



SECTION ONE



SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION ISSUES WINDOW

Section one has twenty-six chapters. They are selected special needs education issues to herald the great interdisciplinary dialogue. The chapters, written mostly by special needs education professionals, therefore, provide the necessary backgrounds and perspectives to the dialogue. The section opens with two chapters by late Prof Ibrahim Adamu Kolo that could not be published in his planned book: **Psychology of Special Needs and Exceptional Persons** with Emeka D Ozoji, Bukola C Dada, and Hassana S. Darma as co-writers. To respect his intellectual identity, the two chapters are presented here as written by Prof. Kolo himself. The other chapters are roughly categorized in three themes: the basics of special needs education such as definitions, models of persons with disabilities (PWDs), misconceptions and corrections about PWDs, challenges and trends in special needs education. The second theme covers a glimpse of special needs education from the Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland in South Africa). The two chapters will serve as comparative study of special needs education between Nigeria and Eswatini. The last theme is a potpourri of issues in special needs education including adapting critical and creative thinking skills in special needs education, handling children with autism spectrum disorders, children with dysgraphia, children with conduct disorder, children with deafblindness, gifted learners and inclusive education in regular schools in Nigeria. Finally, the section provides a selected overview of special needs education that will facilitate meaningful participation in the interdisciplinary dialogue. Welcome and happy reading.

CHAPTER 1

SPECIAL LEARNING NEEDS, SPECIAL EDUCATION AND EXCEPTIONAL PERSONS

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Special Needs

As the highest ranked specie of living things, the human race is endowed with complex abilities which include learning and communication. Psychologists have since the 18th Century confirmed that human learning takes place either by instinct (an innate natural tendency) or by different patterns of psychological processes linking the human sensory reflexes through the learning domains (cognitive, affective and psycho-motor) to occurrences in the immediate environment (Hurlock, 1976; Berk, 2006; Ellis & Abrams, 2009). Instinctual learning occurs naturally or automatically in the context of reactions to innate or external stimulations in the form of eye gazing, eye blinking, sneezing, crying, fear, smiles, anger, etc. These reactions are not taught, but humans just learn to do them by psychological

instinct. On the other hand, much of learning does formally take place as human sensory channels (sight, hearing, thinking, feeling, tasting and smelling) encounter stimuli (occurrences, movements, images, etc.) in the immediate or surrounding environment. For example, as children grow from birth to childhood and into adulthood, they learn to recognize images (physical or simulated), imitate behaviour, mimic sounds or noise, acquire language, scribble, write, draw, read, acquire and understand concepts, acquire and apply knowledge, etc. to intelligible levels.

The abilities for both instinctual and formal learning are expected to develop from stage to stage, matching the individuals' intelligence and persona-social adaptability capacities (Allport, 1961; Bandura, 1974; Harris, 1998; & Siegel, 2012). Seifert, Hoffnung & Hoffnung (2000) described the achievement of expected capacities and abilities in human development as "developmental milestones," implying specific tasks and events during the life span. Human development milestones are categorized by most psychologists into three - Physical; Psychosocial; and Cognitive (American Counseling Association - ACA, 2009). The physical milestones are in terms of physical ability and agility; the psychosocial milestones in the context of interactive capacities, emotional maturity and interpersonal relationships; and cognitive milestones in terms of capacities and abilities for problem solving, language development and creativity. Hence, as humans grow by chronological age and physically, they are expected to mature in



terms of their physical abilities, intelligence and capacity for psychosocial adaptations. When instinctual and formal learning capacities do not meet expected average standards of physical abilities, intelligence and psychosocial adaptations, it is thought that physically, socially and psychologically, there are either learning developmental delays or a state of retardation (Bandura, 1974; Bloom, 1964; Binet, 1961; & Gesell, 1963; Seifert, Hoffnung & Hoffnung, 2000). As ACA (2009) summed up the context of human development milestones in relation to special needs,

Delays in development may indicate that an individual simply has a slower growth process. Significant delays in achieving specific developmental milestones may indicate more serious underlying conditions. Physical development slows and eventually stops as the body begins degeneration; however, psychosocial and cognitive development do not degenerate or terminate as an individual ages unless a medical condition occurs (e.g., Alzheimer's).

Abilities for mastering or learning intellectual tasks and psycho-social adaptations are essentially obviously only limited or incapacitated to the extent that differences become noticeable in due course between individuals affected and those who are able to master learning and psycho-social adaptation tasks as appropriate to their age and intelligence. Such limitations or incapacitations in mastering learning and psycho-social adaptations of expected tasks are regarded in psycho-educational psychology as Special Learning Needs (Brown, 2011). For example, if at birth and up to six months, an infant does not blink the eyes or move the head in the direction of sound, there may be an onset of special learning need. By age one, if a child does not smile or mimic words heard, then there may also be a special learning need. And if by age six, the child is not able to talk language telegraphically or scribble reasonably with writing material, special learning needs are suspected. In Special Education, such limitations and incapacitations of human abilities are referred to variously as Intellectual (Mental) Difficulties (Retardation); Learning Difficulties (Disabilities); Visual Impairments (Handicaps); Hearing Impairments (Handicaps); Neuro-Physiological Dysfunctions (Disabilities); Physical Disabilities (Handicaps); etc. When also human learning abilities are extraordinarily above expected general or specific performance capacity levels; or when the potentials for such extra-ordinary learning capacities are unmet, yet seemingly obvious in the learning dispositions of individuals, the tendencies are also referred to as special learning needs (Kolo, 1994).

The American Counseling Association (ACA) Encyclopedia of Counseling

Disabilities, Dysfunctionalities, Exceptionalities and Special Learning Needs

The terms, *Disabilities, Dysfunctionalities, Exceptionalities and Special Learning Needs* are known to be used side by side in Special Education literature in reference to conditions of unusual difficulties by persons whose capacities for learning and accomplishing daily life tasks are noticeably different from the ways majority of the



population are to learn and carry out similar daily living tasks (Obani, 2004; &Abang, 2005).

Disabilities and disabling conditions in Special Education parlance refer to the limitations experienced in terms of the required basic abilities or capacities to carry out tasks regarded as simple or easy by majority members of the human population. When basic tasks such as focusing or attending to learning tasks; learning to read; learning to write; using the limbs for walking, kicking, throwing; communicating (verbally and non-verbally); sighting objects, etc. become very unusually difficult to accomplish, then a disability or disabling condition is suspected. Disabilities are, therefore, the incapacitation experienced in the expected efforts (mental, physical, sighting, hearing, physiological, psychological etc.) to independently accomplish learning and daily life related tasks such as reading, normal age-appropriate behaviour, physical movements, viewing and recognizing familiar images, communicating verbally and non-verbally, etc.). Difficulties or inability to walk on both legs; unusually slow ability or inability to learn self-help and learning to learn skills are examples of disabling conditions.

Dysfunctions or dysfunctionalities are another way of referring to disabilities. The term simply implies the “non-working or grossly poor working” of human system for accomplishing tasks such as physical coordination (for standing up and walking independently), perceptual-motor skills (for appropriate reactions), eye-hand coordination (for writing), eye focus and sighting (for reading and learning), hearing (for communication and learning language), etc. To learn new words and sentences in a language, the hearing mechanism from source of sound emission, through encoding to decoding of sound must be uninterrupted and followed through to learn language or communicate. To perform a physical task, the neuro-cognitive alertness from the thought to perform a specific task, through the comprehension by the brain of what is to be the output of the expected task, to the mobilization of the nervous system to pull through the neurological coordination must be instant and complete with no disconnects or weaknesses along the flow. And to accomplish any visually related tasks like recognizing images and sighting objects or space in an environment, the visual-perceptual process from sighting the objects and space in an environment, through accommodation in the eyes, and to cognitively encoding and decoding the entire environment must be uninterrupted and processed to the stage of recognition of imagery and reality. In the flow of stimuli and action articulation through any such human sub-systems of learning and daily life activities, any weakness or disarticulations result in dysfunctions.

The term *Exceptionality* emerged in the Special Education vocabulary in the 1970s as a way of de-emphasizing the negative labeling effects on victims of impairments and disabilities who were referred to as *disabled and handicapped* (Kirk & Gallagher, 1983). The idea was that since everyone was endowed with some levels of ability, and since, therefore, every one (with or without the obviousness of disability) do possess some capacities to perform tasks to certain levels, people are unique in their own ways; and hence, everybody is exceptional as individuals.



Exceptionality, therefore, refers to the specific ways in which people as individuals are able to use their abilities and capacities to achieve life and daily living tasks. Exceptionality could be taken to mean how a person who is deaf is able to read the lips of people to communicate in his or her own way in response; how a person with mental retardation is able to slowly but surely learn independent living and basic academic skills; or even how a child utilizes the extra ordinariness of intelligence to be creative and innovative in accomplishing seemingly difficult or impossible tasks. Despite the resort to the use of the term, exceptionality, the fact of disability was still obvious for those who experienced disabilities in one form or the other. Hence, there began the reference to “persons with disabilities” as referring to exceptional persons also. The essence is that even as exceptional persons, handicapping situations still arose to be overcome and the encounters need to be understood as special need education scenario.

Since the essence of special education or support cannot be wished away for exceptional individuals or persons with disabilities, it became fashionable to refer to Special Learning Needs in understanding and educating people with disabilities. A Special Learning Need (SLN) implies the extra psycho-educational effort required to meet the learning and life tasks capacities expected for exceptional individuals to live as normally as possible in relation with the society and everyone else. Learning to cope and live with such conditions as visual impairment, hearing impairment, physical disability, specific learning difficulties, developmental and intellectual difficulties, etc. are all various forms of meeting special learning needs. Therefore, whether referred to as a person with disability or an exceptional person, the obviousness of a special learning need arising from a disability, dysfunctionality, or exceptionality requiring Special Educational Intervention is manifested.

The Impairment - Disability - Handicap Continuum

The three terms, *Impairment*, *Disability* and *Handicap* are core terms to the conceptual understanding of Special Needs Education and are sometimes used by some writers interchangeably, rather than in the context of a continuum of inter-related steps of special need conditions. From a psycho-educational perspective of Special Needs Education, a handicap is more of the consequence of a disability arising from impairment. In other words, there has to be impairment for a disabling condition to emerge in human functioning, with the extent of disability determining a handicapping situation (Obani, 2004).

While an impairment is a damage, tear or significantly weakened condition of the human system in any of the vital organs (eyes, ears, limbs, central nervous system, brain, etc.) required for effective learning and daily life accomplishments, a disability is the incapacitation or grossly limited link or synchrony (blurred vision, significantly reduced hearing or hearing loss, unusual difficulties in learning and developmental skills, very poor physical coordination, etc.) for effectiveness or efficiency of the expected functioning (seeing or sighting objects



and images, hearing, learning to learn basic academic tasks, walking or running skillfully with agility) by affected organ. With the presence of a disability or disabling condition, emerges obstacles (handicap) from the individual affected (poor sight or blindness, hardness of hearing or deafness, low intelligence quotient, poor articulation of coordination of muscles and limbs) or from the environment (inconsiderate physical and architectural barriers, noisy environments, non-availability of specialist teachers and technical personnel, etc.). Plotted along a continuum of performance abilities or capacities, it can be illustrated that impairments trigger disabling conditions which lead to handicapping situations. Figure 1.1 below illustrates the continuum.

Figure 1.1: Impairment - Disability - Handicap Continuum:

Optical Nerve Detachment Blocked Visual Imagery Lack of Vision
Perforated Ear Drums Partial Deafness Partial Hearing Loss
IMPAIRMENT ----- DISABILITY ----- HANDICAP
Brain Injury Specific Learning Difficulty Wrong Learning Skills
Central Nervous System Distortion Muscular Incoordination Physique Instability

While the impairments cited in the figure are physio-psychological in nature, the disabilities and handicapping situations are psycho-educational in nature. The disconnects between the physiological conditions triggering the psychological incapacitations leading to the special educational needs manifested determine the psychological dispositions and levels of abilities.

1.4. Special Education

The term *Special Education* emerged among the key reference areas of practice of formal education for children and youths following humanitarian and rights-based advocacies in Europe and United States of America (USA) for respect for the dignity and human rights of people with disabilities, particularly as enshrined in the Legal and Constitutional Provisions of those countries. Kirk & Gallagher (1983) for example made copious reference to the relevant parts of the United States (US) Public Law 14 - 142 which explicitly provides for the rights and privileges of children and youths with disabilities who should be screened, assessed, educated and trained with specialized psycho-educational methodologies within normalized and integrated settings. With the specific provisions for the rights of people with disabilities to be educated, the term Special Education began to gain prominence in General Educational lexicon. As an educational concept, therefore, Heward and Orlansky (1984) defined Special Education as

...individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of physical settings, special equipment and materials, teaching procedures and other interventions designed to help children achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and academic success.

An important idea to note in the definition of Special Education by Heward and Orlansky is that no specific reference is made to children or persons with disabilities or who have special educational needs, or even those labeled as



exceptional. The reason is to de-emphasize segregation, exclusion and marginalization for those with special needs in making educational provisions in educational settings and delivery methodologies. With such generic definitions of Special Education, the practice has now assumed the dimensions of human services and interventions for persons with disabilities or special needs in the context of Psycho-Educational Assessment Services; Early Interventions; Psycho-Educational Interventions; and Rehabilitation Training and Services. Many writers have, therefore, now come to regard Special Education as specialized teaching learning and training approached tailored to meet the assessed special needs of learners of all ages.

Special Needs Education

From the generic use of the term, Special Education emerged the connotation, *Special Needs Education*. The infusion of the term “Need” between Special and Education was to draw attention of students of Education and Special Education, Teachers, Special Education Practitioners and Professionals as well as Applied Psychologists to the utility value of understanding the psychological underlying factor underpinning the manifestation of differences in human developmental and learning tendencies in all individuals. In other words, Special Needs Education connotes that everyone has one form or another of developmental and learning trends which may impede, influence or even facilitate achievement of related psychological or specific learning tasks (Sattler, 1982) Special Needs Education, therefore, simply refers to specialized teaching and training psycho-educational methodologies designed to address specific learning and developmental skills acquisition of individuals either as particular persons or on the basis of homogeneous and heterogeneous manifestations of learning traits. Adapted Teaching Methodologies of the Regular and Core Curriculum (Braille Medium, Sign Language and Total Communication, etc.); Diagnostic Teaching; Task-Process Teaching; Clinical Teaching, Learning Assessment and Evaluation Based Teaching, Simulation Learning, Therapeutic Sensitization; Adapted Physical and Kinesthetic Activities; and Active Teaching and Learning are examples of specialized educational methodologies referred to as Special Needs Education.

Special Needs and Inclusive Education

Special Educational delivery for individuals with special learning needs in its various ramifications (Exclusive Special Care and Training; Outreach Special Care and Training; Side By Side Regular and Special Educational Settings; Inclusive Special Education Setting; Individualized Special Learning Needs Educational Programming; and In-Class Special Needs Learning Settings) has evolved in practice over the years from practices which were isolationist to exclusionist, Mainstreaming, Integration and more recently, Inclusive practices (Kolo & Nwazuo, 2006). With the persistent challenges faced by various nations in the efforts aimed at universalization of access and functional educational opportunities



for every person (irrespective of ability and socioeconomic status) through various United Nations (UN) Proclamations and Declarations (1990 Jomtien Declaration for Education for All – EFA; 1993 Salamanca Proclamation of Special Needs Inclusive Education – SNIE; 2015 Incheon Education 2030 Declaration and Framework for Inclusive and Equitable Education and Lifelong within the Sustainable Development Goals - SDGs Agenda), there have been various delivery practices in the Education Sector to ensure that every marginalized and excluded group of learners, including those with special needs and disabilities are not only reached and enrolled through regular educational setting re-alignments, they are appropriately provided with the appropriate quality of education that meets their learning needs.

In Nigeria, domestication of these UN Declarations had led to Policies and Policy Implementation Actions like the Universal Basic Education Agenda which provides for 5% Education Sector Budgetary Allocation for Special Needs Education delivery (Federal Government of Nigeria – FGN, 2003) and the recent 2016 Draft National Policy and Implementation Framework for Special Needs Education (Federal Ministry of Education – FME, 2016). In particular in countries like Nigeria with the developing Education Sectors, efforts made by national Governments towards achieving the key goals of 100% access and opportunities for Education for All (including for marginalized and excluded learners like those with special learning needs) have been difficult to achieve (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO, 2015). Hence, the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda into which national governments are expected to adopt in place of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) stipulated an Education 2030 Agenda and Framework for Action towards Inclusive and Equitable Quality Education and Lifelong Learning for All. Specifically, the Incheon Declaration which recognizes Education as Goal Four of the SDGs spells out that part of the overarching goal of the Sector is to

Ensure equity and inclusion in and through education and address all forms of exclusion and marginalization, disparity, vulnerability and inequality in access and participation, retention and completion in learning outcomes. Inclusive education for all should be ensured by designing and implementing transformative public policies to respond to learners’ diversity and needs, and to address the multiple forms of discrimination and of situations, including emergencies which impede the fulfilment of the right to education(UNESCO, 2015; P. 6).

The implication of the latest UN Declaration for universal action for Sustainable Development and Inclusive Education in all member countries is that no for learners with special needs or disabilities shall be left out or have their learning needs met through discriminatory and exclusive educational practices. The challenge in the Education Sector is one of the people, Government at all levels and respective communities ensuring the practical implementation of integration



and inclusion of every person with special learning need or disability in specialized and customized provisions, facilities and programmes through regular schools and educational settings.

To ensure the achievement of the UN Inclusive Special Needs Education Goal at national, sub-national, local and community levels, specialized and implementable psycho-educational programmes need to be adopted and designed to ensure that no learner with special need or disability anywhere is left out or excluded through regular education policies and programmes implementation.

The Psychological Perspective of Special Needs Education

Professional Special Education Practices (Psycho-Educational Assessments, Human Care and Basic Developmental Skills Acquisition Training, Teaching of Special Learning Needs Core and Adapted Regular Curriculum, Rehabilitation Training, Education and Services) in practical terms essentially entails deepened pedagogical approaches applicable to both learners with special needs and those whose learning needs are not apparent or obvious. In other words, special educational methodologies used for training and teaching learners with various types of special needs (visual handicaps, hearing handicaps, learning difficulties, physical and physiological handicaps, etc.) can be used to also effectively facilitate learning skills mastery by learners whose special need traits are not obvious in the regular class or school setting. Indeed, as Woodside & McClam (2006) proffered in the context of Human Services Perspective Model, the focus of Special Needs Education in practice is to help individuals solve their respective problems in their every life, considering the complex nature of human existence in the environment. The applicability of the generic focus of Human Services for Special Educational Services delivery is, therefore, in the context of the Social Systems Approach which operates on the underlying philosophy that all individuals (with or without special needs or disabilities) have to function with other individuals, groups, institutions, and the environment. The intrinsic capacities and abilities (psychological attributes) of the individual to interact sufficiently with others and the environment goes a long way in determining the success or failure to efficiently learn and accomplish human developmental and educational skills, irrespective of the limitations or stereotypes (as is apparent for individuals with special needs or disabilities) encountered in everyday living. Taking into consideration the Human Services and Social Systems Models of social care, welfare, education and training as required by persons with special needs or disabilities, obviously the key intervening factors for consideration for effectiveness and efficiency of accomplishing daily life tasks and learning has to be from a psychological perspective (Shea & Bauer, 1994 & Woodside & McClam, 2006).

As Akinade (2005) described it, Psychology “is the scientific study of the behaviour of humans and animals as well as underlying mental or cognitive process such as thoughts, emotion, motivation and the application of the results of research to solve behavioural problems” (P. 150). Hence, sub areas of psychology



such as Applied Psychology, Behavioural Psychology, Neuro-Psychology, Clinical Psychology, Educational Psychology, etc. find strong applicability for Special Needs Educational delivery and for the education of exceptional persons. Issues of human developmental tasks, personality development, intelligence and intellectual traits, cognition and cognitive functioning, emotions and emotionality, attitudes and attitudinal dispositions of persons with special needs or disabilities are all concerns of what may be described as the perspectives of psychology of special needs education and exceptional persons. This is because these psychological factors as focused upon in the various sub areas of human psychology play essential roles in understanding for functionally interacting with and facilitating achievement of developmental and learning tasks for individuals with special needs or disabilities. While Human Developmental Psychology offers a clearer understanding of comparative understanding of expected abilities at different stages of human development, the knowledge of Applied Psychology helps Special Education Professionals understand better individual learning and developmental adaptability capacities as the basis for developing special needs assistance and methodologies suitable for persons with special needs or disabilities. On its part, Clinical Psychology and Neuro-Psychology provide the empirical evidence and assessment data in respect of special need or disability conditions on the basis of which Educational Psychology prescriptions can be modified to suit the special developmental and learning needs of individuals. Hence, Special Needs Education practices employ psycho-educational theories and approaches for specialized interventions required by learners with special needs and disabilities. The subsequent chapters of this book focus more precisely on these psychological factors in the context of achieving the goals of special needs education and effective independent living for people with special needs and exceptional persons.

Summary

This chapter is basically introductory to the central theme of this book – *Psychology of Special Needs Education and Exceptional Persons*. Therefore, subthemes which facilitate a clearer understanding of the main theme are foremost explained for a better understanding of the content of the book. Chapter one essentially explains Special Education concepts like Special Needs; Learning and Ability Dysfunctions; Impairments; Disabilities; Handicaps; and Special Needs Education from a psychological perspective. Subsequent chapters in the book explore various psychological factors like personality types, intelligence, learning styles, attitudes, self-concept and self-image as the basis for understanding Special Need Conditions and the appropriate Education required by Exceptional Persons.

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