

# 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. Estimate vary for the number of people with disabilities in Nigeria. The need to integrate these category of persons into the workforce of the Nigerian society necessitated this study. 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, the literature reviewed, revealed that the challenges militating against the incorporation of the disabled into vocational training programme are community Perception about the disabled; the absence of mechanism for evaluating special vocational training programme of persons with disabilities; equipment and infrastructural factors and teachers' 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 teacher as well as the educational environment that will suit the learners.*

## **Introduction**

The educational policy on vocational and technical education is aimed at manpower development in Nigeria. It is a programme designed to train and produce persons with requisite knowledge and skills who are useful to themselves and the society. Such knowledge and skills that are usually acquired at various level of vocational and technical education programme are meant to equipped the recipients for self reliance and job creation. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2007) 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 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. Provide trained manpower in applied technology particular 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 impact the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economical. 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 manpower 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.
- (f) 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: bricklaying, carpentering, painting, and motor vehicle repair; laboratory and pharmacy technicians, electrical/electronic technicians and skilled vocational nurses. According to the Federal Ministry of Education in the National policy on education document (2004) Technical Education is defined as that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of partial and applied skills 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 disabilities, 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, 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 number of persons living with disabilities 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 NGO's report revealed that the common type of disabilities in Nigeria include: visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical impairment, intellectual impairment, and physical impairment. This various human impairment spread across the six geo-political zones the irrespective of gender and age.

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 adaption, inclusion, and empowerment as advocated by the social model of disability that is generally favoured in the field of disability studies. Disability could be acquired at any point in a person's life and as such, 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 challenges facing these category of people in the society. For example, many of the youth living with one form of disability or another wish to acquire knowledge and skills like their counterparts who are not having such challenges but are hindered by certain factors. The infrastructures in many institutions, where such training is being carry out seen

not to cater for the need of those having disabilities. The school buildings, library, laboratories, the sitting arrangement are not design to favour these category of people. Also, the curriculum seems not to make provision for instructional facilities for students with special needs.

The features that characterized institutions where vocational training programmes are offered are some of the hindrances to the acquisition of vocational skills by persons living with disabilities. According to Tarzi (2005), there is much work to be done in developing a principal framework for a fair distribution of educational resources and opportunities aimed at inclusive education. It means that an ideal educational system is expected to consider persons living with disabilities in it curriculum design.

### **Inclusive Education: Education for All**

Inclusive Education: Education for All. This was the main theme of the conference held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. In that conference, delegates from 155 countries, as well as representatives from some 150 governmental and non-governmental organizations agreed to make primary education accessible to all children and to massively reduce illiteracy before the end of that decade. In June 1994 UNESCO summoned the world nations to meet in Salamanca in Spain to further the objectives of Education for All. The main focus was to enhance inclusive education by enabling all children, those with Special Educational Needs in particular to access schools (World Bank 2000).

In other to enhance 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 in the process of implementing education policies. One of the resolutions taken in that meeting was to ensure that all nations where children with special educational needs have been marginalized should be provided with at least primary education of good quality by 2015 (UNESCO, 2000).

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). In Nigeria, there are schools (primary, secondary and higher institutions including teacher training colleges) established for people living with disabilities. The number of these schools seem to be grossly inadequate compared to the number of children and adults living with disabilities in Nigeria whose number cannot be actually ascertained.

### **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**

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 among others. There are few studies that did compare working life situations among different types of disability. For example Clausen, (2004), Crisp (2005) and Boman, Kjellberg, & Danermark & Boman, (2013); employment opportunities were found to differ between types of disability. Crisp 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 were key predictors for returning to work or employment status after onset of disability. Key predictors differed both between and within the disability groups. Clausen 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.

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. Observations revealed that most artisans within Benin metropolis that are into vulcanizing works are the deaf and dumb. They are found in wood carving, block moulding, hair dressing and shoe making. Those who crippled have be found to be very enterprising in leather works and tailoring. Most of the physically challenged persons learnt these trade through apprenticeship scheme offered under informer education system. Another study by Tiamiyu, (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 Training 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:

#### **1. Community Perception of Disability**

Disability does not only affect an individual, but the social aspect as well (Savolainen, 2000). In trying to explain disability, the social model has an ethical economic implication which is different form the medical model. In Savolainen's study in Finland, the found out that the social stigma of disability had a

profound effect on individual that what could be seen as disability. The weakness of this study is that it ignored children from poor social backgrounds, example, low income families, single parent families, orphans. A study conducted in some schools in Ethiopia, a developing country, by Gezahegene and Yinebeb (2011), revealed insufficient funding as the biggest drawback to the implementation of major programs, like inclusive 21011, Furthermore, challenges (Tirussew, 1999 as referred in Gezahegene and Yinebeb, attitudes, materials and equipment provision are also factors that affect that inclusive education for children with disabilities (Ibid). The study also revealed that the attitude of the 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 (Gezahegene and Yinebeb, 2011).

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

Prominent position in our schools, but Nigeria 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 not to be interested in Technical and Vocational education programmes. The challenges of implementing technical and vocational education in Nigeria colleges are synonymous with the problem of Technical and Vocational education for children living with disabilities in Nigeria and also that of general education in Nigeria.

## **2. Inadequate Care for the Special Needs of the Disabled Children**

The school setting as it is currently operated in Edo State is such that but able and disable children are taught with the same teachers, facilities and environment. Such practice seems not to adequately cater for the special needs of the disable persons. It is expected that the disabled are separated and taught with teachers and use facilities that would meet their special need. According to Evans (2008) one of the key needs is to adjust the school setting to fit well into the needs with learners with special needs. The setting of the school goes a long way in helping children with disabilities to attain their goals (Ainscow 2007).

## **3. Inadequate Special Instructional Facilities for the Disabled Children**

The challenge facing the effective implementation of functional technical education is numerous and ranges from the few number of technical colleges to inadequate instructional facilities. Oranu (1990) stated that lack of physical facilities is the problem of technical education in Nigeria. 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. It 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. Insufficient material resources for training; inadequate number 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.

Apparently, the conventional workshops and instructional facilities used for teaching able body children might not be very effective for teaching children with disabilities. Electronic instructional facilities such as audio, video and audio-visual are likely to produce the needed results if adequately used to teach children with disability. But, these sort of materials are hardly found in our technical colleges in Edo State.

#### **4. Teachers' Factor**

When discussing problems militating against proper implementation of technical education and skill acquisition of the disabled, 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 education 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 technical teachers generally, and teachers trained to teach children with specific needs are in short supply. These teacher are expected to effectively use these available tools and equipment in terms of quality and quantity available in schools. The author recommended that there should be need to train teachers to effectively make use of the technical equipment in technical colleges. In the 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 inadequate funding, 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 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).

#### **Prospect of Vocational Skill Acquisition by Children with Disabilities**

This is a popular saying that there is ability in disability. Children with disabilities can acquire vocational skills as much as their abled counterparts, if given the conducive atmosphere. If the needed facilities are provided in technical colleges, the clipped will become a master craft worker. In this case, the skilled worker will become self reliance and even employer of labour. Acquisition of vocational skills by person living with disabilities will reduce unemployment in the society and they will be less dependent on their family members. This will eventually lead to economy growth and crime reduction in the society.

#### **Conclusion**

From the literature, different authors have noted that education needs of children with disabilities could be achieved by restructuring the general education system through inclusive process. In this case, the teachers take responsibility for the education of all learners irrespective of their nature 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 studies discussed in this report 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-culture challenges, and parents as contributors of children with disabilities.

### Recommendations

Based on the challenges identified militating against the acquisition of vocational skills by persons living with disabilities in Edo state, the following recommendations are made:

1. Government through institutions organize seminars, and workshop to re-orientate the mind of parents and families members. Such orientation will educate parents and guardians of the possibilities training their children and words to acquire vocational skills for self-reliance.
2. School buildings where vocational training are offered should be design and constructed to accommodate persons living with disabilities.
3. Instructional facilities meant for training persons living with disabilities should be procure and distributed by government to institutions where the disabled are being trained
4. The government and NGSs should establish more teachers' training colleges for the disabled. Such institutions should train more teachers with requisite knowledge and skills for the effective teaching of persons with special need

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