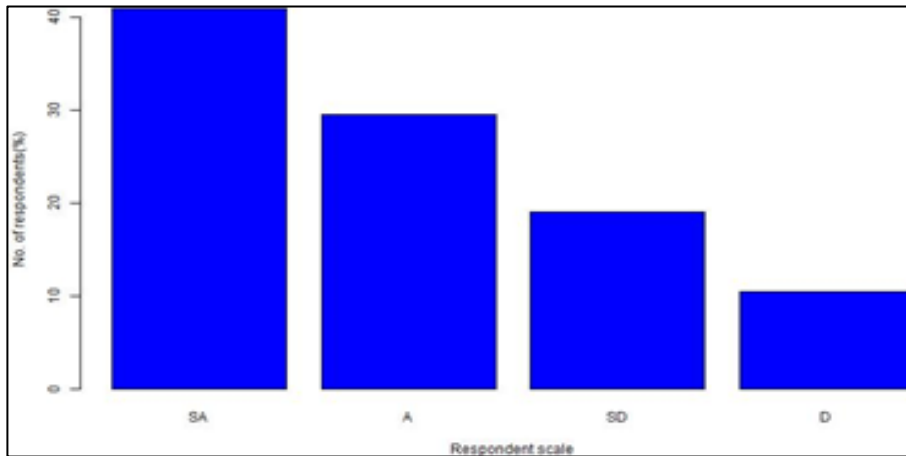


Fig.1: Bar chart showing participants' Response

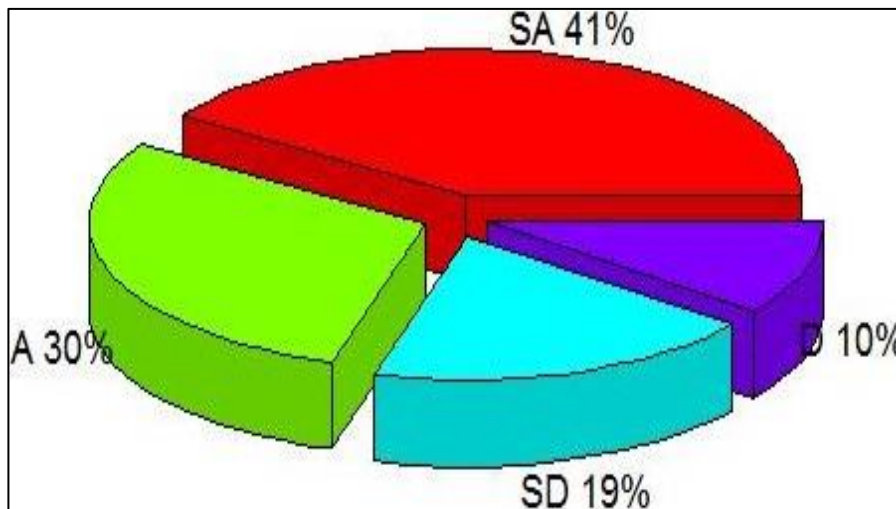


Fig.2: pie chart indicating Response from participants

Discussion of findings

This study investigated strategies that could improve institutional security for special education and its clients in Nigeria. The findings validate the vulnerability of this target population either in school or in the society. As responsible government efforts are made to institutionalized security of valuable citizens with disability. Specifically, the study affirmed through 141 (70.5%) of the participants that collaborative mechanism, formation of people with disability organization, improved funding of special education, active professional associations (like NAEC & NASET), establishment of special education commission or ministry and improved awareness and advocacy will address developmental needs special education and provide security for its clients. However, 59 (29.5%) of the participants disagreed that strategies articulated in this study has no potential develop special education and protect its stakeholders including those living with disability in the society. The finding of this study is corroborated by FGN (2011) in her submission

that effective collaborative network partnership with relevant stakeholders both national and international will move the discipline and immediate beneficiaries of the services closer to global best practice in meeting their needs. It is also supported by Young (2016) who findings agreed that establishment of a commission or ministry for special education will save it from being mere recipient of "good will" from ministry of women Affairs and politicians who trade with the vulnerable group for their political fortune. The author and this present study argues that a commission or ministry with specific mandate will go a long way helping to shape special education in Nigeria as it will be accountable. Additionally in line with NAEC (2015) findings, the study validates the role and importance of professional Associations. Its articulate the contributions of such associations in developed countries and specifically alluded to the pioneering role National Association of Learning Disabilities in America played in the development of what is seen today as specific learning disabilities.

Conclusion

Disability has been and will remain part of a normal society; this implicitly means more responsibilities for government and other relevant stakeholders. One of such is the provision of security for special education and its client through well-established institutions. This has become imperative in the light of global pressure and pursue of rights of persons with disabilities to education, healthy living, employment, personal human dignity, freedom from discrimination among others. The challenge of providing these seems to be difficult for a country like Nigeria; with strategies articulated in this study the road map to getting it right has been provided.

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