163   **INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (IJERD)**

ENCOURAGING THE DISADVANTAGED GROUP AND THE NEED FOR SOCIAL INCLUSION IN NIGERIA:
THE CASE OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS   164

Encouraging the Disadvantaged Group and the need for Social Inclusion in Nigeria: The Case of People with Special Needs

DANGOMA Ishaya
National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) Ondo.
Training Department
dangomaishaya@yahoo.com +2348065480222
&
AYOOLA Olubunmi Adedunke
National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) Ondo.
Training Department
bunmade34@gmail.com +2347032296922

Abstract

People with special needs fall among the disadvantaged group that constitute an important and special group that the society needs to care for. However, this group of people continues to experience some form of social exclusion, marginalization and discrimination in the society. This study looked at the position of such group of persons with special needs which are socially excluded and advocate for social inclusion. The study discussed some of the challenges faced by the disabled persons from lack of available facilities, to access and that of mobility. In places where such facilities abound it does not accommodate the disabled, people generally have negative attitudes towards them. The study suggested that; Government should encourage traditional rulers to provide avenue for participation in traditional activities, festivals and related issues that promote their status in societies; Sponsor, Promote and conduct campaigns that will change people's mentality towards people with disability among others.

Keywords: Disability, Social inclusion, Disadvantaged Group, People with Special Needs.

Introduction

There is no doubt that the Salamanca statement as it is called came up with the issue of inclusive education and has provided the strongest impetus which draws attention to the education of some of the most marginalized groups, it was encouraged to be practiced by all African countries and Nigeria is not an exception. Inclusive Education has been a global education policy that was advanced by UNESCO and other international partners. Armstrong, Armstrong and Spandagou (2011) pointed out that it was ratified by national governments across the Sub-Saharan Africa. Inclusive Education is an approach towards educating the children with disability and learning difficulties with that of normal children within the same roof (Singh, 2016) Singh went further to say that it brings all students together in one classroom and community, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area, and seeks to maximize the potential of all students.

Inclusion is the act of making all groups of people within a society feel valued and important. It has been defined by the World Bank (2018) as "The process of improving the terms for individuals and groups to take part in society" or more precisely "The process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged on the basis of their identity, to take part in society". The provision of certain rights to all individuals and groups in society such as employment, adequate housing, health care, education and training among others is something that must be ensired (Oghenekohwo, 2008).

The basis of inclusion is that people with special needs have the right to benefits from a full school experience, with needed modifications and supports, alongside their peers without disabilities who receive general education therefore the education system of any country should be channeled to reach out to diverse learners (Ajuwon, 2008). Kaplan, Miles and Howes (2011) in their own view posit that the issue of inclusive as it relates to education is not only the process of ensuring that all children and adults regardless of their gender, age, ability, ethnicity, impairment, HIV status, and so on have access to education within their community, but that the education they received is useful, appropriate and enables them to participate and achieve, both within their education system and more widely.

This means that Inclusive Education actively works to ensure that every child, irrespective of gender, language, ability, religion, nationality or other characteristics, is supported to meaningfully participate and learn alongside his/her peers, and develop to his/her full potential (Save the Children, 2016). Similarly, Singh (2016) opined that there are millions of children who are out of school in Africa, many of whom are marginalized as a result of poverty, gender, disability, and caste which should be included in the education system. This therefore mean that all the stakeholders in the business of providing education should do everything within their power to encourage social inclusion. Similarly, this serve as a wakeup call for the Nigerian government to fully embrace Inclusive Education and also promote social inclusion a situation in Nigeria that seems to be far from reality.

According to the World Bank, 15% of the world's population (over 1 billion people) has some form of disability and is more likely to experience adverse socioeconomics outcomes than persons without disabilities (World Bank, 2018). Over 25% of the large number of disabled persons globally is in Nigeria; and of the 25 million disabled persons in Nigeria suffer from some form of physical deformity, with over 3.6 million having serious challenges with mobility (James, 2017).

Disability is such an important issue that needs concern and immediate attention because, according to the EFA Global Monitoring Report, children with disabilities remain one of the groups that countries need to be concern about with passion because the disabled are among the groups being widely excluded from quality education (Global Monitoring Report, 2010). The report further reveal that disability is recognized as one of the least visible yet most potent factors in educational marginalization, even with the knowledge of the fact that children with disabilities have equal right to education as their counterpart the normal and able children yet, that is not practically applied in

most of the African countries (African Child Policy Forum, 2011).

Disability is referenced in various parts of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and specifically in parts related to education, growth and employment, inequality, accessibility of human settlements. Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education and promotion of life-long learning opportunities for all focuses on eliminating gender disparities in education and ensuring equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. In addition, there is need for upgrading education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and also provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (IISD, 2013). This can be achieved by any government that have a strong political will through the tireless effort of community leaders. The fact remains that there cannot be sustainable development without investment in education. Bhola (2006) wrote that education is development, therefore, the relationship between education and development that is sustainable is defined absolutely and infinitely according to Oghenekohwo (2013) by the elements of education, namely; empowerment, engagement, experience and evidence. This relationship can only be sustained through a commitment to the funding of education in order to:

i. ensure access, equity and social justice through which poverty and hunger can be mitigated;

ii. ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all ages;

iii. ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all;

iv. reduce inequality within and among countries.

The aforementioned, when fully embraced and implemented by any nation will mean that such a nation is moving towards the path of social inclusion.

Disadvantaged Groups

These are the marginalized group the individuals who are excluded from social, economic and educational opportunities which is enjoyed by other individuals. This group remain depressed in their communities due to numerous factors beyond their control (UNICEF, 2017). These include factors at the social level like economic inequality, violence, poverty, ethnic, tribal or religious factors among others. At the family level it takes the form of neglect and abuse while at individual level it includes disability, ethnicity among others. All those within this group fall under the disadvantaged group. This article is more concern about the disabled, those with special needs who because of their conditions are neglected. To further butress this issue, people living with disabilities in Nigeria typically receive little or no support from the government and instead they rely on their family members who most times abandon them living them with biggest obstacles which is the stigma surrounding their disabilities, which excludes them socially, economically and politically. Often, families treat people with disabilities in Nigeria as a secret shame, couple with the fact that work and education exclude them. In extreme cases, their families abandon them or, if the family is wealthy, they institutionalize them. The Leprosy Mission Nigeria found in its survey that

16 percent of its participants survived by begging (The Borgen Project, 2019).

In an ideal situation people within such group should be cared for, they should be entitled to free school meals, looked after with concern by the state. It is important to note that groups such as these are suffering as disadvantaged children when compared with others children because of low family income among other factors.

Disability also Known as People with Special Need Disability can be defined as any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for every human being due to impairment. The Center for Disease Control, consider it as any condition of the body or mind that makes it more difficult for an individual to carry out certain activities and interact with the world around him/her (Center for Disease Control, 2017). As a result of these displacements, this group of people become vulnerable and often considered dependent individuals who require a level of special protection and support. These disabilities vary and take different forms. Therefore disability, is regarded as an umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions. Impairments are problems in body function or alterations in bo hidy structure. According to the Department of Health and Human Services United States (2005), Activity limitations are difficulties encountered by an individual in executing activities while participation restrictions are problems with involvement in any area of life. In their submission, the WHO (2018) explained that there are wide variations in the classification and types of disabilities. They provided an international classification of disabilities as it relates to the consequence of diseases. These include: behavioral disabilities, communication disabilities, personal care disabilities, dexterity disabilities, situational disabilities, particular skill disabilities, body disposition disabilities and loco motor disabilities. Others classified disabilities into physical, sensory and mental disabilities. This is due to the fact that there is no universally accepted standard definition or conceptualization as it is influenced by factors including but not limited to causes, cultures, ideologies, beliefs, societies and history. However, disabilities can generally be considered as falling into three dimensions (WHO, 2001).

a) impairment to a person's body structure or function. Examples of impairments include loss of a limb, loss of vision or memory loss.

b) activity limitation, such as difficulty seeing, walking, hearing or problem solving, and,

c) restrictions in normal daily activities, such as working, engaging in social and recreational activities.

Challenges of People with Disability Persons living with disabilities in Nigeria face several challenges which include negative treatments and attitudes especially from their able-bodied counterparts (stigmatization), difficulty in accessing public buildings, high unemployment, poor provisions of education and health services, among others, which often lead to their exclusion from community life and decision making (Ali, 2018). He further maintained that the various challenges this group of persons experience is mostly marginalization, victimization, exclusion,

stigmatization, discrimination and neglect of their special needs. Some other challenges includes the following;

Education Sector, Healthcare related Services, Political and Electoral Participation, Employment Opportunities, Marriage and Social Life, Security and Human Right Related Issues. Disabled people in Africa and Nigeria in particular are usually faced with extreme poverty, some are living in rural and other areas where medical and other services are not available and where such facilities exis they are confronted with issues of discrimination, marginalization, accessibility, affordability and mobility.

Social Inclusion

Social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity. It is also a process by which efforts are made to ensure equal opportunities that everyone, regardless of their background, can achieve their full potential in life. Such efforts include policies and actions that promote equal access to (public) services as well as enable citizen's participation in the decision-making processes that affect their lives.

The goal of social inclusion is to create a more stable, safe and just society for all, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. Such an inclusive society must be based on the principles of embracing not coercing or forcing diversity and using participatory processes that involve all stakeholders in the decision-making that affects their lives.

Education and Human Rights

It is clear that education allows human development and meeting of the numerous requirements, therefore, education is of a great importance for the life of the individual and society. The importance of education for individuals and society is evidenced by the fact that the right to education is defined as one of the basic human rights in numerous international documents like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These documents guaranteed the right of access to education at all levels, taking into account the principle of the equality. These rights includes:

- free and compulsory primary education;
- to everyone available secondary education;
- higher education accessible to everyone on the basis of merit.

Responsibility for the implementation of the right to education is purely on governments who are suppose to make it work at all costs being the signatory of documents which define this right. Accordingly, states are required to respect, protect and fulfill the right to education, as it is defined in international documents. This includes a range of activities, legal and other measures to ensure this right, and to prevent bans and violation of this and other rights on its citizens. How effectively this is achieved in Nigeria is the question that needs to be addressed to clear doubt in the minds of Nigerians.

The benefits of Education

Education generally provide every beneficiary with some benefit and also help individuals to add value to themselves and their immediate communities. This implies that those disadvantaged individuals that are left out with no education will end up remaining poor. The benefits that are attached to education are many, not only will one personally benefit from receiving an education when it comes to income, career advancement, skill development, and employment opportunities, but one's society and community also receives benefits of education as well. Societies with higher rates of degree completion and levels of education tend to be healthier, have higher rates of economic stability, lower crime, and greater equality. Those who benefits from education have higher incomes, have more opportunities in their lives, and tend to be healthier. Borgen Magazine, 2018 outline the following as benefit of education:

★ Poverty Reduction

Lack of access to education is considered the root of poverty. Not getting an education can lead to a cycle of poverty. However, access to education can mean getting out of that cycle.

★ Healthier Lifestyle

People with better education tend to live longer and have healthier lifestyles. According to research, people with higher education have a one-third lower risk of heart disease. Degree holders are also less likely to smoke and more likely to get regular exercise.

★ Sense of Accomplishment

Finishing any degree whether it is a high school degree or higher education is an accomplishment. Graduating gives such individuals a huge sense of accomplishment and gives them the confidence needed to go out into the world and make something of themselves.

★ Personal Development of Skills

Students are required to go through many types of assignments, discussions, courses, and more during their time in education. Therefore, they end up with a wonderful skill set that translates into the workforce. People with an education can think, and think well. They are taught to ask questions, reflect, and analyze all critical skills for later success. Some have skills that they haven't yet discovered, and haven't had the opportunity to expand upon. Education stretches the mind, exposes students to new topics, and pushes students to do better. As such, students may find skills they didn't even know they had. In addition, from extracurricular activities, students learn arts, sports, and more that help them personally in life and to connect with others. They know how to manage their time and talents, be productive. After graduation, students can carry that productive energy into the workforce. Students are required to turn in written assignments, work in groups, participate in discussions, or present in front of others. This leads to excellent written communication, speaking skills, and group communication.

★ Greater Sense of Discipline

Students are given increasing amounts of responsibility with each year of education they complete. It is the student's job to manage their time and create their own success, leading to self-discipline

abilities for those who succeed.

★ Environmental Benefits

Climate change is a large part of the conversation today, and society needs to work together to find ways to reduce impact on the earth. Educated individuals that enter the workforce will put their knowledge of climate change into company policies, leading to increased sustainability.

★ Reduces Crime

Education teaches people the difference between right and wrong, and also exposes children and young adults to experiences of others. Understanding right and wrong and having empathy reduce tendency to commit crimes. Education of a society decreases overall arrests.

★ Reduces Gender-Based Violence

In communities with high rates of education for both genders, gender-based violence is lower. Educated persons are more likely to support gender equality, and are more likely to take efforts to stop and prevent gender-based or domestic violence. Communities that value education for both genders are less likely to have instances of terrorist attacks on girls schools.

★ Reduces Child Marriage

Girls with secondary or higher education are three times less likely to marry before the age of eighteen. Putting education first in a society allows for girls to be seen as people who can get an education and make their own decisions, rather than just a future wife and mother.

★ Social Experiences

Don't forget that college isn't all studying. The friends you make during college will be the friends you have for life. They can also act as a social net, lifting one up when one is down and encouraging one to do his/her best in studies, profession and in life. Learning to live with others and work well with others enhances ones social skills as well.

The importance of education for increasing social cohesion and participation of individuals and social groups in different social activities

Education is not only the basis for the economic prosperity and broader social development, but it is also one of the best ways of achieving social cohesion. Increasing the involvement, in particular individuals and groups who have been excluded or insufficiently involved in society, is contributing to the growth of social cohesion. Social cohesion is a social process which aims to consolidate plurality of citizenship by reducing inequality and socioeconomic disparities and fractures in the society. It reflects people's needs for both personal development and a sense of belonging and links together individual freedom and social justice, economic efficiency and the fair sharing of resources, and pluralism and common rules for resolving all conflicts (Stanley, 2003).

Social cohesion itself is quite important for the future stability of nations, it is said to be high when nearly all members of a society voluntarily play by the rules of the game, and when tolerance for differences is demonstrated in the day-to-day interactions across social groups within that society. Education contribute to social inclusion because schools teaches the rules of the game those that govern interpersonal and political action. They consist of the social and legal principles underpinning good citizenship, obligations of political leaders, behaviour expected of citizens, and consequences for not adhering to these principles. School also facilitate a student's appreciation for the complexity of issues related to historical and global current events and by so doing, may increase the likelihood that a student will see a point of view other than his or her own. By teaching the rules of the game. In this manner, schools foster tolerance and lay the groundwork for voluntary behavior consistent with social norms.

Benefits of Social Inclusion

It is clear that people can be present in community without being socially included especially those with some form of disability. Being socially included means that a number of things are present in people's lives. Social inclusion means that people:

> Experience a sense of belonging;
> Are accepted (for who they are) within their communities;
> Have valued roles in the community;
> Are actively participating in the community;
> Are involved in activities based on their personal preferences; and
> Have social relationships with others whom they chose and share common interests

When people experience some or all of these conditions in their life they are more likely to be happier and healthier. Social inclusion has been widely recognized as a key social determinant of health (O'Hara, 2006) In fact, social inclusion is an important determinant of health without which people are more likely to experience poor health including poor mental health, loneliness, isolation, and poor self esteem.

Recommendations

1. Government should design through the relevant agency a strategies that will accommodate and attend to the needs of people with special needs or people with disabilities.
2. National Directorates of Employment (NDE) should update and work on their data of employed and unemployed disabled persons to ensure they have employment slots, using Federal Character Mechanism, that will remove the barriers to recruitment and encourage participation at all levels.
3. Government should encourage traditional rulers to provide avenue for participation in traditional activities, festivals and related issues that promote their status in societies.
4. Sponsor, Promote and conduct campaigns that will change people's mentality towards people with disability.

Conclusion

Many people with disabilities unnecessarily experience life quite differently. They may not have a sense of presence in the community and may not have access to activities they prefer or desire, they lack opportunities to work, play, learn and develop social relationships with others particularly with

people who do not have a disability. People with disabilities are often not acknowledged in the community, or if they are, it may be in a negative way. Too often, people do not have close friends with whom they can share their desires, time and lives this is a practice that should be discouraged. How does this lack of social inclusion for people with disabilities get addressed? There are many possible pathways to inclusion. The good news is that we can get better as a society by opening up our doors, schools and workplaces to people with disabilities.

References

African Child Policy Forum. (2011) The lives of Children with Disability in Africa: A Glimpse into a Hidden World, Addis Ababa. Retrieved May, 2019 from www.Firah.org-upload-notices3

Ajuwon, P. M. (2008) Inclusive Education for Students With Disabilities in Nigeria: Benefits, Challenges and Policy Implications. *International Journal of Special Education*, 11-17.

Ali, T. Y. (2016) *They Called Us Senseless Beggars Challenges* of Persons with Disabilities in North-Eastern Nigeria. Grassroot Researchers Association. Pp. 8-18

Armstrong, D., Armstrong, A. C. & Spandagou, I. (2011) Inclusion: By Choice or by Chance? Retrieved 23rd June, 2020 from https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2010.496192

Bhola, H.S. (2006) Access to education: a global perspec- tive. Widening access to education as social justice. Essays in honour of Michael Omolewa (pp. 1-12).

Bokonjić, Improving education as a factor of economic development, Belgrade: FEFA - Faculty of Economics, Finance and Administration, University of Singidunum, 2014, p. 45.

Borgen Magazine (2018, 13 January) Top 10 Benefits of Education Include Poverty Reduction. Retrieved 27th February, 2021 from https://www.borgenmagazine.com/top-10-benefits-of-education/

Buaham, H. (2013) Teachers Attitudes Toward Inclusion : Survey Results from Elementary School Teachers in Three Southwestern Rural School Districts. *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 22(2), Pp. 24-30.

Center for support and promotion of European integration (CEPPEI) Social cohesion strongest in Scandinavia, Sarajevo: SERDA (Sarajevo Regional Development Agency), 2013. Retreave 27th July, 2020 from http://ceppei.ba/bos/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12620&Itemid

Centers for Disease Control, (2017) Disability overview/disability and health. Retrieved 19th June, 2020 from https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/disability.

European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), Understanding the Human Rights: Manual on Human Rights Education, Graz: ETC, 2003, p. 183. 22

European Training and Research Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (ETC), Understanding the Human Rigts: Manual on Human Rights Education, Graz: ETC, 2003. 23 UN DocumentE/CN.6/1995/3/Add.2, 18th of January 1995.

International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps (1980): A manual of classification relating to the consequences of disease published in accordance with resolution WHA29.35 of the 29th World Health Assembly, May 1976. Section 3, page 142- 172

James, S. (2017) Over 25 Million Nigerians Disable. Retrieved 16th May, 2020 from https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2017/04/22/over-25m-nigerians-are-disabled

Kaplan, I., Miles, S. & Howes, A. (2011) Images and the ethics of inclusion and exclusion: Learning through Participatory Photography in Education. *Journal of Research in Special Education needs. Vol. 11. Pp. 195-202.*

Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2010) Monetisation of workers" benefits and organizational

Oghenekohwo, J. E. (2013) Adult Learning in the context of comparative higher education. Procedial Social and Be- havioural Science. 106:338-347.

O'Hara, P. (2006) Social Inclusion Health Indicators: A Framework for Addressing the Social Determinants of Health. Retrieved 25th June, 2020 from https://www.homelesshub.ca/resource/social-inclusion-health-indicators-framework-addressing-social-determinants-health Publishers

Save the Children. (2016) Inclusive Education: What, Why and How? Retrieved 19th June, 2020 from http://images.savethechildren.it/IT/f/imgpubblicazioni/img292b.pdf

SDG Knowledge Hub. (2013) The International Institute for Sustainable Development.

Sign, J. D. (2016) Inclusive Education in India- Concept, Need and Challenges. *Scholarly Research Journal for Humanity Science and English Language. Vol. 3. No. 13. Pp. 3222-3232.* Retrieved 15th July, 2020 from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301675529

Social Cohesion and Education, 2020, crowdstrike Global Threat report

Stanley, D. (2003) What do we know about social cohesion: The research perspective of the Federal Government's Social Cohesion Research Network. *Canadian Journal of Sociology*, 28(1), *pp. 5–18*

The Borgen Project, (2019) Living with Disability in Nigeria. Retrieved from https://borgenproject.org/disabilities-in-nigeria/

The Council of Ministers, Directorate for Economic Planning, Bosnia and Herzegovina: Report on the development of BiH (Annual Report 2013), Sarajevo: Directorate for the Economic Planning, 2014 p. 71.

The World Bank, (2018), "Disability Inclusion" Retrieved from http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability

UNESCO, (2010) EFA Global Monitoring Report: Reaching the Marginalized. Retrieved 17th September, 2019 from https://www.unicef.org/socialpolicy/file/Reaching_the_Marginalized.

UNICEF, (2017) Research with Disadvantaged, Vulnerable and/or Marginalized Adolescents Retrieved 11th April 2019 from https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications-pdf-IRB_2017_06_Adol04

US Department of Health and Human Services (2005). "The Surgeon General's call to Action to improve the Health and wellness of Persons with Disabilities". Washington, DC Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General. Retrieved 26th June, 2020 from "Defining disability".

WHO, (2018) Disability and Health. Retrieved 23rd May, 2020 from http://www.who.int/en/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health

World Bank, (2018) A classroom for all: Africa's Vision to Educate Children with Disabilities. Retrieved 23rd May 2020 from https://blogs.worldbank.org›education›classroom-all-africa-s-vision-edu...

World Health Organization, (2001) International classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF). WHO, Geneva. Retrieved 14th May 2020 from https://www.who.int/standards/classifications/international-classification-of-functioning-disability-and-health

World Health Organization, (2020) Health topics-disabilities. Retrieved 23rd June, 2020 from, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/disability-and-health