

Chapter Eighteen

PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS PREPARATION FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: A FOCUS ON NIGERIAN COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

Today, if there is any concept that has gained currency in the world of special needs education, it is inclusion. Major publications in the field reveal the volume of intellectual effort that is being dissipated in the examination of this emerging concept. Inclusion as a concept is generating so much attention world wide as a new approach in the provisions of services for learners with special needs education. Nigeria, the biggest and most populated nation in Sub-Saharan Africa and indeed in the entire continent is not an exemption in this direction. Clamours exist for inclusive education in both Nigerian Colleges, Polytechnic and Universities.

The fact in Nigeria is that no concrete effort has been made with regards to implementation of inclusive education. Integration which is the

education of normal and those with special needs in the regular classroom still remains the focus. The National Council for Exceptional Children discussed the issue of inclusion extensively at its 12th Annual National Conference held in Minna, Niger State - Nigeria in August, 2002. The Council still believes that the main solution to the problem of special needs education in Nigeria is simply inclusion.

Inclusive education demands that the teacher should be able to meet the needs of students with disabilities in a regular/ordinary classroom. The success of inclusive education rests on quality teacher preparation gearing towards inclusive education that is able to meet the learning needs of diverse categories of learners with disabilities.

Conceptual Exploration

Special needs education, according to Kirk (1972), is a modification of the education given to the ordinary child involving practices which are unique, uncommon and of unusual quality, compared to school practices intended for the ordinary child. This conceptualization of special needs education is too restrictive and does not meet up with today's changes in special needs education and regular education in general.

Special needs education has been widened to include several disadvantaged learners and those needing different forms and levels of learning requirements. Special needs education is no longer education given in special schools or classes by special teachers only using special methods and approaches and special equipment. It is now education given in regular schools by any well-trained regular class teacher and for all categories of children (Obani, 2006).

Special needs education, therefore, is an upgraded concept of special education. It is a British concept coined to remove the negative perception thereby making it more ordinary and natural.

Obani (2006) observed that the central focus of special needs education should include:

- * Ensuring that schools provide for the diversity of their pupils



without exception or discrimination, and to make them more responsive to, and inclusive of all.

- ? Emphasis on what schools or the educational system should provide to facilitate learning for all learners rather than focus on the deficiency (disability) of the children.
- ? Schools to focus on the individual differences (learning difficulties and needs) of their pupils rather than labeling and treating them in categories as deaf, blind, mentally retarded, etc.
- ? Promoting the view that there is no clear-cut line of demarcation between the educational needs of those with disabilities and those without disabilities.
- ? Making the school system see special needs education as mere educational problems rather than as personal permanent characteristics of a set of learners.

Pupils and students with special educational needs are like other learners who can be and should be taught in regular schools and classrooms, by teachers who are knowledgeable enough to recognize and understand their problems and difficulties and who can use appropriate methods and approaches to meet their special learning needs.

The foregoing portrayed, special needs education to be ordinary in thinking and orientation. It is this change in orientation of special needs education that resulted into concepts like integration, mainstreaming, education for all and inclusion.

Inclusion in education is an approach to educating students and pupils with special educational needs. Inclusion rejects the use of special schools or classrooms to separate students with disabilities from students without disabilities. A premium is placed upon full participation by students with disabilities and upon respect for their social, civil and educational rights. Hence, inclusion is about the child's right to participate and the school's duty to accept the child. It differs from integration and mainstreaming which tend to be concerned



principally with disability and special educational needs.

Inclusion has two sub-types namely regular inclusion or partial inclusion and is full inclusion. In full inclusion setting, the students with special needs are always educated alongside students without special needs, as the first and desired option while maintaining appropriate supports and services and at the same time, eliminating segregated special education classes. Garuba (2003) citing the Salamanca declaration of 1994 observed that the report provided the needed international and theoretical frames for inclusive education that the task of the future is to identify ways in which the school, as part of the social environment can create better learning opportunities for all children and by this means, address the challenge that the most pervasive source of learning difficulties is the school system itself'. According to Garuba, the Salamanca Declaration Report described inclusion as the most effective means of combating discriminating attitude, creating welcoming communities, building in an inclusive society and achieving education for all.

The new anti-discrimination climate has provided the basis for much change in policy and statute, nationally and internationally. Inclusion has been enshrined at the same time that segregation and discrimination have been rejected. Articulations of inclusion in ways of thinking policy, formulation and law include:

- ? The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) which sets out children's rights in respect of freedom from discrimination and in respect of the representation of their wishes and views.
- ? The UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) which calls on oil governments to give the highest priority to inclusive education.
- ? The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2006) which calls on all States parties to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels.

Pre-Service Teachers' Preparation

As noted by Obani (2000), whether we have been able to recognize them or not, people with special educational needs form a significant proportion (about 20 - 25 percent) of the general regular school population in the pre primary, primary and secondary schools.

This is because recent views of people with special needs have widened to include not only those with blindness, deafness, physical handicaps, intellectual disability but also include those with milder and hidden forms of disabilities which often go unnoticed in schools.

Schumn and Voughn (1995) as well as Baker and Zigmond (1995), equally noted that the increasing number of children with special needs are being served in regular classrooms today and this is dramatically changing the way special education services are being provided in schools. They stressed that the development must be addressed in pre-service teacher education programmes so that the next generation of teachers will be better prepared to work more efficiently and effectively.

Therefore, there is the need to amend the traditional ways of teaching in regular classrooms to reflect the development in the school system. Given the complex nature of classrooms and the increasing demands on teachers, who often have little or no specialized training in working with exceptional students, structures should be set up to provide the necessary help and guidance for teachers to make changes in their instructional practices (Magg & Katsiyannis, 2000).

The implication of inclusive education (as a means of increasing educational access to large number of pupils and students with disabilities) is very strong for pre-service teachers' preparation. More people with disabilities will be placed in the regular classroom than before. In order to provide effective inclusive education for all students, teachers need to be trained with different set of skills and knowledge than traditionally required.

The increasing diversity among children in today's classrooms calls for teacher preparation programmes that will train teachers who are able to



respond competently to the challenges of inclusive classrooms (Munby, Lock, Hutchinson, Whitebead, & Mortin, 1999). A major part of responding to the diversity found inside the classroom is through effective and efficient teacher preparation. Regular and special education teachers often feel that they are inadequately prepared to address the needs of learners with various categories of exceptionalities (Mukhopadhyay, Malosiwa & Moswela, 2009).

Jenkins, Paleman and Black (2006) opined that the current teacher - training model should focus on affording trainee teachers ample opportunities to practice as much as possible throughout the programme. Pre-service teachers should be properly trained and be equipped with skills, knowledge and competencies which promote successful inclusion of students with disabilities. Mukhopadhyay, Malosiwa and Moswela (2009) reiterated that high quality teacher development programmes are integral part of current efforts to transform schools into inclusive school communities. Furthermore, Haug (2003), highlighted that effective special education teacher development programme should have a curriculum that produces knowledgeable, reflective, empathetic, responsive teacher individuals and should place much emphasis on the new social-contextual paradigm underpinning inclusive education movement.

Special Education in Nigeria

Generally speaking, special education emanated in two phases in Nigeria, that is the humanitarian missionary era 1945 - 1970) then special education services were handled by private voluntary organisations and private individuals. The Christian missionaries were the most active during this period. The second era is the social service era which was dominated by government patronage in the form of take-over of schools, organized training programmes for special education teachers and the setting up of institutions to commence training programmes in special education namely:

- 1) University of Ibadan started the Diploma in special education in 1974 and a Bachelor's programme in 1976.



- 2) The University of Jos started the Bachelor's programme in special education in 1977 and Masters in 1978.
- 3) The Federal Advanced Teachers' College (Special), now Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo was established in 1977.

The current Nigerian National Policy on Education (2013) 5th edition spelled out the aims/objectives of Special Education as follow:

- (i) Give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- (ii) Provide adequate education for all people -with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.
- (iii) Provide opportunities for exceptionally-gifted and talented children to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of the nation' economic and technological development and
- (iv) Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries.

In addition to the above, the Nigerian National Policy on Education categorized special needs education into:

- (i) The Disabled - people with physical or sensory impairments.
- (ii) The Disadvantaged - children of nomadic pastorals, migrant fisher folks, migrant farmers, hunters, etc. who, due to their life styles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision and therefore require special education to catch up for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances.
- (iii) The Gifted and the Talented - people (children and adults) who possess very high intelligent quotient and are naturally endowed with special traits, (in arts, creativity, music, leadership, intellectual precocity, etc) and, therefore, find



themselves insufficiently challenged by the regular school/college/university programmes.

The National Policy on Education of Nigeria saddled the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) with the responsibility of coordinating Special Education activities in Nigeria in collaboration with relevant State Ministries, Non-Governmental Organisations and International Agencies such as (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WHO, etc). In connection with the above, the Federal *Ministry aims*:

- (i) Provide special programmes for the gifted and the talented people.
- (ii) Provide free education to all children with special education needs at all levels of education.
- (iii) Provide all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education and
- (iv) Advise the three tier arms of government (Federal, State and Local) to be financially responsible for special needs education' programmes.

The only hope for inclusive education in the above lofty design of Nigerian government is in items (i) and probably (ii) that spelled out equal and adequate educational opportunities for all children including those with special needs education.

It is noteworthy that the policy papers on special education in Nigeria has always fared better. However, the reverse is the case when it comes to implementation. This is acknowledged in the National Blueprint on the Education of the Handicapped published by the FME. According to the blueprint, success made so far in the delivery of special education in Nigeria, although minimal in terms of anticipated impact, largely due to inadequate funds.

Many aspects of the policy especially in the areas of administration, integration, provision and management of facilities and identification of children with special needs for the purpose of enrolment for services only exist on paper.

Garuba (2003) identified the following problems with special education in Nigeria:

- ? Inadequate plans for the identification of handicapped children
- ? Lack of adequate guidance services for the parents and the nature and extent of special education facilities available for their children.
- ? Location of most of the special schools in urban centres.
- ? Inadequate funding of special education *services* and poor remuneration of special education teachers.

Focus on Nigerian Colleges

Teachers constitute the determinants of quality in the education system and College of Education is the bedrock of teacher education in Nigeria. The Colleges in Nigeria are responsible to train teachers at the middle level man-power who will man teaching services in the pre, lower, middle and upper basic levels.

The history of Colleges of Education in Nigeria started in 1962 when the first College of Education, then Advanced Teachers College, Zaria was established. This was followed by Alvan Ikoku College of Education, Owerri in 1963, Adeyemi College of Education, Ondo in 1964 and Kano Teachers' College (now FCE Kano) in 1965.

In 2015, there are 109 Colleges of Education in Nigeria and distributed as follows:

Table 1: Colleges of Education in Nigeria.

Distribution	Population
Federal Colleges of Education	21
State Colleges of Education	46
Private Colleges of Education	33
National Teachers Institute	1
Nigeria Army School Education	1
Polytechnics Offering NCE Programmes	7
Total	109

Source: JAMB, 2015.



Each of these institutions produces NCE (Nigeria Certificate in Education) graduates in their various disciplines and qualified on graduation as teachers to teach from pre-primary to the junior secondary school levels. Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) is taken to be the minimum qualification for teachers. The institutions are owned by different bodies such as the Federal Government of Nigeria, the various State Governments and others owned by private individuals and corporate bodies. The Federal Colleges of Education were further placed in terms of generic classification as either conventional, technical or special as follow:

Conventional Colleges of Education	Colleges of Education Technical	College of Education Special
12	8	1

The Conventional Colleges of Education produce NCE teachers specializing in Humanities, Arts, Social Sciences and Science, etc. The Federal Technical Colleges produce NCE teachers in technical and vocational disciplines such as Elect/Elect, Building Metal Work, Wood Work, Business Education, Home Economics, Agric, etc. the only Federal College of Education (Special) produce teachers in Special Needs Education.

The Federal Government of Nigeria, through an Act in 1989, established the National Commission for Colleges of Education, (NCCE) to monitor and control quality among Colleges of Education. The first assignment of the Commission was the review and harmonization of the Minimum Standards for the training of NCE teachers across the country. The first edition of the harmonized NCE Minimum Standards was published in 1990. The current edition of the NCE Minimum Standards was reviewed and published in 2012.

With regards to this 2012 edition, the introductory page reads that it represents the Commission's first step in addressing the pressing need of specialist teachers and content standards that reflect the knowledge and skills that pre-service teachers need for effective teaching at the basic education level.



The 2012 edition of the Nigeria NCE Minimum Standard spelled out the objectives of NCE programme as follows:

- (a) Discuss intelligently the main ideas that have, affected and still affect the development and practice of education generally, and in Nigeria in particular;
- (b) Examine the main psychological, health and socio-economic factors that may help or hinder a child's educational performance;
- (c) Study learners appropriately to determine the most effective ways of relating to them to ensure their maximum achievement;
- (d) Professionally combine use of conventional and ICT or other innovational instructional/learning strategies in generating and imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills;
- (e) Develop, select, and effectively use appropriate curriculum processes, teaching strategies, instructional materials and methods for maximum learner achievement;
- (f) Broaden their intellectual perspective through the General Studies. Education programme;
- (g) Demonstrate desirable attributes, in moral and character development;
- (h) Discuss intelligently major issues affecting teacher education and the teaching profession in Nigeria;
- (i) Identify major problems of education in Nigeria, and their corresponding solutions;
- (j) Demonstrate proficiency in measuring and evaluating learning outcomes, as well as in carrying out appropriate research on educational problems in Nigeria.

In pursuit of these objectives, the National Commission for Colleges of Education designed curriculum and courses for the different generic versions of the 3 year period NCE, conventional, technical and special programmes. The curriculum design covers areas in general education,



teaching practice, general studies, the teaching subjects and other specialized areas such as technical and special education courses as relevant to each institution.

The summary of total minimum requirement for graduation in general education is indicated below:

Total number of credits	=	36
Compulsory credits	=	30
Elective	=	06
Minimum number of units for graduation	=	36

The concern of the writers is in the general education which is made compulsory for all the trainees irrespective of subject combination or specialization. The general education curriculum content is commendable for teacher preparation and the middle level manpower.

However, the argument remains if ever this design favours inclusion. How realistic is the take off and adoption of inclusive education with this type of design. One of the two (Introduction to Special Education and Education of Special Target Groups) available special education courses make little mention of inclusion and in fact the second one is made elective. Given the nature of the environment of special education in Nigeria, one will have to exercise caution in an attempt to implement inclusion especially full inclusion. The general educational system in respect of pre-service teacher preparation is not geared towards inclusion.

There is no doubt that inclusion will enhance the attainment of "Education for All" (EFA). Education can not be for all until it is delivered to and received by all, irrespective of abilities and disabilities. Inclusion facilitates cooperation, sense of belonging and cooperative attitude among learners. Most importantly, inclusive education is said to be cost effective as all learners are accommodated in the same environment using virtually the same facilities. Hence, unnecessary duplications of cost associated with segregation are avoided.

Nigerian government needs to review its teacher preparation vis-à-vis the teacher education curriculum to enable NCE graduates function



effectively in a setting of inclusive education. The current teacher education curriculum is grossly inadequate as the teachers may not know what to do and how to handle the different categories of students/pupils in an inclusive classroom.

Strategies for Promoting Inclusive Education in Nigeria

As pointed out earlier in this paper, inclusion is still a quest and a desire which is yet to be actualized in Nigeria. To facilitate inclusive education in Nigerian setting, adequate attention should be paid to the issue of pre-service teacher preparation. The teachers should be well-equipped to attend to different categories of special needs education children in their regular classes.

The Nigerian government, in collaboration with all stakeholders, should mount vigorous campaigns on the need for inclusion in the education of children with special needs. This should be followed by adequate planning and preparations in terms of curriculum amendment of teacher education, most especially in Colleges of Education.

In addition, in-service teachers in regular schools should be provided with the needed training to acquaint them with the programme. Parents in particular should be properly enlightened on the merits of inclusive education. Also, we should allow the young beggars to become adult before rehabilitating them. Individuals, corporate organisations should come together to support the government to fast track the process of inclusion as this may take a gradual but long-term process before the effects can be felt.

Implementation of national programmes in Nigeria is, more often than not, influenced seriously by political considerations. Hence, the need to involve the legislative arms of government to lend credence, and legislate in respect of inclusive education for funding and administration. If possible, the government may set a National Commission for Special Education as in the case of Nomadic Education. A proper maintaining approach should be put in place to assess



development and progress of special education.

Conclusion

The Nigerian situation may be a bit serious than other developed countries in the sense that special education has not yet attained a fully recognized status in view of negative societal attitude and low level of commitment of the Federal Government in the education of people of special needs. The country is still grappling with problems of implementation of special education policies. Inclusive education for the present circumstance in Nigeria may remain a dream.

The complexity and diversity of the country and the low level of scientific thinking and operations may still make inclusive education beyond our reach. Nigeria government should provide for knowledge among its citizenries, attitudinal change about special needs people, resource materials in regular and special schools and adequate number of personnel's to man inclusive education.

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