

ACQUISITION OF VOCATIONAL SKILLS BY PERSONS LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN EDO STATE: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT: *The disabled constitute a significant demographic group in the Nigerian population. Estimates vary for the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria. There is a need to provide VTE that will accord children with special education and an enabling environment. This study reviewed the state of disability in Nigeria and the skill abilities of the disabled. Despite the skill abilities of the disabled as identified, this studies reviewed, revealed that the challenges militating against the incorporation of VTE for the disabled are community Perception on Disability, the absence of mechanisms for evaluating special VTE of Children with disabilities, equipment/Infrastructure factors and teacher's Factor. The study recommends that a vocational educational curriculum which suits the educational needs of children with disabilities should be designed together with the pedagogical way of teaching as well as the educational environment that will suit the learners.*

KeyWords: Disabilities; Vocational and Technical Education; Teachers' Factors

INTRODUCTION

The educational policy of vocational and technical education is aimed at manpower development in Nigeria. It is a programme designed to train and produce technicians for industry, impart vital technical skills in the youths, towards achieving the goal of self-employment and job creation.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2002) stated that Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a comprehensive term which encompasses the study of technologies and related sciences and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, understanding and knowledge related to occupation in various sectors of economic and social life. The attainment and actualization of functional technical education for sustainable youth empowerment was also emphasized by the National Policy on Education (2004). The policy is aimed at:

a. Providing trained manpower in applied technology particularly at, craft, advanced craft and technical levels.

b. Provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and electronic development.

c. Give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically. The objectives of Technical and Vocational education and training (TVET) as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) include the following:

(a) To provide trained man power in applied science, technology and commerce particularly at sub professional levels.

(b) To provide people who can apply scientific knowledge to the improvement and solution of environmental problems for the use and convenience of man.

(c) To provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development.

(d) To give an introduction to professional studies in engineering and other technologies.

(e) To give training and impart the necessary skills leading to the production of craftsman, technicians and other skilled personnel who will be enterprising and self-employed. To enable young men and women to have an intelligent understanding of the increasing complexity of technology in today's world.

In the Technical colleges, youths acquire such skills as skilled technicians: bricklayers, carpenters, painters and auto mechanics; laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electrical/electronic technicians and skilled vocational nurses. According to the Federal Ministry of education Technical Education is defined as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills as well as basic scientific knowledge". Technical education provides opportunities for the mastery of skills and knowledge in selected occupations as well as for the development of personality for useful living. They essentially:

(a) Provide general education

(b) Provide training in selected occupations

(c) Help trainees to develop the requisite skills and abilities necessary for securing and retaining a job

(d) Help in creating employment and self-employment

The disabled constitute a significant demographic group in the Nigerian population. Estimates vary for the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria. The World report on disability, published in 2011, said about 25 million Nigerians had at least one form of disability, while 3.6 million of these had very significant difficulties in functioning. The 2006 Nigerian census reported 3,253,169 people with disabilities, or 2.32% of the total population of 140,431,790 in that year (Wikipedia, 2018). However, the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, a Nigerian NGO, claims the census did not capture the full extent of disability in Nigeria, and has called on Nigeria's National Population Commission to cooperate with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development for the 2016 census in order to measure disability more accurately. The five most common types of disabilities in Nigeria are, in descending order, visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, and physical impairment. Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March 2007 and its Optional Protocol on 24 September 2010.

A 2008 study by the United Kingdom Department for International Development (UKDFID) found that the public, the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development, and disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in Nigeria understood disability within a discourse of

welfare and charity. This is as opposed to emphasis on social adaptation, inclusion, and empowerment as advocated by the social model of disability that is generally favoured in the field of disability studies. Disability can be acquired at any point in a person's life. This therefore, should be a rallying point for those who have the responsibility of establishing an environment capable of dealing with any would-be cases of disability.

Although inclusion provides enrichment for all involved, it is important not to overlook the challenges one is facing. A curriculum which suits the educational needs of children with disabilities should be designed together with the pedagogical way of teaching as well as the educational environment that will suit the learners. It's important to design a simple curriculum so as to make it easy for the participants to understand, achieve good outcomes, and prevent lack of participation from the students. To improve upon the capabilities of children with disabilities and children with special education needs, the choice of the right curriculum and pedagogical practice for training as well as education environment is very important (Mcdermott, 1993), referring to a study in American society. To sum up, much work is to be done in developing a principled framework for a fair distribution of educational resources and opportunities aimed at inclusion (Terzi, 2005).

There is a need to provide VTE that will accord children with special education and an enabling environment, rather than making the children with disabilities to fit into specific educational or school settings as Evans noted in a study carried out in England. He found out that one of the key needs was to adjust education settings for people with disabilities to fit well in the school (Evans, 2008). But the authors have not specifically pointed out the key needs of this so called "education setting" for children with disabilities. The setting of the school goes a long way in helping children with disabilities attain their educational goals (Ainscow, 2007).

Inclusive Education: Education for All

In June 1994 UNESCO summoned the world nations to meet in Salamanca in Spain to further the objective of Education for All. The main focus was to enhance inclusive In 1990, delegates from 155 countries, as well as representatives from some 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations, agreed at the World Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand (5th – 9th of March 1990) to make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy before the end of the decade. (World Bank 2000).

To continually take further the cause of Education for All, world nations met again in Dakar Senegal in the year 2000. In this forum nations had the opportunity to assess the achievements, lessons and failures encountered. One of the resolutions in Dakar was to ensure all children, with emphasis to the marginalized children like those with special educational needs, to have access to and complete a primary education of good quality by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

The UN standard rules on the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. Among the major outcomes of the Decade of Disabled Persons was the adoption, by the General Assembly, of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities in 1993. Although not a legally binding instrument, the Standard Rules represent a strong moral and political commitment of Governments to take action to attain equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The rules serve as an instrument for policy-making and as a basis for technical and economic cooperation.

The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities hold that in situations where the general education system does not adequately meet the needs of all people with disabilities, Special Education may then be considered as a solution. The quality of such education should reflect the same standards, goals and ambitions of a general education and should be closely linked to it (WCPT, 2011).

Developmental Disability

The term developmental disability was essentially created by the 91st United States Congress in 1970 (Parette & Peterson, 2008). Before developmental disability there was many terms used, which are no longer used today. For this study the term Developmental Disability will be used. Developmental Disability is also referred to as Intellectual Disability. The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) uses the following definition: Intellectual disability is a disability characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and in adaptive behaviour, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. (<http://www.aaid.org>, accessed 20.6.2014). Developmental disability reflects the fit between the capabilities of individual and the structure and expectations of their environments.

Causes of Developmental Disability

Developmental disability is caused by many different kinds of trauma to the developing brain and nervous system. In many cases it is difficult to pinpoint the exact cause of the damage or time when it occurred. According to the alter regional centre for development (2018) the possible causes of developmental disability includes:

- Brain injury or infection before, during or after birth.
- Growth or nutrition problems.
- Abnormalities of chromosomes and genes.
- Babies born long before the expected birth date - also called extreme prematurity.
- Poor diet and health care.
- Drug misuse during pregnancy, including excessive alcohol intake and smoking.
- Child abuse can also have a severe effect on the development of a child, specifically the socio-emotional development.

Skill abilities of the disabled in Nigeria

The disabled constitute a significant demographic group in the Nigerian population. Estimates vary for the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria. The World report on disability, published in 2011, said about 25 million Nigerians had at least one disability, while 3.6 million of these had very significant difficulties in functioning. The 2006 Nigerian census reported 3,253,169 (Wikipedia, 2018).

However, the Centre for Citizens with Disabilities, a Nigerian NGO, claims the census did not capture the full extent of disability in Nigeria, and has called on Nigeria's National Population Commission to cooperate with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development for the 2016 census in order to measure disability more accurately.

The four most common types of disabilities in Nigeria are, in descending order, visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual impairment, and physical impairment. Nigeria ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities on 30 March

2007 and its Optional Protocol on 24 September 2010. Disabled people have been found to be skilled in the following vocational areas; Leather works, wood carving, bronze casting, computer operations, drafting, weaving and knitting, painting and decorations, graphic designs. Of the few studies that did compare working life situations among different types of disability (e.g., Boman, Kjellberg, Danermark, & Boman, 2013; Clausen et al., 2004, Crisp, 2005), employment opportunities were found to differ between types of disability. Crisp (2005) identified variables related to vocational outcome for six groups with disabilities (five with medical disabilities and one with psychological disability).

The severity of disability as well as socio-demographic, psychological and psychosocial factors was key predictors for returning to work or employment status after onset of disability. Key predictors differed both between and within the disability groups. Clausen et al. (2004) studied the labour market in Denmark for groups with communicative, physical, medical and psychological disabilities. In brief, the group with communicative disabilities, including the hearing and vision impaired, had the best opportunities on the labour market. Most problems entering the labour market were found in the group with a psychological disability.

In Statistic Sweden's additional investigation, disabilities are categorised as deafness, hearing impairment, dyslexia, blindness/vision impairment, stuttering, language/speech or voice disorder, psychological impairment, asthma/allergy, diabetes, heart-lung condition, gastrointestinal disease, psoriasis, epilepsy, physical impairment and intellectual disability. Thus, the disabilities reported in Statistic Sweden's (2005b) report were divided into 16 sub-groups. People who had several disabilities were asked to indicate their primary disability.

Here, a division was made into broader categories. The categorisation was partially based on earlier studies (Clausén et al., 2004) on disabilities and welfare that divided disabilities into four groups: communicative, psychological, medical and physical. In this study, the disability categories are in three sub-groups: "communicative-hearing" including respondents with deafness or hearing impairments; "communicative-speech-reading" including respondents with dyslexia, stuttering or a language/speech or voice disorder and "communicative-vision", including respondents with blindness and vision impairment.

A study by Akinyemi (2016) examined the motivational factors for entrepreneurial empowerment of people with special needs, and determined the level of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competences that are necessary to become self-employed and contribute to individual growth and societal development rather than living in poverty, liabilities as beggars along the roads in Ondo and Osun states, Nigeria. Exploratory survey was adopted, using interviews and focus group discussion.

The study revealed that most deaf and dumb in the societies who are involved in entrepreneurial skills development are cobblers, dry cleaners, tailors, bricklayers, carpenters, and hair dressers; while some disabled are into music, typing, teaching and trading. At the same time many are still depending on members of the society for survival.

Many disabled are not motivated into engaging in entrepreneurial activities as the attitude of the society towards them does not indicate these people could be useful in different entrepreneurial activities of their abilities, while some families use their disabilities as sources of income. Another study by Tihamiyu, (2010) noted that although entrepreneurship education is not alien, it has not gained prominence in the curriculum for children with special needs in the school system.

Accordingly, the lack of specially trained personnel, absence of an all-encompassing curriculum, difficulty raising capital, strategic disadvantages in competing with 'normal' entrepreneurs among others were identified as responsible factors.

Challenges Facing the Delivery of Vocational Education to the Disabled

Despite the skill abilities of the disabled as identified, there are several challenges militating against skill acquisition of the disabled. These challenges include:

Community Perception on Disability

Disability does not only affect an individual, but the social aspect as well (Savolainen, 2000).

When trying to explain disability, the social model has an ethical and economic implication which is different from the medical model. It views disability from the medical perspective. In Savolainen's (2000) study in Finland, he found out that the social effect of disability had a profound effect on the individual with disability than what could be seen as a disability.

The weakness of this study is that it ignored children from poor social backgrounds, for example, low income families, single parent families, orphans etc. A study conducted in some schools in Ethiopia, a developing country, by Gezahegne and Yinebeb (2011), revealed insufficient funding as the biggest drawback to the implementation of major programs, like inclusive education, as in many countries (Tirussew, 1999 as referred in Gezahegne and Yinebeb, 2011, p.95).

Furthermore, challenges like in teachers' training programs, teachers' attitudes, materials and equipment provision, are also factors that affect inclusive education for children with disabilities (Ibid). The study also revealed that the attitudes of the teachers were positively or negatively affected by the extent of a disability, either minor or complicated, in carrying out their duties diligently. Likewise, lack of special training and class size are the other challenges mentioned in the study (Gezahegne and Yinebeb, 2011).

Similarly, Peters (2003) carried out a comparative study on inclusive education between developing and developed countries on behalf of the World Bank. He focused on attitudes of teachers in the classrooms ignoring other problems children with disabilities face in accessing education. She found out that besides having necessary training skills attained from teacher training colleges, teachers must have a good will. Teachers, who change and gain a positive attitude, benefit their learners immensely (Peters, 2003).

The Absence of Mechanisms for Evaluating Special Vocational Education needs of Children with Disabilities

There is a need to provide a school setting that will accord children with special education and an enabling environment, rather than making the children with disabilities to fit into specific educational or school settings as Evans noted in a study carried out in England. He found out that one of the key needs was to adjust education settings for Children living with disability to fit well in the school (Evans, 2008)... But the authors have not specifically pointed out the key needs of this so called "education setting" for children with disabilities. The setting of the school goes a long way in helping children with disabilities attain their educational goals (Ainscow, 2007).

Equipment/Infrastructure Factors

The problem facing the effective implementation of functional technical education is numerous and ranges from the existence of technical education. Oranu (1990) stated that lack of physical facilities is the problem of technical education in Nigeria. On the problem existing in the technical colleges and the system of education, it is lack of materials and necessary equipment for effective teaching of vocational and technical, science and technology subjects (Aromolaron,1985).

Okoro (1991) stated that the facilities, which include the buildings, equipment, tools and technical college materials available, are inadequate for effective use and implementation of vocational and technical curriculum in technical colleges. The state of inadequate equipment and facilities for teaching and effective implementation of vocational and technical curriculum in technical colleges has been a source of concern to various people and government at various times.

According to Ibeneme (2007), Nigeria does not seem to accord Technical and Vocational education (TVE) the attention it deserves. In support, Nwogu and Nwanoruo (2011), stated that the challenges of Technical and Vocational education are numerous, which include lack of skilled manpower; acute shortage of Technical and Vocational education teachers; and poor funding of Technical and Vocational education. Consequently, Olaitan citing Odu (2011) posited that the following challenges confronted the implementation of Technical and Vocational education curriculum in Nigeria which include insufficient material resources for training; death of qualified Technical and Vocational education educators; and the use of the quota system for selection of students in Technical and Vocational education teachers training program.

Teacher's Factor

When discussing problems militating against proper implementation of technical education, the teachers and students always come to mind because it is the teacher that uses the technical equipment, books and facilities in teaching the students during the implementation of the technical college curriculum. Msue (1992) undertook a study of the problem facing vocational and technical college and secondary school in Benue State in Nigeria. Msue noticed that the shortages of teachers to effectively use these available tools and equipment in terms of quality and quantity available in schools are the major problems facing vocational and technical curriculum.

He recommended that there should be need to train teachers to effectively make use of the technical equipment in technical colleges. In same vein Odu (2011) stated that, some of the challenges of Human Capital Development include inadequate funding; poor workshop organization; and inadequate instructional materials. Others challenges as posited by Okebukola (2012), include teachers inadequacies; funding inadequacies; gross inadequacies in facilities; harsh and intimidating lecture-room; poor quality preparation by Technical and Vocational education lecturers; resource inadequacy; unhealthy classroom; shortage of equipment; and social vices.

Ozioma (2011) posited that the Federal Government of Nigeria wants technical education to occupy a prominent position in our schools, but Nigerian schools pay little or no attention to Technical and Vocational education and training; teachers and students seem not to understand what it is all about and consequently develop some contempt and aversion for

Technical and Vocational education courses and subjects which now made teachers and students not to be interested in Technical and Vocational education programmes. The challenges of implementing the Technical and Vocational education curriculum in Nigerian colleges are synonymous with the problems of Technical and Vocational education in Nigeria and also that of general education in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

From the above literatures, different authors have noted that education needs of children with disabilities can be achieved by restructuring the general education system through inclusive process. In this case, the teachers take responsibility for the education of all learners. In preparing the curriculum to suit all the learners, the physical structures must be tailored in a way that all the different groups are accommodated. In essence, most of the studies discussed in the chapter, were mainly carried out in developed countries, where the education system is advanced to include all the different groups of children. They mainly focused on the teacher as the sole provider of education, yet there are other challenges such as the nature of curriculum design, socio-cultural challenges, and not to mention parents as contributors to education of children with disabilities.

A vocational educational curriculum which suits the educational needs of children with disabilities should be designed together with the pedagogical way of teaching as well as the educational environment that will suit the learners. It's important to design a simple curriculum so as to make it easy for the participants to understand, achieve good outcomes, and prevent lack of participation from the student. To improve upon the capabilities of children with disabilities and children with special education needs, the choice of the right curriculum and pedagogical practice for training as well as education environment is very important (Mcdermott, 1993), referring to a study in American society. To sum up, much work is to be done in developing a principled framework for a fair distribution of educational resources and opportunities aimed at inclusion (Terzi, 2005).

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