



WWJMRD 2017; 3(9): 343-344

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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The Organization and Administration of Special Education in Nigeria

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Book review:

Reviewed by Orim, Samuel Orim

The author of the above intellectual piece is a seasoned academic with wealth of experience and passion for knowledge to transmitting same to posterity. He is a professor of Special education with specialization in learning disabilities, in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation sciences, University of Jos Nigeria. The author has published many articles in both national and International learned Journals as well over ten in his field and general education.

The one under review is an expression of intellectual prowess seasoned with rich experience in teaching, community service and administration within and outside the University system in Nigeria. Prof Mark Lere is convinced that special education is a response therapy to exceptionality in any society. Based on this, he is certain that for persons with special needs to be useful to themselves and the society, policies, programmes and services must have direction and stakeholders should be conscious and focus on their responsibilities hence his contribution (The Organization and administration of special education in Nigeria) to the development of the discipline in Nigeria.

The book consists of eleven chapters each beginning with an insight and precise introduction to acquaint readers with the real intellectual menu ahead of time. It covers essential issues in contemporary organization and administration of special education in Nigeria. Specifically, it stresses the overwhelming importance of providing special education and related services as well as highlights the need for stakeholders such as administrators in Ministry of Education and schools to have requisite knowledge to articulate, formulate and implement special needs education policies. Most importantly the book re-echoes the need/ability of principal stakeholders to collaborate with legislative bodies in Nigeria to enact enforceable legislations that give legal backing to implementation of special needs education policies. The author is categorical about the ability of special education teachers to translate policies into effective and efficient service delivery in line with global best practices. The book is also concerned about the administrative structure of special education, policy formulation mechanism, the role of advocacy, NGOs, and individuals in special education administration as well as the urgent need for reliable national data bank on persons with special needs as basis for effective planning and provision of adequate services in Nigeria. The concern for pre-determined channel of communication among different offices, officers, level of government and other relevant stakeholders is articulated scholarly.

In chapter one the author succinctly conceptualized special education, special needs persons from societal, educational, medical and biological perspective. He vividly traces the history of special needs education in Nigeria with emphasis on the significant pronouncement of the then Military head of state LT. GEN Yakubu Gowon in the 70s and concludes the chapter by categorizing exceptionality using condition first approach rather than persons first approach and highlights the relevance of special needs education to both primary and secondary stakeholders.

Chapter two focuses on fundamentals of policy and programme in special education, and role of legislations in implementation. In this chapter, the author states categorically the role

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of professional associations such as National Association for Exceptional Children (NAEC), National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET), Parents Organizations (PO), Persons with Disabilities Organizations (PWDOs) as pressure group to actualize all that concerns special education /its clients. Individuals are encouraged to carry out action research in policy formulation, implementation and administration of special education in Nigeria.

Chapter three is a layout of ideal administrative structure of special education in Nigeria with concept of Nigerian federalism in mind. However, the author spells out the role of specific bodies/agencies and recommend that a professional should head and be active in policy formulation and other stakeholders be retooled to brace up to the challenges of special education administration. In chapter four, attention is focus on implementation and monitoring of policy/programme as well as constraints to effective implementation of special education policy and administration in Nigeria. He identifies among others lack of political will, underfunding, misplaced priority, financial corruption and lack enforceable legislations as set back to special education in Nigeria. He summarized the chapter by suggesting measures such as attitudinal re orientation, frequent review of policy and culture of accountability be cultivated among Nigerians.

The next chapter presents and expressively discusses the concept of census of children with special needs as recommended by National policy on Education. He highlights the process, significance, instrument, personnel and professional bodies to collaborate for success of the exercise. In an in-depth approach chapter six is dedicated to advocacy in special education with specific emphasis on meaning, nature, types, factors enhancing advocacy, its relevance and challenges that may likely hinders effective advocacy for clients with special needs. Chapter seven expresses the author professional knowledge in the management of school records/information about learners with special needs especially during assessment, teaching and referral. The author categorically states that the ethics in access to information about persons with disabilities should be strictly maintained so that unauthorized persons do not have access to information about clients. The author in chapter eight underscores the importance of basic special education literacy among administrators and scholarly discusses how to apply administrative principles in the management of special education and its clients. In the ninth chapter administrative styles/leadership as well as their implications for special education administration are interestingly presented. The role of special education teachers in decision making at classroom level is equally discuss. The chapter is concluded with a call on special education administrators to be mindful of their leadership because it is one of the major determinants of success or failure of special education policy/programme.

In chapter ten the classroom is presented as the main theater for the management of learners' behaviour and their instructional needs. The author recommend that teachers capacity should be build to manage inclusive learning environment and the last chapter focus on the traditional model of service delivery in special education as postulated by Reynold and Deno. In addition, seven levels in service delivery as designed by Thomas and Bauer are highlighted. The author stress the need to professionally blend these

models with inclusionary school and instructional practices. He concludes that services should be delivered in with global best practices.

Lere, M.M (2007). The organization and administration of special education in Nigeria. Jos: University press Ltd. ISBN 978-166-557-0