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An Analysis of the Educational Needs of Children with Disability in Sokoto state

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Abstract

This paper empirically analyzes the educational needs of children with disabilities in Sokoto State of Nigeria. The research was conducted at A A Raji Special School Sokoto. Two instruments were used for the study which includes Questionnaire and interview with a targets group of three respondents that is the Disabled pupils, teachers and parents. The data was collected using Questionnaire and in-depth interview. The main objective of the study is to find out the extent to which special education program affect the lives of the disabled children in Sokoto State of Nigeria. The research finds that students/pupils that attended the school were found to be very clean and healthy, they can read and write and even secure jobs, that the program is very vital in the lives of all the disabled children and their parents, because it equips them with the knowledge and skills that will makes them to become self-reliant individuals in the society. The classrooms are inadequate to accommodate the number of the students/pupils admitted in the school and there are inadequate qualified teachers in the school. Finally, the study suggests the establishment of more special school to cater for the children with disability in Sokoto state.

Keywords: Educational, needs, Children, Disability

Introduction

Over nine million (9m) school age children were believed to be *Almajiris* who were totally out of school, 3.6 million of them are children with different disabilities (FGN, 2015). Education is a right to every Nigerian child irrespective of tribe, religion, and section or economics background. The importance of education to any given country is over emphasized that is the reason why many nations of the world have embraced it. Nigeria government has equally embraced education in its totality. National Policy on Education (NNPE 2004) states that, every Nigerian child shall have a right to educational opportunity irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities "Nigeria as a nation is committed to Education for All (EFA) by 2015 she has equally made education tuition free and compulsory for pupils and students under Universal Basic Education (UBE). The UBE programme was officially launched on October 20, 1999 in Sokoto, Sokoto State" (Amori, 2005). Special education is the practice of educating students with disabilities in a way that addresses their individual differences and needs. Ideally, this process involves the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of teaching procedures, adapted equipment and materials, and accessible settings. These interventions are designed to help individuals with disabilities achieve a higher level of personal self-sufficiency and success in school and in their community which may not be available if the children were only given access to a typical classroom education.

Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives.

Disability, which encompasses a number of different functional limitations (including physical, intellectual, as well as sensory impairment, medical conditions or illness), occurring in any population, in any given country of the world, is a basis for discrimination. Notwithstanding, this people along with other socially excluded members of the society are entitled to exercise their civil, political, social, economic, educational and cultural rights on

an equal basis with others. This is why Omede (2010) postulated that “the importance of education to humanity and the economic sector in particular of any society cannot be over emphasized as it gives ample opportunity to those that are educated to contribute meaningfully to national development be it in agriculture, health, sports etc.”

Background of The Study

The right to education has been universally recognized since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 26) in 1948. It states that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.” It falls under the category of economic, social and cultural right (entitlement to receive an education) as well as civil and political right (free choice of education). It aims at an adequate standard of living, wellbeing, self-development and protection of human dignity. Katarina Tomasevski, in a study of government reports to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, listed no less than 32 categories of children that are particularly likely to be excluded from education. Among them are abandoned children; asylum seeking children; beggars; child laborers; disabled children; child mothers; child prostitutes; street children etc.

Despite the laudable aims of special education programme there are still vacuum spaces to be filled. Even in the States where special schools for the disabled children exist, the ratio is incomparable with that of the normal schools. It was observed with dismay that despite benefits inherent in Special Education, children with special needs have not fully embraced and tapped into it due to a number of problems such as inaccessibility, inadequate sensitization programme, lack of funding inability of the government to come up with accurate figure of persons with disabilities, lack of specialists to carry diagnostic procedures, and lack of knowledge of general classroom teachers to detect a child in their classroom having required special attention as well as wrong placement of children with special needs in classes and schools where their needs are not taken into cognizance.

The national policy on education (2004) stated that, the philosophy of education is based on the following set of beliefs: education is an instrument for national development and social change; education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria; education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society; education is compulsory and right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society. (FGN, 2013). Education also allows the enjoyment of other human rights like right to work, health, food, political participation, equal opportunity and full participation in society For education to be a meaningful right, it must be available, accessible (non-discrimination access to education), acceptable and adaptable. In a wider sense, education could mean the training of the entire person to enable him not only to be able to read and write and

calculate or to be proficient in a given job, but also to enable him fit himself for living in a society. So education could be treated either, as a very narrow subject relating to school and formal education or as training covering the whole life (Goodluck& Juliana, 2012).

Purpose of The Study

This research work sought to identify the educational needs of children with disability in Sokoto state. It also sought to identify the problems faced by parents in educating their disabled children in Sokoto state. The research work also hope to find solutions to the identified problems.

Statement of The Problems

Education in its largest sense is any act or experience that has a formative effect on the mind, character or physical ability of an individual. In its technical sense, education is the process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another (Hubpages, 2014). Education empowers people toward personal development, to contribute to society as an independent and emancipated citizen, to have control over one’s personal life, to control the government and to move up the social ladder. It also allows the enjoyment of other human rights like right to work, health, food, political participation, equal opportunity and full participation in society. For education to be a meaningful right, it must be available, accessible (non-discrimination access to education), acceptable and adaptable. It is one of the core obligations of a State to ensure access to education on a non-discriminatory basis. The State has an obligation to protect the most vulnerable groups in the society and to provide special educational facilities for persons with educational backlog. However, it is in the treatment of minorities and vulnerable sections of society that we see the real test of a government’s duty to protect, respect and fulfill the rights of its citizens and those under its jurisdiction.

Special education on the other hand is the education aimed at meeting the special learning needs of learners in order to assist them to attain their optimum development, and to live a meaningful interactive life in the mainstream of the community. Abang (2005), explains that Special education is designed in order to address challenges pose to an individual and to enable him/her attain a meaningful life. He further explained that the aims of special education is to train the child to be an oak, strong and independent, self-reliant rather than grow like a pumpkin or vine, weak and dependent.

But, it was observed with dismay that despite benefits inherent in Special Education, children with special needs have not fully embraced and tapped into it due to a number of problems such as inaccessibility, inadequate sensitization programme, lack of funding inability of the government to come up with accurate figure of persons with disabilities, lack of specialists to carry diagnostic procedures, and lack of knowledge of general classroom teachers to detect a child in their classroom having required special attention as well as wrong placement of children with special needs in classes and schools where their needs are not taken into cognizance. Against this background and considering the enormous resource challenge for the special education subsector in Nigeria today, it becomes highly imperative to examine the Educational Needs of children

with Disabilities in Sokoto State. The research work is therefore committed to investigate to what extent the special education program affects the life of the disabled children, the public perception on the benefit of educating children with disabilities, and the problems faced by parents and the disabled education program.

Objective of The Study

The objectives of the study are;

- i. To find out the extent to which special education program affect the lives of the disabled children in Sokoto State of Nigeria.
- ii. To find out the problems faced by parents in educating their disabled children in Sokoto State.

Research Question

The study is set to answer the following questions;

- i. To what extent the special education program affect the life of the disabled children in A A Raji Special School of Sokoto State?
- ii. What are the problems faced by parents in educating their disabled children in Sokoto state?

Methodology

The research design used is descriptive survey. The design was mainly to describe the situation, characteristics or behaviour of a particular population or variable in a systematic and accurate pattern. Descriptive design uses questionnaires, interview, observation or Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to collect information about people’s attitudes, belief, feelings, behaviors, life styles, as well as opinions, because it is to collect data from the respondents without changing or modifying the situation under investigation as literature expounds (Sambo, 2000). The target population of this study comprises all the Disabled pupils 130, teachers 30 and parents 30 making a total of 190 respondents. A purposive sampling was used in selecting 130 Disabled/pupils, and 30 teachers who would fill in the study questionnaires.

SN	School	Category	Number of respondents
1	A.A Raji	Blind pupils	45
2	A.A Raji	Cripple pupils	40
3	A.A Raji	Deaf pupils	45
4	A.A Raji	Teachers	30
5		Parents	30
6		Total	190

The instruments used for data collection are research structured questionnanire and interview.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section deals with presentation and analysis of the result of the field work collected through quantitative and qualitative design of the study. The quantitative data was presented and analyzed using frequency and percentage. While information obtained from qualitative data was analyzed in themes and sub-themes.

**Presentation and Analysis of Quantitative Data
Effects of special education on the life of the disabled children**

Educational Needs of the Respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation
Need to devote more time to my studies	3.51	.723
Need to learn how to read and write	3.02	.968
Need to learn how to study and pass important examinations	3.35	.751
Need for financial support to the study	3.11	1.069
Need on how to cope with my condition	2.93	1.039
Need to accept correction without being upset	2.73	1.141
Need for teachers to be more approachable	2.85	1.114
Need to stop worrying about other people sayings	2.63	1.253

Source: Researchers field work, 2019.

above shows that the higher needs of the respondents is the need to devote more time for studies which has the mean of 3.51 and standard deviation of .723, followed by the need to learn how to study and pass important examinations with the mean of 3.35 and standard deviation of .751, need for financial support with the mean of 3.11 and standard deviation of 1.069 and the need to learn how to read and write with the mean of 3.02 and standard deviation of .968 while the lower needs of the respondents are the need on how to cope with my condition which has the mean of 2.93 and standard deviation of 1.039 followed by the need for teachers to be more approachable with mean of 2.85 and standard deviation of 1.114, need to accept corrections without being upset with the mean of 2.73 standard deviation of 1.141 and the need to stop worrying about other people saying which has the mean of 2.63 and standard deviation of 1.253

Presentation and Analysis of Qualitative Data

The target respondents for the interview were 30. The findings from interview were presented under the following themes and sub-themes

1 Admission into AA. Raji Special School

There is no specific time allocated for admission. But admission is always open to all the disabled children anytime.

Respondent 1 states that:

There is no specific time for admission in AA Raji Special School. When a disabled child is brought to the school, we admit him instantly whether at the beginning of the school session, at the middle or at the end, provided the school is on session. He further states that, there is no special requirement for admission provided the child is a disabled child; we only receive one hundred naira (N 100.00) only as PTA levy.

1a Students Enrolment per Class

AA Raji Special School is the only school of its type in Sokoto state and that is the reason why the enrolment of the students per class is so much with about 80-100 students per class which makes learning difficult especially with the disabled students/pupils.

2 Mode of Retention in AA Raji Special School

Retention and completion is an integral part of every schooling activity. Students of AA Raji special school are also expected to stay and complete their studies after they are admitted into the school. the following are some of the criteria’s followed to achieve retention and completion in the school.

2a Ability to read and write

Almost all the students/pupils admitted into AA Raji Special School cannot read and write in English. But when they started their study, within reasonable period of time, they will be able to read and write using their special reading and writing material. This encourages the parents to enroll their children into the school and it also motivate the students to stay in the school and continue to learn.

Respondent 11 explains that:

One of the most interesting thing is that presently I can communicate with my child who is deaf through writing. It also makes the child happier because he can communicate with people without the use of sign.

2b Extracurricular activities

Students/pupils are always participating in sporting activities in the school which makes the school livelier and attract the attention of the students/pupils to stay in school.

Respondent 3 affirms that:

There are sporting activities in the school that most of the students both male and female participate.

2c Provision of good accommodation facilities

The students/pupils hostel is available in the school and there is a demarcation between the girls and boys hostels with tight security. There are also beds and mattresses in both the hostels.

Respondent 1 added that:

All the boarding facilities are provided to the school including bedding and mattresses which makes the hostels conducive for the students/pupils.

2d Students/pupils quality of life

Quality of life involves encouragement towards good habits such as moral behaviors, cleanliness and responsiveness as well as exposure to effective learning habits. Students/pupils of AA Raji Special School are trained in that aspect. Teachers are also dedicated to their duties.

Respondent 7 States that:

We remove away stigmatization from our students by showing them love and affection as well as training them to be good, presentable and useful members of the society.

The study reveals that students/pupils of AA Raji Special School are train to be worthy in both character and learning.

2e Provision of Food

Food is one of the major basic needs of life. For any learning process to become effective and permanent, student/pupil must eat food and drink good drinking water. Students/pupils of AA Raji Special School are provided with food and are some of the major reasons why the students/pupils are retain in the school and learning is taken place.

Respondent 25 asserted that:

The government effort in providing three-square meals and good drinking water is one of the major aspects that help in retaining the students/pupils in the school.

The finding reveals that provision of food and good drinking water to the school contributes positively in students/pupils retention.

2f Parents and Relatives Visit to the School:

Visit to school by parents and relative is very important to the students, because it makes them to feel happy and secured. The visits help in relieving children feelings of being away from home and will encourage their stay in school.

Respondent 29 assert that:

We visit our children in school every last Sunday of the

month they feel very happy. We always met them in a very good condition of health and clean and the school is well secured

The findings indicate that parents and relatives visit to the students/pupils of AA Raji Special School contribute positively in the pupils retention and completion. The findings of this study also reveals that provision of basic needs such as food, good drinking water, boarding facilities and the ability of the students to read and write contribute immensely in students retention and completion in AA Raji Special School. It further reveals that the ability of the students/pupils of AA Raji Special School to communicate both verbal and non verbal significantly assist in encouraging the enrolment of children in the school as well as the acceptability by the members of the public.

3 Availability of Infrastructural Facilities

Infrastructural facilities in school are those physical items that assist in enhancing the welfare of the students/pupils as well as making learning more easy and real. They include Classrooms with chalk boards, laboratories, assembly halls, furniture's, medical facilities and sporting equipment. These infrastructural facilities are basic necessity for the survival of any school. Availability of these infrastructures assists in making learning more effective by arousing the interest of the learners to learn.

Respondent 19 explains that:

There are many class rooms but they are not enough to accommodate the students, therefore there is the need for more class rooms in the school. The school fencing is ok, the principal office and the two vice principal offices and the staff rooms are all in good shape

3a Parents Attraction on Infrastructure

Provision of good infrastructural facilities to school always attracts the interest of the parents towards a school.

Respondent 7 observed that:

The infrastructural supply is good, government have tried, because the school is so attractive especially the school landscaping, the fencing which makes the school to be more secured and we the parents feels that our children are save and secured.

Respondent 25 added that:

We are thankful to the government for establishing the school. Also the infrastructural facilities in the school help a lot in making learning easier to our children. There is constant supply of water in the school, but there is the need for improvement on the issue of electricity supply, provision of more student hostels and class rooms. The shortage of student's hostels makes it impossible for all the students in the school to be boarding.

The study reveals that the available infrastructural facilities in the school attract parent's interest to enroll their children into the school. But there are the needs for the provision of more hostels and class rooms to accommodate the students in the school.

3b Availability of Health Facilities

Provision of health facilities is very important in any human setting. There is a school dispensary in AA Raji Special School with a health personnel attached to it.

Respondent 1 explains that:

We have school dispensary with a health personnel attached to it, he is in charge of giving first aid treatment to the students/pupils. If the case is serious, there is a school bus which we always use to convey patients to the hospital for treatment.

This indicates that serious measures are taken on the issue of students/pupils health.

4. Learning Materials

Learning materials are those facilities use by teachers and students in teaching and learning processes that helps in making learning effective. These include text books, chalk board, white b, computers, brailing machine, hand frame, markers, chalk board, white board cardboard papers and so on.

4a Computers and other Learning Materials for the Disable Students/Pupils

Computer is a modern instructional material that plays a vital role in teaching and learning activities. It makes learning easier and very fast in the processing of data and information. It helps special School students/pupils are also affected on that aspect which end at affecting teaching and learning in the school.

Respondent 1 further explains that:

The problems faced by teachers in the school are the shortage of instructional materials such as the hand frame and brailing machine for the visually impaired children.

Respondent 12 also added that;

The instructional materials provided to the school by government are not enough and even when people are contacted for assistance, they hardly respond. But respondent 13 argue that some community members use to donate books and pens to the school. Also respondent 33 further added that the instructional materials for the visually impaired pupils are too cost, so he called on the government to provide more of such materials to the school.

This reveals that there are no adequate instructional materials especially hand frame and brailing machine in the school which makes it difficult for teaching and learning.

4a Government Provide Learning Materials to the School

Respondent 29 explains that;

Government use to provide text books, science equipment and other special learning materials to the school, because the school is a special school with special peculiarities that needs special considerations. Respondent 45 further add that special text books for the special pupils were provided by the government. But it is the parents that provide their children with note books and pens.

This indicates that government provides learning materials to the school, but the learning materials provided are not enough.

5. Feeding and Funding of AA Raji Special School

Food is an essential and basic necessity for living. For the students/pupils of AA Raji Special School to be able to stay in school and study, they require food for survival since they are not with their parents/guardians and they are also disabled children.

Summary of Major Findings

The major findings of the study are:

i. The study reveals that AA.Raji special school is a school that is under inclusive education which is divided into two sections. The school for the Disable pupils and the conventional secondary school, but the main concern of the researcher is the school for the Disabled pupils. The study shows that admission into AA Raji special school for the disabled pupil is open to all the disabled pupils in Sokoto state and pupils from other states especially Kebbi and

Zamfara states.. The study further shows that parents accepted the programme due to the impact that they notice on the life of their children, that's the mode of dressing and cleanliness, ability to read and write and above all securing of jobs by some of the graduated students of the school.

ii. The study also reveals that AA Raji special school is the only school of its type in the whole of Sokoto state. On the acceptability of the programme the study indicates that the programme was highly accepted by the people of Sokoto state, but the school is not enough to accommodate the disabled pupils that need to enroll. It also reveals that only 20% of the teachers in AA Raji special school are trained to teach special education, and therefore there is the lack of qualified teachers on special education in the school. This clearly indicates that the school will not be able to cater for the educational needs of children with Disability in Sokoto state. It further shows that the class rooms and hostel facilities are too small to accommodate the admitted pupils which lead to allowing many pupils to stay at their houses and come to school on daily bases (Day students) that consequently affect their leaning activities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this research are based on the research questions of the study as follows:

1. To what extent the special education program affect the life of the disabled children in A A Raji Special School of Sokoto State?

The study was set to ascertain the extent to which the special education programme affects the life of the disable pupils in Sokoto state. The result of the study shows that students/pupils that attended the school were found to be very clean and healthy, they can read and write and even secure jobs. According to one of the respondent; People accepted the program almost hundred percent. The program is very vital in the lives of all the disabled children and their parents, because it equips them with the knowledge and skills that will makes them to become self-reliant individuals in the society. This finding is in line with the saying of Abang (2005), that Special education is designed to train the child to be an oak, strong and independent, self-reliant rather than grow like a pumpkin or vine, weak and dependent.

2. What are the problems faced by parents in educating their disabled children in Sokoto state?

The problems faced by parents in educating their children are:

- i. Lack of information; majority of the people in rural areas are not aware of the existence of the school and even those that are aware of the school, they do know the procedure to and enroll their children.
- ii. Shortage of class rooms, furniture's and hostels; the class rooms are inadequate to accommodate the number of the students/pupils admitted in the school.
- iii. Cost of learning materials; some of the learning materials are too cost to by the parent and the one's available in the school cannot go round for the students.
- iv. Inadequate qualified teachers: One of the findings of the study indicates that 80% of the teachers in the school are not qualified to teach special education.

- v. Unavailability of schools for special education programme. The school is the only one of its type in the whole of Sokoto state and it is not catering for only the disabled pupils but it's an inclusive education school and therefore did not have the capacity to accommodate the number of the disabled pupils that need to be enrolled. There is the need for establishing more special schools that will cater for only the special pupils.

Recommendations.

The study recommendations are as follows:

1. Government should establish more special schools to cater for the children with special needs. At least one special school should be established in each local government headquarters to cater for the disabled children in that local government.
2. Provision of Instructional materials; Instructional materials should be provided to all the special schools established in all the local government head quarters
3. The schools should be equipped with all the needed furniture's and other boarding equipment.
4. Recruitment of qualified teachers for special education.
5. Provision of adequate teacher training. The ability of teachers to provide quality education to students with disabilities depends on their training and qualification.

Conclusion

AA Raji special school is the only school of its type in Sokoto state and therefore it's not enough to cater for the educational needs of children with disability in Sokoto state. The government of Sokoto state should establish more of such schools. There is also the need for an enlightenment campaign so that people will be aware of the existence of the school. It was also reveals that special education programme has a positive impact on the life of the disable pupils in Sokoto state.

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