

EQUAL BASIC EDUCATION FOR ALL IN NIGERIA: IS IT A REALITY FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN BASIC SCHOOLS IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

Oluwaseun Temitope LAWAL, Ph.D

Institute of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria
E-mail: lamset005@gmail.com,

Duyilemi Jumoke OLUSOLA

Counselling Psychology Department (ECCE, UNIT)
Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria

&

Mubo Olubanke AJAGBE

Department of Special Education, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria as a nation continues to make efforts to implement equal and quality education as stipulated in Sustainable Development Goals No.4. Since 2015 therefore, Nigeria has been committed to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for children with disabilities in order to comply with the SDG 4 target 4.5. ahead of 2030. To achieve this objective, National Policy for Special Needs Education (NPSNE) was formulated in 2015. This study examined the level of educational provision and implementation of equal educational opportunity for children with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. It adopted survey research design and the population consist of all public primary schools for children with disabilities. The sample for the study comprised 34 primary schools and 34 head teachers. Multi-Stage sampling procedure was used to select the samples. An instrument named Educational Provision for Special Needs Pupils Checklist (EPSNPC) was used. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and means. The result showed that there was low educational provision for children with disabilities, learning equipment and materials available were also low and very low implementation of inclusive education for children with disabilities. The study concluded that education for all is yet to be a reality for children with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Keywords: Primary Education, Children with Disabilities, Special Needs Education, Policy, Sustainable Development Goals, Equal education

Introduction

It is globally accepted that education is an important instrument for socio-economic development of any nation, of which Nigeria is included. Educational policy makers in Nigeria recognize education as a human right for every citizen to benefit from and this includes equal access to quality education for all

children including children with disabilities, also all adopted international documents on "Children's right" states that every child is expected to be full beneficiaries of their rights. The right to education plays a major role in identifying every child's potential and allows children to participate and contribute to societal and economic development of their country. This line of thought gives credence to the United Nations General Assembly 1975's Declaration that children with physical, intellectual, social, learning or behavioural disabilities have every right to education in order for them to develop their potentials to aid the process of their social integration and prevent stigmatisation.

The basis of Special Needs Education in Nigeria is to teach all children with disabilities through recognising every child's individual differences and assist every child to discover his or her abilities or skills that can make them give back to their society. The rebranding of SNE in Nigeria began when the Federal Government formulated National Development Plan of (1973-1980), which served as a symbolic document that aided the speedy promotion of education for children with disabilities in Nigeria. The document incorporated equal educational opportunities for all children and the incorporation provided amongst others were: Considering education for children with disabilities as priority in the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, the state ministry of education should be saddled with planning, supervision and financing of education for children with disabilities, the supervisors in the special needs education unit at the federal ministry of education should be in-charge of the monitoring of all projects and facilities of special and inclusive schools, all States in Nigeria, should give records of special needs children in their respective states and the state government are to take full responsibility of children with disabilities education and the welfare of their

teachers (Onwuchekwa, 2005). These provisions implied that all the state governments would be majorly responsible for every aspect of education for children with disabilities and they must make laws and policies on SNE for implementation. However, having noted that all the state governments are the major stakeholder in implementation of primary school education for children with disabilities in Nigeria, what is the level of state government commitment in providing equal education for CWDs in their states?

Adeyemi (2016) states that "the ideology of Nigerian education system is embedded in national policy on education and it is based on providing sound and effective education that brings about equal educational opportunities to all children" (Adeyemi,2016). SNE is given a section in the NPE since its inception in 1977 till the latest revised edition of 2013 which was the 6th edition. The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2013) states that SNE was established to: Provide and make education accessible for all children with disabilities, in an inclusion environment; make educational opportunity equal for all children, without minding their challenges; provide quality educational services for all children with challenges; provide opportunities for all exceptional children; and to provide well planned curriculum that will be appropriate to address the needs of children with challenges (FRN, 2013:35). Since, Nigeria as a country could not meet with the targets of quality education in the Millennium Development Goals of 2015, a policy for SNE was formulated in the year 2015 to correct all anomalies in SNE. The National Policy on SNE lay emphasis on: Least restrictive environment, zero reject, total inclusion and diversification of services beyond the school target (FRN, 2015i); practice of SNE that will be based on global best practices (FRN, 2015ii);bringing about a paradigm shift to maximize human potentials of people with special needs and nurture their intelligence without any forms of discrimination and to ensure inclusion of persons with Special Needs, provide equal opportunity, equity and access in a barrier free environment (FRN, 2015:9).

Nwazuo (2007) states that the outstanding benefits achieved from the World conference on SNE which was held in Salamanca, Spain in June 1994 was the strong position taken that inclusive education should be offered for all children with disabilities. The conference which also adopted the legal framework for the actions on SNE was guided by the principle of inclusion that regular schools should accommodate all children regardless of their disabilities or other constraints (UNESCO, 1999). However, it is very unfortunate that from investigation, inclusive education is only evident at policy making level in

Nigeria as it seems to be yet recognised and granted full implementation in Nigeria. Fakolade (2020) states that during Covid-19 crisis in Nigeria children with disabilities were not provided with the necessary support. He noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had severely impacted the education of CWDs and decried on lack of Information Communication Technology skills and knowledge by SNE teacher as both learners and teachers were affected negatively by the classroom shutdown because of lack of equipment, internet access, specially designed materials and trained manpower support (Fakolade,2020).

However, the fact that all that is needed to equalize educational opportunity for children with disabilities are clearly stated in the policies does not mean that it has all been implemented as from observations and scholarly contributions, Special Needs Children Education is viewed as one of the major educational sector in Nigeria still not hitting the mark required to meet SDG 4, 2030 targets and to achieve such SNE will require meticulous educational programme management from all stakeholders. This makes it very imperative to know the extent of implementation of education for all children with disabilities in Southwest Nigeria. To carry out the study, the following objectives were therefore set as follows:

Objectives of the Study

- I. examine educational provisions for children with disabilities in southwest Nigeria.
- ii. investigate level of implementation of equal educational opportunity for CWDs in southwest Nigeria.

Research Questions

- i.a. Are there provisions for early development support, assessment centres, health providers and referral classes for preparation and placement of children with disabilities into primary education in southwest Nigeria?
- b. Is there provision of schools for children with disabilities in all local government areas in each state of the study in southwest Nigeria?
- c. Is there availability of learning equipment and materials for children with disabilities in the schools?
- ii. What is the level of implementation of equal educational opportunity for CWDs in southwest Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted the descriptive survey design. The target population comprised of all children with disabilities in primary schools in Southwest States of Nigeria. Multistage sampling procedure was

employed for the study. Three states (Oyo, Osun and Ondo) were selected from the six southwest states in Nigeria using ballot system. Three categories of children with disabilities were randomly selected using simple random sampling technique. In each of the selected states all public primary schools providing education for children with disabilities were purposively selected for the study. The sample size consisted of 34 public primary schools and 34 head teachers that were purposively selected in all the selected states. An instrument titled Educational

Provision for Special Needs Pupils Checklist (EPSNPC) was developed by the researchers for data collection. The instrument was pilot tested in primary schools that were not from the sampled schools. The responses to the items on the instrument were used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The reliability of the instrument was investigated using Internal Consistency Approach based on Cronbach's Alpha. Data obtained from the instrument yielded correlation coefficient of 0.75. The data obtained were analyzed using frequencies, percentages and mean.

Results

Research Question 1a. Are there provisions for early development support, assessment centres, health providers and referral classes for preparation and placement of children with disabilities into primary education in southwest Nigeria?

Table 1. Frequency Count and Percentage showing Provisions for Preparation of Children with Disabilities into Primary Education in Southwest Nigeria

Categories of Children	Early development support for children in the schools	Assessment centres for CWDs in the schools	Health Service Providers for CWDs in the schools	Referral Classes
Children with autism	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Children with intellectual disabilities	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Children with speech disorder	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

The results from Table 1 shows that there was 0%provision for early development support, assessment centres, health providers and referral classes for children with disabilities in the schools in the selected states.

1b. Is there provision of schools for children with disabilities in all local government areas in each state of the study in southwest Nigeria?

Table 2. Frequency Count and Percentage Showing the Selected States and their Provision of Schools for Children with Disabilities

State	No. of Local Government in each State	Frequency of Special Primary Schools in each State	Frequency of Regular Primary Schools in each State	Percentage of Special Primary Schools to Regular Primary Schools in each State	Percentage of Special Primary Schools among the Selected States
Oyo	33	21	2008	1.05	62
Osun	30	09	1411	0.64	26
Ondo	18	04	880	0.45	12
Total	81	34	4299	2.14	100

The results from Table 2 shows that Oyo state has 21 special primary schools compared to 2008 regular primary schools, this indicates 1.05% of special to regular primary schools. Osun has 9 special primary schools compared to 1411 which indicates 0.64% of special to regular schools and Ondo has 4 special

schools compared to 880 which indicates 0.45% of special to regular schools. It shows that Oyo state had highest number of special primary schools 21(62%) out of all the selected states, Osun 9(26%) and Ondo 4(12%).

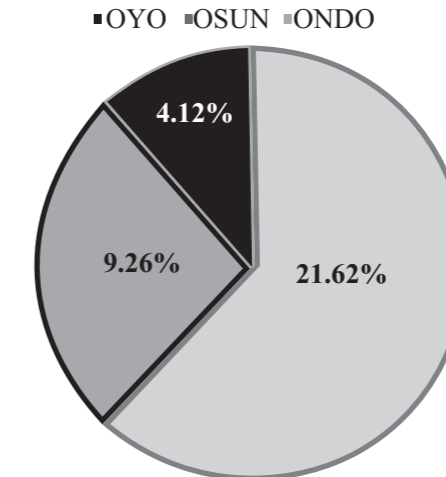


Fig.1. Chart Showing Frequency and Percentage of Special Primary Schools Available in the Selected States of Study

1c. Is there availability of learning equipment and materials for children with disabilities in the schools?

Table 3. Frequency Count, Percentage and Mean Showing Availability of Learning Equipment and Materials for Children with Disabilities in Primary Schools in Southwest, Nigeria

Learning Equipment and Materials	Availability		
	F	%	Mean
Tape recorder	8	23.5	1.77
Speech trainers	9	26.5	1.74
Map and Puzzles	10	29.4	1.71
Link Blocks	0	0	0
Flash cards	13	38	1.62
Braille letters	2	6	1.94
Talk Lights	1	3	1.97
Language masters	3	9	1.91
Dry erase boards	4	12	1.88
Keyboards	4	12	1.88
Track balls	6	18	1.82
Mouse sticks	3	9	1.91
Switches	5	15	1.85
Synthesized speech	0	0	0
Touch sensitive pads	0	0	0
Articulation station	0	0	0
Synthesized speech	0	0	0
Picture boards	2	6	1.94
Tactile walkways	0	0	0
Gonge balancing boards	0	0	0
Steamroller ramps	0	0	0
Roll and rides	0	0	0
Tilt boards	0	0	0
Sensory balls	3	9	1.91
Timers and clocks	2	6	1.94
Building blocks	10	29.4	1.71
Legos	7	21	1.79
Board games	2	6	1.94
Tactile walkways	0	0	0

Table 3 above shows the availability of learning equipment and materials for children with disabilities in primary schools in southwest Nigeria. 38% of the schools had flash cards, 29.4% map and puzzles and building blocks, 26.5% speech trainers, 23.5% tape recorders, 21% legos. 18% track balls, 15% switches,

12% dry erase boards and keyboards, 9% language masters, mouse sticks and sensory balls, 6% braille letters, picture boards, timers and clocks and board games, 3% talk lights and none of the schools had other learning equipment and materials.

Research Question 2. What is the level of provision of equal education opportunity for CWDs in primary schools in southwest Nigeria?

Table 4. Frequency Count and Percentage Showing the Level of Equal Education Opportunity for Children with Disabilities in Southwest Nigeria.

Categories of Children	Inclusive Education f%	Special Education f%	Individualised Curriculum
Children with intellectual disability	5 (15%)	29 (85%)	Not Available
Children with autism	0 (0%)	34 (100%)	Not Available
Children with speech disorder	7 (2%)	27 (790%)	Not Available

The results in Table 4. Shows that 5% and 7% of the schools provided inclusive education for children with intellectual disabilities and speech disorder while none of the schools provided inclusive education for children with autism in the states. It also shows that there was no availability of individualized curriculum for children with disabilities.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study on educational provisions for children with disabilities in southwest Nigeria revealed that none of the primary schools had provision for preparation and placement of CWDs into primary schools. It revealed that schools provided for children with disabilities in each state of the study were so inadequate. It also revealed that there were not enough learning equipment and material for CWDs in all the selected states. The findings are in line with Fehintola (2019) who discovered that challenges faced by children with disabilities in attending quality education is inadequate plans for the identification of children with disabilities, lack of adequate guidance services for the children and poor policy implementation. It also corroborates Kanno and Onyeachu (2018) who discovered that availability of required learning equipment and materials for teaching CWDs were so inadequate in Abia State. The findings negate the statement of National Policy on Special Needs Education (2015) which states that practice of special needs education would be based on global best practices. It further corroborates Lawal (2021) who discovered that there is no referral classes and health providers for children with disabilities in southwest Nigeria.

The findings on level of equal education opportunity for children with disabilities revealed that implementation of inclusive education for CWDs was very low and no availability of individualized curriculum for CWDs in all the primary schools in the selected state of study in southwest Nigeria. The findings are supported by Fareo (2015), who found out that children with disabilities are yet to be fully integrated into regular classroom setting in southwest Nigeria. The findings did not agree with National Policy On Special Needs Education (2015) which states that there would be provision of multiple curricula and differentiated curricula that will be tailored to individual needs of the children and adequate arrangement shall be made to relate programmes and services to individualized needs of all children with disabilities. Fehintola (2019) therefore found out that challenges facing quality special needs education in Nigeria are lack of integration of children with disabilities and their transition into regular school.

Conclusion

The paper concluded that there is no preparation for placement of children with disabilities into primary schools, schools provided for children with disabilities were so minute in all the states, learning equipment and materials provided were very low, no full implementation of inclusive education and none of the state provided individualized curriculum for the children. It can be concluded that equal educational opportunity for children with disabilities in southwest Nigeria is yet to be a reality.

Recommendations

1. Government should establish schools for children with disabilities in all local government areas in the states.
2. There should be provision of assessment centres, early support centres and referral class for children with disabilities in all the schools. It would prepare the children for school and guides the teachers on placement of children into appropriate class.
3. Provision of health providers that would attend to children for assessment and placement of children with disabilities in all the schools required urgent action as teachers cannot perform the duty of a health provider.
4. Government can encourage involvement of community, NGOs and philanthropist to support in provision of necessary learning equipment and materials for children with disabilities in basic schools.
5. Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council and other curriculum planners in education should develop individualised curriculum that would meet the needs of all children with disabilities.
6. Effective implementation of inclusive education in all basic schools should be a priority for government.
7. Government should put efforts in making policy statement a reality in all areas that concerns children with disabilities.'

References

- Adeyemi, B. A. (2016). Comparative effectiveness of storytelling and enter educate strategies in the teaching of civic education in lower primary schools in Osun State, Nigeria. *Ideal Journal of Education and Policy Studies*, 2(3), 104-109.
- Fakolade, O. (2020). Nigeria: Covid-19- Special educators make case for special needs children. This day June 2020. Retrieved from

allafrica.com>stories

- Fareo, D. O. (2015). Inclusive education setting in southwestern Nigeria: Myth or reality? *Universal Journal of Educational Research (UJER)*, Vol. 3(6), 368-374.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2013). *National policy on education* (6th ed.). Lagos: Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2015). *National policy on special needs education* (1st ed.). Lagos: Nigeria Education Research and Development Council (NERDC).
- Fehintola, J. O. (2019). Assessment of challenges facing children with special needs in Oyo State. *Dynamics of special education practice: Department of special education, Faculty of Education, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.*
- Kanno, T. N., & Onyeachu, A. E. (2018). On instructional resources for teaching special needs children in Abia state, Nigeria. *International Journal of Technology and Inclusive Education (IJTIE)*, Vol. 7(2), 1318-1321
- Lawal, O. T. (2021). Assessment of educational service delivery for children with special needs in basic schools in southwestern Nigeria. Institute of Education, Faculty of Education, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. Unpublished thesis
- Nwazuoke, I. A. (2007). *Inclusive education in Nigeria: Principles and Practice*. A paper presented at the Lagos State Universal Basic Education Board workshop held at Modupe Cole Memorial Childcare and Treatment Home/School, Akoka. 22nd to 26th January 2007.
- Onwuchekwa, J. (2005). *A comprehensive text book of special education*. Ibadan: Agbo-Areo publishers.