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## CHAPTER 11

### EVALUATION OF NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION ON SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION (1977 TO DATE)

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#### **Introduction**

The educational system in Nigeria was established after independence in 1960 with a National policy on education (NPE) in 1977. The policy came up after seventeen (17) years of independence. It shows a lagging/lackadaisical attitude of the nation in education. As a nation prepares for its independence national policy on education would have been one of the priority areas. However, it will not be out of place to recall the emergence of the civil crisis that culminated into the Nigerian – Biafran civil war between 1967 and 1970.

The process of establishing a national policy on education started on the 8<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> September, 1969 with a National Curriculum Conference (NCC) organized by the Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) later known as Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) which was previously scheduled to hold in 1966 but derailed due to the national civil crisis that culminated into full blown civil war.

The conference was initially set up to hold sometimes in 1966 and rescheduled for 8-12<sup>th</sup> September, 1969 to search for a national philosophy of education, National goals/ aims for education in Nigeria at all levels and to provide guidelines with respect to:

- a) The needs of youth and adult individuals in our society
- b) The socio-economic needs, values, aspirations and hence development of the society
- c) The curriculum matters, the subject content of the system which is the means to the goals/ aims (Adaralegbe, 1969: xiii and Osaat, 2010: 147).

The conference was structured in three interrelated stages to perform three tasks such as:

- i. Identification and Clarification of a National Philosophy of Education, goals/ aims, purposes and objectives.
- ii. Statement of issues and problems/challenges
- iii. Development of implications and recommendations for a national curriculum reform (NERDC report, 1969).

The conference successfully accomplished its goals/ objectives and one of its goals is a well written national policy on education (1<sup>st</sup> edition in 1977) for Nigeria nation. The education of the national policy on education (NPE) becomes imperative but first what is evaluation.



Evaluation is the determination or the estimation of functions, values of things, programmes and policies. It could also be used to assess the efficiency, effectiveness and values/functions of individuals and programmes. It is applied to determine or estimate which teaching method or device is more effective and which textbook is more influential to the readers.

According to Joshua (2005) evaluation is a process of judging the worth, desirability, effectiveness or adequacy of something according to definite criteria while to Ajuru (2006) evaluation is a process of the collection of evidence to determine whether certain changes are taking place in the learners as well as determine the amount or degree of change in the individual/person. Previously, Stufflebeam (1980) argued that evaluation is a process of delineating, obtaining and providing useful information for judging alternative decisions. To Osaat (2014) evaluation is a process of taking decisions or making valued judgment on the information/data obtained from the result of measurement. The decisions or judgment must be based on predetermined criteria or set standards. Evaluation in most cases can be described as subjective rather than objective dealing with goodness, worth, satisfaction, utility, etc.

Education could be formative, placement, diagnostics and summative. Formative evaluation helps in decision making periodically as the instruction or programme is ongoing to ensure its overall success. It promotes monitoring and guiding instruction/programmes. It is formative because it provides feedback, reward mechanism and remediation (Amadioha in Osaat, 2014). Placement evaluation reveals the level of knowledge the candidates who wish to join or enter into an academic programme possess. It is a kind of entry qualification test while diagnostic evaluation provides knowledge of problems/challenges of students in programmes. It identifies and differentiates levels of performances or why performances are poor or better. And perhaps what should be done to remedy it. According to Amadisha in Osaat (2014) summative evaluation takes place at the end of the instructional process or programmes. It is applied to estimate the worth of the learning programme. It helps the administrators/ teachers decide who should be prompted or be awarded a certificate at the end of programmes such as NECO, WAEC, JAMB, etc.

Evaluation performs numerous functions and it's crucial to the teachers, school administrators, parents, stakeholders in education, etc. The functions include provision of textbooks and determination of instructional objectives, it is also used for selection, certification, and promotion, placement streaming and counselling of students or administrators / teachers. It is used to diagnose students' academic problems/weaknesses and how appropriate remedial measures would be applied. It is used for determination of overall success/failure; predict future achievement and curricular revision/planning. (Amadioha in Osaat, 2014).

It is therefore pertinent to evaluate the national policy on education (NPE, 1977) as revised 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2013 with reference to special Needs



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education (SNE) 2015 to date, challenges of special needs education, Conclusion and suggestions.

### **Evaluation of National Policy on Education (NPE) with reference to Special Needs Education (SNE) (1977-1982).**

Nigeria's 1969 curriculum conference was a bold and a practical step to educational emancipation. Nigeria attained her independence on October 1, 1960 from the British colonial master. The next target was how to get out of educational slavery. To Akanbiand Abiolu (2018:479);

*The general consensus was that there was the need for educational emancipation through colonization of the academic contents of education, to make education relevant to the needs of the individual and the society at large. This led to the organisation of the 1969 curriculum conference which had far reaching effects on the curriculum contents, purposes, goals and objectives of education in Nigeria.*

As shown above, Nigeria through the 1969 Nigerian curriculum conference (NCC) agreed to have a conference as to chart her path of relevant education to decolonise our colonized mentality and have our indigenous educational system that could save us from all shackles of colonial educational system, known as "Educational emancipation". Some years after the 1969 national curriculum conference the way for national policy on education opened. Precisely, in 1977 the first/ indigenous edition of national policy on education was obtained as a result of a well organized 1969 national curriculum conference. How did it happen? Government proposed that for the benefit of all citizens, the country's educational goals in terms of its relevance to the needs of the individuals as well as in terms of the kind of society desired in relation to the environment, people and the realities of the modern world and rapid changes should be set out (FRN; 1981:1:5). With these in mind, the government organized a seminar in 1973 summoned distinguished educational experts and appointed Chief S. O. Adebayo former permanent representative of Nigeria of the United Nations and the Chairman of the National Universities Commission (NUC) as an able Chairman of the seminar, to deliberate on all issues and aspects of a National Policy on Education. These experts were drawn from a wide range of interests and professions, included:

- Representatives of both Christians and Islamic Religion
- The Universities
- National Universities commission (NUC)
- Interested external agencies
- Government ministries
- Organizations in public and private sectors interested in the end products of education for purposes of employment
- Women's Organisations and
- Others.



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Also, to be remembered as participants in the seminar are the National Council for Education (NCE), the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE), the National Educational Research Development Council (NERDC) and Federal Ministry of Education officials. These professional and Non-professional bodies made recommendations that culminated into the 1977 National Policy on Education. This document between 1977 (1<sup>st</sup> Edition) to 1981 (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition) has thirteen sub-units and twelve sections as shown below:

1. Introduction
2. Section 1: philosophy of Nigerian Education
3. Section 2; Pre-primary Education
4. Section 3: Primary Education
5. Section 4: Secondary Education
6. Section 5: Higher Education including Professional Education
7. Section 6: Technical Education
8. Adult Education and Non-formal Education
9. Section 8: Special Education
10. Section 9: Teacher Education
11. Section 10: Educational services
12. Section 11: Administration and Planning of Education
13. Section 12: Financing of Education

The concern of this paper is section 8- Special Education as it was known as at then. This section is numbered 53-56 (4 sub-sections). The first two sub-sections 53 and 54 deal with concepts of special education and specially gifted children respectively. According to FRN (1981:36), "Special education is the education of children and adults who have learning difficulty because of different sorts of handicaps".

These handicaps include Blindness, partial sightedness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social readjustment, physical handicap and others. While specially gifted children are intellectually precious and find themselves insufficiently challenged by normal/regular school programmes who may take to stubbornness and apathy, in resistance to it. By implication, special provisions must be made for special education to take care of two broad categories as the handicapped and the exceptionally gifted.

The serial number 55 in the NPE indicates the purpose and objectives of special education as follows:

- a. To give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental and emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- b. To provide adequate education for all handicapped children and adults in order that they may fully play their roles in the development of the nation.
- c. To provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.



**The Federal Ministry of Education:** The Federal Ministry of Education is responsible in coordinating the affairs of special education but it seems the ministry has been failing in fulfilling this function because one can hardly see any special education committee to coordinate the functions of federal ministry of education first, to coordinate special education activities in collaboration with the ministries of Health, social welfare and labour and employment. There has been no evidence for the fulfilment of this function.

Secondly, records should have been kept/ taken of all handicapped children and adults by age, sex, locality and type. Data well generated and well kept can help some level of implementation. Schools should have been obliged to make yearly returns of children with classification to enable them to be sent to special schools and or awarded scholarships to highly gifted children.

Thirdly, the Government seems to have failed in its responsibility for making provision for training special education teachers and raising of supportive staff required in schools, colleges, clinics and centres. Considering the importance of highly trained professionals and efficient personnel required in special education, the Government wouldn't have abandoned this function for the private sector and personnel in private educational institutions. In this respect we can see that professional diploma in special educational needs in collaboration with national open university of Nigeria (NOUN) cannot be enough both in quality and quantity (<https://hiimadis.com>) while Tribune online (<https://tribuneonlineng.com>) argued that regular training of special teachers is crucial to helping special needs education. Nigerian teachers should have to undergo training on intellectual disabilities across all the levels of special needs education.

However, the capacity building and development training workshop organized by the National Teachers Institute (NTI), Kaduna and Axiom learning solutions limited help in training special education teachers, but in most cases not really been trained by the Federal Ministry of Education. (vanguard, 2021) and not really adequate.

Fourthly, that all teacher training colleges will provide general and basic courses to all prospective teachers who will teach in normal schools to enable them have knowledge identity and help handicapped children failed because it was not enforced, neither supervised nor assisted in the real sense of it.

Fifthly, the Government decided to introduce integration as the most realistic form of special education because handicapped children are meant to live in the society- Normal society with every other person. This implies that special classes and units shall be provided in the normal/regular school under the universal primary education scheme. This means that schools must be well staffed and equipped. One can only testify of the existence of some special schools for the handicapped, mentally retarded and other forms of disabled children but for a strong form of regular schools accommodating the handicapped together with



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normal children form of inclusive system, the answer is no, because if at all it exists, it's not fully in existence.

Sixthly, the Ministry of Education in consultation with the appropriate bodies, provides special programmes for gifted children within a regular educational set up and has not been visible for all just as proper identification has been of the handicapped well taking care of.

Seventhly, the proposed free education at all levels for the handicapped and gifted children has not been fully addressed.

Eighthly, vocational schools reservation and multipurpose vocational schools have got to be given priority attention to address the problem of unemployment among the handicapped graduates. Perhaps, the worsening unemployment problem aggravated the situation and made the government not to give priority attention. Generally, the promise to provide suitable employment opportunities for handicapped graduates has also been a forgotten one. Also, the work of the ministry of social development, youth and sports in terms of giving consideration to addressing the problem of the handicapped children has more to be desired.

Ninthly, that children's clinics will have units for early identification of handicapped children, providing curative and medical care before and after their primary school age. This has been a total failure and in most cases not in existence.

Tenthly, that ministries of health, education, social welfare/social development and labour will jointly work in most handicapped children programmes is yet to be addressed. However, the national council on special education only mentioned on the pages of paper would have been a laudable one if properly empowered to work (FRN, 1977, 1981). It is pertinent to say that the special education also known as Special Needs Education (SNE) was recognised, properly documented in the first and second editions of national policy on education but the nation failed in its policy implementation. This kind of failure in policy implementations described above cut across the period being considered here. However, a little assessment will continue as shown in some sub-units below.

### **Evaluation of National Policy on Education With Reference To Special Needs Education (1982-2003)**

The Nigerian National Policy on Education was revised in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007/ 2008 and 2013 / 2014. Between 1982 after the second edition it had been revised only once in 1998 for a period of about 21 years. The previous review from 1977 to 1981 helped the nation to change the education system from 6:5:4 to 6:3:3:4 in 1981 which was implemented from 1982.

The 1998 revised edition (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) maintained most of the principles and policies issues as previously explained (1977-1981) with the same concepts analysis (definitions) but introduced the word "talented" together with "gifted". The concepts of purpose and objectives were replaced with goals. The goals of Special Education (as in 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) included:

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(a) Adequate education for all special cases; (b) a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries

In comparing purpose/objectives in the 1977 and 1981 editions to 2 goals described in 1998 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition), one would believe that the third edition merely tried to avoid repetition. In this type of document simplicity helps implementation and implementers.

Again, the functions/responsibilities of Federal Ministry of Education are the same but 1998 edition shifted or shared some of the functions to state and local governments and some specifications were made in terms of facilities, funding, shared among Federal, State and Local Governments, psychological screening and architectural design of school buildings to account for the special needs of the handicapped (FRN, 1998).

The introduction of Universal Basic Education (UBE) was made in 1998 (3<sup>rd</sup> edition) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps, the constant revision of National Policy on Education after 1998 was as a result of the introduction of UBE.

### **Evaluation of National Policy on Education with Reference to Special Needs Education (2004-2014).**

The dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century places emphasis on education and hence education policy. According to Tikly (2001) education policy issues continue to be a question of critical concern in developing countries in Africa as a tool for development. Apart from being a developing country the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands become imperative in drawing attention to education. It is believed that education is now intentionally accepted as a key development index and its recognition of this importance that governments all over the world have made commitments in their countries educational policies for their citizens to have access to education (Odukoya, 2009 and Imam, 2012).

The revised National Policy on Education (FRN, 1998) prescribed a Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme made free and compulsory for every child for at least a period of nine years. This programme (UBE) was launched in 1999 which perhaps resulted in 3 revisions of National Policy on Education between 1999 and 2014- just a period of 15 years.

The 2004 (fourth Edition) of National Policy on Education is in section 10 Pp 47-50 (FRN, 2004). The number of pages explains the importance or emphasis attached to special needs education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Here, special education is defined as “ a formal special educational training given to people (children and adults) with special needs “ was emphasized and this group of people classified into three categories:

I. The Disabled: people with impairment (physical, sensory) and because of this impairment/disability find it difficult to cope with normal/regular school/class organization and methods. In this category are people with:

- a. Visually impaired (blind and the partially sighted)
- b. Hearing impaired (deaf and the partially hearing)



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- c. Physically and health impaired (deformed limbs, asthmatic)
  - d. Mentally retarded (educable, trainable, bedridden)
  - e. Emotionally disturbed (hyperactive, hypoactive/the socially maladjusted/behaviour disordered)
  - f. Speech impaired (stammerers, stutterers)
  - g. Learning disabled (low psychological/neurological educational phobia/challenges)
  - h. Multiple Handicapped

2. The Disadvantaged: The children of nomadic pastoralism, migrant fisher folks, migrant farmers, hunters, etc. who, due to their lifestyles and means of livelihood are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision.

3. The Gifted and Talented: People (children and adults) who have a very high intelligent quotient (IQ) and are naturally endowed with special traits and therefore insufficiently challenged by regular academic programmes. The categorization seems better than the ones in other past editions.

The aims/objectives of special education (FRN, 2004:48): The aims/objectives are somehow explicit compared with 1977/1981 and 1998 editions.

The Responsibilities: The responsibilities are shared for Federal, State and Local Governments with special invitation to non-governmental organizations and international agencies (such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WHO, etc) for assistance.

Emphasis is placed on the following areas:

- a. Provision of special programmes for the gifted and talented
- b. Free and compulsory education at all levels
- c. Provision of facilities and easy access
- d. Effective funding by the Federal, State and Local Governments

Emphasis is also placed on architectural designs of school buildings, regular sensory, medical and psychological screening to identify any incidence of handicap.

The 5<sup>th</sup> edition was printed 2007 and reprinted 2008 with special resemblance with 2004 but with different features from the 6<sup>th</sup> edition printed 2013 and reprinted 2014.

Here, this study will be making reference to 2013 (not 2014). The 6<sup>th</sup> edition FRN (NPE) 2013 captures special education with the most appropriate name "special needs education" in section 7. It defines special education as a customized educational programme, designed to meet the unique needs of persons with special needs that the general education programme cannot cater for (FRN, 2013: 52).

The truth remains that the handicapped persons have unique needs to be addressed with special needs education but they should not be stigmatized as envisaged in the principle of inclusive education. This document/policy categorizes these persons into about 10 groups. Special needs persons are categorised as follows:

- 1. Visual impairment (blind and the partially sighted)
  - 2. Hearing impairment (deaf and the partially hearing)
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3. Physical and Health impairment
  4. Intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe and profound)
  5. Emotional and Behavioural disorders (hyperactive, hypoactive, socially maladjusted)
  6. Speech and language impairment
  7. Learning disabilities (psychological/Neurological phobia and challenges)
  8. Multiple disabilities
  9. The gifted and talented
  10. Albinos (persons with vision and skin problems, lack of self-esteem, myths about Albinism, stigmatization and stereotype).

Government as shown in the policy promised to provide inclusive education in the real sense of it. This should be another way of eliminating stigmatization among these persons.

The aims of special needs education as indicated in the policy include:

- a. Provision of access to education to all persons in an inclusive settings
- b. Equalizing educational opportunities irrespective of their genetic composition, socio-physical, sensory, mental, psychological/Emotional disabilities.
- c. Provision of adequate education for all persons with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.
- d. Provision of opportunities for the exceptional gifted and talented persons to develop their talent, natural endowments/traits as their own pace in the interest of national development
- e. Design a diversified appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.

The responsibilities of the Federal Ministry of Education are better arranged. The Federal Ministry of Education as shown in policy shall:

- a. Contribute to the funding of education programmes across the country
- b. Be responsible for policy formulation and modification relating to the special education programmes.
- c. Coordinates and supervises the provision of special education services and programmes for persons with special needs
- d. Provide matching grants to states and local governments for the provision of special education programmes
- e. Encourage national and international donor agencies/financial institutions to assist in funding and implementing special education programmes
- f. In conjunction with relevant ministries and agencies, carry out regular data updates of the number of persons that require special education services across the country.

Table 1: Development of Aims/Objectives in NPE from 1977 to 2013 in Summary



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NPE 1977-1981	NPE 1998	NPE 2004-2007	NPE 2013
<p>The purpose &amp; objectives of Special Education should be:</p> <p>To give concrete meaning to the likes of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental, emotional disabilities *****</p>	<p>The goals of Special Education shall be to provide:</p> <p>Adequate education for all special cases;</p>	<p>The aims/objectives of Special Education are to:</p> <p>Give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.</p>	<p>AIMS</p> <p>The aims of Special Education are to:</p> <p>Provide access to education for all persons in an Inclusive setting</p>
<p>To provide adequate education for all handicapped children and adults in order that they fully play their roles in the development of the nation.</p>	<p>A diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.</p>	<p>Equalize educational opportunities for all persons irrespective of their genetic composition, social, physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities</p>
<p>To provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.</p>		<p>Provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented children to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.</p>	<p>Provide adequate education for all persons in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation</p>

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Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.	Provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented persons to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of national development
	Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.

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Table 1: Development of Aims/Objectives in NPE from 1977 to 2013 in Summary

A close observation would show a higher level of commitment in funding, supervision/coordinating and implementing special education programmes. She also illustrates commitment as shown below.

The Federal and State Ministries of Education/FCT Education secretariat shall, in collaboration with appropriate bodies, provide special programmes for gifted and talented persons and other categories. Federal government through her ministry of education will provide all necessary facilities, equipment, materials and other assistant devices that will ensure easy access to quality education to special needs persons. Another key function is the special education training including the training and retraining of teachers capability building personnel organize school physical structures, designs and facilities, arrange regular sensory, medical and psychological screening assessments to identify children of special needs education (FRN, 2013).

### **The Dawn of National Policy on Special Needs Education (2015 to Date)**

A critical examination or evaluation of National Policy on Education on Special Needs Education reviews the existence of a skeletal plan of Special Needs Education from 1977 to 2014. However, the development of national policy on special needs education in 2015 was made possible with the well written national policy on education. The formulation of concepts, objectives, categories and the coordinating function of the Federal Ministry of Education were carefully developed and stipulated by the National Policy of Education. It is therefore believed that a critical evaluation of National Policy of Education on Special Needs Education should consider the emergency, coverage and the quality of National Policy on Special Needs Education.

National Policy on Special Needs of Education was completed and printed. Shekarau in FRN (2015: i-ii) has this to say:



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I am therefore delighted to pioneer the maiden editions of the national policy of special needs on education and the implementation guideline on the national policy on special needs education. With this document in place, the practice of special needs education (SNE) in the country would reflect best global practices for our nation's development.

Perhaps, the use of the words "With this Document" refers to both national policies on education. Again, Shekarau in FRN (2015:i) posited that:

The national policy on education (NPE) 1977 paid attention to the issues on special needs of education by creating a section for it. The implementation of the policy between 1978 and 2013 has been subjected to various interventions which include among others: teachers' development, instructional development framework, establishment of special schools, curriculum reviews and other initiatives by the government and non-governmental organizations (NGO).

Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, the Honourable Minister of Education explained that since 1977 National Policy on Education paid attention to issues on special needs education and provided the needs for regular interventions. It means that all the policy reviews consider special needs education as well as regular education programmes and issues.

Special needs education needs to be expanded to embrace new concepts; implementation of policy issues, teacher training, special schools establishment and sharing of responsibilities as well as funding necessitated the product of National Policy on Special Needs Education (NPSNE).

The special needs education receives the highest level of regards when a special policy/document was dedicated to it to address all the issues previously captured and the current ones. A special professional committee was given the responsibilities, which was well delivered in 2015. The way forward of SNE was discussed by the committee and brought to the fore for implementation and further development.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria through the Federal Ministry of Education sets the purpose and objectives of special needs education to include:

- i. To take care of the total service delivery of the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child irrespective of settings (school, home and hospital).
- ii. To provide adequate and qualitative education for all persons with special needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavours
- iii. To ensure that all persons with special needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nation's socio-economic and technological development (FRN, 2015:9-10).

In a simple illustration to show the foundation of national policy on education on special needs education. a summary of purpose/aims/goals and objectives is shown in the table below:



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Table 2: Summary and Comparative of Aims/Objectives of all NPE Editions 1977 to NPSNE 2015



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NPE 1977-1981	NPE 1998	NPE 2004-2007	NPE 2013	NPSNE 2015
The purpose & objectives of SE should be:	The goals of SE shall be to provide:	The aims/objectives of SE are to:	AIMS The aims of SE are to:	the purpose & objectives of SE to include:
a))To give concrete meaning to the likes of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental, emotional disabilities notwithstanding	Adequate education for all special cases;	Give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.	Provide access to education for all persons in an Inclusive setting	To take care of the total service delivery of the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child irrespective of settings (school, home and hospital).
b))To provide adequate education for all handicapped children and adults in order that they fully play their roles in the development of the nation.	A diversified and appropriate curriculum for all beneficiaries.	Provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation.	Equalize educational opportunities for all persons irrespective of their genetic composition, social, physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities	To provide adequate and qualitative education for all persons with special needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavours

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c)To provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted children to develop at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.	Provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented children to develop their talents, natural endowments /traits at their own pace in the interest of the nation's economic and technological development.	Provide adequate education for all persons in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation	To ensure that all persons with special needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nations socio-economic and technological development (FRN,2015)
	Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.	Provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented persons to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of national development	
		Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.	

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Summary in table 2 at a glance shows that the foundation of special education laid in 1977 and revised in 1981 as was known then, was solid and to a large extent comprehensive. The 1998 revised edition of National Policy Education (third edition of NPE) shows that there was no seriousness shown between 1982-2003, a period of about 21 years. The interest shown in 1977 up to 1981 as illustrated

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in the national policy on education was rekindled from 2004 to date which gave birth to appropriate nomenclature of the issue at hand. For instance, it was in 2013 (6<sup>th</sup> edition) that the name special needs education was used which became not only the right name but also the right global appellation for the programme.

Again, the issue that draws attention is the words purpose / objectives 1977-1981 editions stating 4 objectives, goals (1998 edition) stating only 2 goals, for 2004 and 2007 editions the words aims/ objectives indicating 4 objectives while 2013 edition the most elaborate edition used the word aims without the word objectives indicating 5 aims. If one considers goals and aims as open/broad and objectives as specific in dimension, what are the reviewers of the national policy on education of 1998 and 2013 portraying that in 1998 they saw only 2 goals and for the special education in 2013 they increased to 5 aims? It has been observed that national policy on special needs education applied what were used in 1981 edition purpose/objectives and indicated 3 objectives as 2 goals in 1998, 4 objectives in 2004-2007 and 5 aims in 2013. It will not be out of place to believe that choice of words and number of objectives were done by professionals and they are comprehensive enough to cover what special needs children and adults require.

On the issue of categorisations, all the editions do justice to the necessary groups of the handicapped persons but better or improved upon from 2004 (4<sup>th</sup>) edition which formed a solid background for the national policy on special needs education published in 2015.

Another well stated fact in the national policy on education and national policy on special needs education is the issue of responsibility of federal ministry of education, state and other ministries and non- governmental organizations (NGOs) identified the areas under the federal ministry of education who also does the collaboration with other ministries, stated and selected national and international organizations in supporting special programmes, necessary facilities, equipment, materials and assistance devices to promote access to quality education of special needs persons (FRN, 2013: 54-56 AND FR ; NPSNE, 2015:13-18).

Very importantly, is the issue of professional training and retraining of staff/ personnel. This has been well captured in the documents.

1. FRN (2013:56) on training and retraining has it, thus:
  - a. Special education training and retraining shall be provided for all categories of teachers in the regular schools for the effective implementation of the inclusive education for special needs persons, e.g.
    - I. Braille reading and writing
    - II. Mobility training
    - III. Use of regular typewriter for persons with visual impairment, etc
  - b. Special training and retraining of the person to develop capacity building and to keep abreast of latest teaching techniques for the various categories of disabilities, the gifted and talented.

Similarly, national policy on special needs education captured it as follows (FRN, 2015:18):



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- Special training and re-training of personnel
  - Capacity building development
  - Developing counselling and relevant teaching techniques for various categories of persons with special needs.
  - Developing relevant therapeutic techniques...
  - Developing course work for the educators of the gifted, creative and talented tutors, parents and students.

The federal government based on all discussed will in future drive special needs education. based on the following principles:

- Creating the least restrictive environment.
- Zero reject (education for all irrespective of circumstance of life, setting and services)
- Total inclusion of persons with special needs within the ambience of societal operation
- Diversification of services beyond the schools setting to include the home and the hospital (FRN, 2015:i).

The opportunity to evaluate/examine the key areas of the national policy on education and national policy on special needs education attracts the need to look at the level of implementation.

Implementation and prioritization of the needs of the handicapped children cannot be overemphasized or in any way underrated. However, it becomes not uncommon to observe that the most neglected are the implementation and prioritization of the needs of the handicapped persons, perhaps waiting to who will bear what responsibility even when these responsibilities have been well spelt out. The most common areas of neglect by casual observers include:

- a) Classroom Provision: The classroom must be adequate for any meaningful learning activities to take place. These classrooms in most cases are inadequate and the few available ones lack basic facilities and materials for effective teaching and learning for the benefit of special needs persons.
- b) Rehabilitation: some levels of man power produced are exposed to or all rightly trained through special needs programmes but rehabilitation has not been emphasized. Consequently, the beneficiaries who ought to be self reliant are rehabilitated. The graduates of special needs education programmes may not be accepted in the society without a good rehabilitation
- c) Special needs education setting special needs education has 3 settings but despite all the policy statements only setting is being used. The one setting is school-based settings where special needs education has largely been used exclusively in home and hospital bound settings. This Is due to poor implementation and absence of prioritization.
- d) Legislation: The absence of a well thought out bill or functional legislation on special needs education has a serious challenge in the implementation of Special



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Needs Education programmes. It is obvious that there is no effective enforcement and inadequate provision (FRN, 2015)

- e) Funding: Funding has been a greater challenge to the development of education and special needs education in Nigeria. This equally affects development. provision of equipment and materials.

**Challenges:** As briefly explained there are challenges that need to be overcome such as inadequate classrooms, facilities, equipment, materials, lack of proper rehabilitation programme, legislation and adequate funding among others.

### **Conclusion**

The evaluation of national policy on education on special needs education has enabled the author to navigate through and draws the conclusion that 1969 Nigerian national curriculum conference and special profession committee of 1973 gave birth to a well written national policy on education with a fully identified section for special education also known as special needs education. That this policy document has been a good foundation to another vital policy document, the National Policy on Special Needs Education (NPSNE) in 2015. The national policy on special needs education has placed education of the handicapped, gifted/talented children and the albinos in its rightful position. However, its level of implementation has more to be deserved.

### **Suggestions**

From the evaluation of national policy on education and that of national policy on special needs education, the following suggestions are made:

1. The federal ministry of education should step up collaboration with other ministries, NGOs and international development partners (IDPS) such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WHO, World Bank, etc to raise funding and personnel for the special needs education of the handicapped children.
2. Special needs education and rehabilitation services (SNERS) as a formal education meant for persons with special needs should be promoted and prioritized.
3. Provision of adequate class room with facilities, equipment and materials should be made
4. The principle of inclusive education should be applied and inclusive education should be fully implemented by the federal government and other tiers or movements.
5. Special needs education should occur in:
  - a. School bound settings
  - b. Home bound settings
  - c. Hospital bound settings
6. The legislatures should provide the standard enabling laws to promote and backup the practice of special needs education.



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To meet up with global best practices and as a way of providing the persons with special needs, they deserve the best treatment which will encourage them and bring out the best in them.

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