



CHAPTER 38

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

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Introduction

Nigerian constitution places education on the concurrent list, thus, ensuring that a lot of efforts are consciously harnessed to make sure that at least basic education is provided for all Nigerian children. One among these efforts of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to attain Education For all (EFA) was the establishment of the Universal Basic Education Programme in September 1999 which was enacted into law to become the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) by the UBE Act in April 2004. In addition, FGN ensured that National Policy on Education (NPE) in 2004, 2009, 2012 and 2014 explicitly emphasized that all necessary facilities that would provide easy access to education shall provide inclusive education of special classrooms and units in ordinary/public schools under the UBE scheme.

This is because inclusive education connotes an equitable environment of learning where learners with diverse learning and physical abilities stay in the same classroom to learn side by side. The concept of inclusion promotes the active participation of the learner as the primary aim rather than simple placement in the classroom. It also emphasizes the need for changes within the education system and the school to accommodate the learner (Hooker, 2007). The goal, therefore, is inclusion, not integration and the onus for achieving this is placed firmly on governments, schools and the wider community (National Policy on Inclusive Education, 2017).

For UBEC to speedily achieve this, the FGN donates 2% of the country's Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) every year to UBEC since 2005. In addition, since 2008, the FGN introduced special education and donates 2% of the UBEC's 2% Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF) every year for the establishment of special schools and for the pilot implementation of inclusive education. The commitment was made to equalize educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities. In 2008 this funding arrangement encouraged the sharing of the 2% between public and private providers of special education programmes in the ratio of 70:30 and that has been on to date. This effort by UBEC has led to quality records in terms of expected



outputs such as an increased number of classrooms as well as the provision of instructional materials (UBEC National Special Education Report, 2018).

However, despite these records, the generality of the education system is seen to be far from being competitive due to the number of gaps that pervade the system in almost all the units of educational assessment particularly when the effectiveness of the special education delivery is measured (UBEC, Special Education Situation Analysis Report, 2021). This is a share of evidence that more efforts are required to make schools effectively inclusive in order to provide learning and teaching instructions, resources and support services needed to allow quality education delivery for all categories of learners of school-going-age in Nigeria irrespective of their observed special educational needs (Disability, parental socio-economic status, location. etc. Hence, it could be possible that Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) and State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEBs) may not be consulting the inclusive education guideline in establishing inclusive schools and the special education programmes as indicated in UNESCO. (1994). Therefore, most investigation indicates that implementation process are not achieving the two (2) most desires inclusive educational objectives which removing all forms of segregation and ensuring quality education for all learners in the same learning environment (Peters, 2003)

It is in line with this that the National Policy on Inclusive Education (2017) categorically outlined the roles of Basic Education Institutions in an inclusive education setting which among others include the effective development of the guidelines for inclusive education fund release and utilization and provision of adequate facilities to enhance access in basic education institutions. This was made to ensure that the implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria Basic Education is guided by the inclusive education guidelines (Loewe & Rippin, 2015). But records have shown that the Basic Education Institution does not have an inclusive education implementation framework that provides the roles and responsibilities that will ensure that the UBE Institution. provides equitable access to quality education for all, and also presents the guideline for implementation, quality assurance and strategies for system strengthening and sustainability.

Indeed, this action is critical because, records have shown that while there are between 93 and 150 million children with different categories of disabilities in the world, the 2018 Universal Basic Education (UBE) National Personnel Audit report, indicated that, there are 100,863 males and 88,208 females totally of 189,07 learners with different categories of disabilities. In 2021, the Commission conducted a Needs Assessment exercise in 397 schools, 18, 338 learners with special needs were recorded for improved educational processes. These numbers are very high and it is critical to make deliberate sacrifices and take systematic actions to at least provide quality basic education individually to these categories of Nigerians especially those within school-going age in both public and private basic education institutions.



Firstly, providing equitable access is relevant because it will enhance learner confidence since conventional methods of dealing with learners with special needs or learning difficulties can have a harmful impact on learners' self-worth, organizing them into small groups and teaching them away from the main classroom pushes the idea that they are different and should be treated differently. Previous studies have shown that learners in wholly special needs schools have lower self-esteem than those in inclusive schools. Giving all learners the opportunity to mingle as part of the class, will naturally provide a sense of belonging and help them participate in peer interactions (Dark and Light Care, 2008). Though, there are instances where learners may need additional support away from the classroom, such as during after-school hours for help with specific subjects and in the resource rooms. This however does not mean that they cannot be a part of the main classroom activities for the greater part of their schooling days. In such cases where learners would benefit from being taught away from the main classroom for certain reasons, it should be provided even if it is at home (Onwuzurike, 2014).

Secondly, the Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) improves communication skills, because it helps learners to improve their ability to communicate with one another. When learners are segregated, their social circles become smaller and they would have fewer opportunities to interact with a wider classroom. With an inclusive classroom, learners are able to interact with a wider range of other learners with a variety of abilities. This will open opportunities for them to strengthen their communication skills and adapt to a varied level of social interaction. It also helps to prepare them for life after school and makes them career-ready (Onwuzurike, 2019).

Onwuzurike further emphasized the need for basic education institutions to develop an inclusive basic education implementation framework if the inclusive education process will be effectively applied. An inclusive education framework refers to a document, containing the process of educating learners with or without special needs in a neighbourhood school. It will guide basic education stakeholders on how to design schools, classrooms, teaching and learning programmes for the learners to learn and participate together. With an inclusive education framework, the strategies will enable learners from diverse backgrounds, and different ability levels to learn together in the same environment. Therefore, different types of learners with special needs learn in a safe and supportive environment with regular learners where **equitable access to quality education** and the best practices for **system strengthening** as well as **sustainability** are provided.

The thesis statement of this chapter includes identifying categories of special needs and strategies for equitable access to inclusive basic education, access to quality education and best practices for system strengthening and sustainability.

It is against this background that, the conversation will present the content required for all categories of learners to get to the school, participate adequately in all the activities expected to take place in the schools for the delivery of quality



education and ensure that the system continues in the direction of the provision of effective basic education for all Nigeria Learners. By the time this is presented, it is expected that role of the Universal Basic Education Institutions in the implementation of inclusive education for all categories of learners particularly children with special needs in Nigeria will be categorically performed for effective basic education delivery. Finally, a conclusion and suggestions will be made to end the discussion.

1. The Different Categories of Special Needs and the Strategies for Equitable Access to Inclusive Basic Education

Different Categories of Learner's Special Needs

- a) **Sensory Disabilities:** Hearing impairment, deafness, visual impairment and blindness.
- b) **Learning Disabilities:** speech or language impairment, dyslexia, dyscalculia, language processing disorder and ADHD
- c) **Physical Disabilities:** Orthopedic impairment.
- d) **Multiple Disabilities:** Deaf-blindness, intellectual disability-blindness, intellectual disability-blindness, physical disabilities and visual impairment, cognitive disabilities and blindness, learning disabilities and blindness and emotional or behaviour disorders and blindness.
- e) **Intellectual Disabilities:** Autism, traumatic brain injury, down syndrome as well as cerebral palsy.
- f) **Health Related Impairment:** Emotional disturbance, epilepsy, leprosy, speech and language impairment.
- g) **Vulnerable Groups:** Emotional disturbance, nomads, street urchins, almajiri, IDPs etc
- h) **Others:** Gifted and talented, albinism (Onwuzurike, 2014).

a. Access for Learners with Sensory Impairment

i. Hearing Impairment

Learners with hearing impairment will have access to school environment and the curriculum when they are accepted into the school as their right and provided the opportunity to access a sign-language interpreter, hearing threshold prior to enrolment and encouraged to communicate in writing. To access the curriculum, the following strategies are required: early intervention for learners in lip reading, speech training & sign language utilization, adapted curriculum etc.



Classroom instruction should take cognizance of appropriate communication modalities, availability of note-takers in the classrooms, skilled signers as models, provision of amplification systems such as behind-the-ear, body-worn, eyeglasses hearing aids and FM wireless classroom amplification, presence of interpreters in the classroom, caption camera in the classroom. Also, there is a need for the availability and utilization of appropriate instructional materials, sign language, textbooks, recorded sign language CDs as well as the provision of a sign-language laboratory. If Universal Basic Education institutions are able to apply these strategies in inclusive schools with learners with hearing impairment, they will have no barriers to accessing the school environment and the curriculum.

ii. Visual Impairment

. The learners with visual impairment will have access to the school environment and the curriculum when there is an inclusive educational programme in neighborhood schools, various skills and techniques in orientation and mobility disability-friendly schools through adaptation of the school buildings and environment with ramps and hand-rails, no hanging and projected windows, proper footpaths and good roads within school premises. Other will include lighting system. The teachers and sighted learners are prepared and are well sensitized on visual impairment before inclusion takes place, discriminatory attitudes are guided against, transportation systems provided and the blind or visually impaired learners moves with sighted friends from home to school and back. In addition, the curriculum will be accessed when there is early stimulation of sensory organs, development of motor skills (gross and fine motor skills), adaptation of the curriculum, provision of adapted tables (they should be slightly larger than those of the sighted learners in view of the bulkiness of braille machines.

The Basic Education Institutions should ensure the availability of resource rooms, materials/equipment such as braille machines, slate and stylus, braille papers, braille textbooks, balls with sounds inside for blind, long canes, drawing kits either imported or locally adapted for blind learners with (embossed rulers, triangles, set squares etc.), computers with soft wares for: transcribing braille using **DUXBURY** software, embossers for translating print to braille and braille to print, enlarging print materials, speech soft wares that read from computer screens, JAWS and thermaphorming machine for producing copies of brailled materials, maps, diagrams etc. should be provided for proper access to the curriculum in an inclusive education setting.

iii. Learning Disabilities:

Learners in this category do not display visible disabilities, so while they do not require modified access to the environment, access to the curriculum is required through the provision of content adaptation in order to break them down into smaller units, process adaptation, flexible scheduling, individualized instruction, cooperative learning, alignment of IEP goals with core curriculum, product adaptation, appropriate assessment, improved learning environment, -proper



sitting arrangements as well as provision of other appropriate learning materials and ensuring they are adequate enough for all.

iv. Physical Disabilities

Learners with physical disabilities will access the school environment and the curriculum through the availability of neighbourhood schools, the provision of transportation services using customized vehicles such as can accommodate wheelchairs to convey the learners to, and from school, modification of buildings and environment, such as pathways, drainages, ramps, toilets with lower bases, wider doors, pavements, furniture such as the tables and chairs etc., provision of specialized equipment such wheelchair sits, prosthetics, and so on. There is also a need to ensure that apart from the curriculum that other co-curricular activities are made available for assessment by this category of learners.

v. Multiple Disabilities (MD)

There are different categories of learners with multiple disabilities. For these categories of learners to access the environment, the Universal Basic Education Institutions are required to develop strategies that will ensure the provision of the following: amplification systems such as behind-the-ear, body-worn, eyeglasses hearing aids and FM wireless classroom amplification, presence of interpreters in the classroom, caption camera in the classroom, sign language, textbooks, recorded sign language CDs, sign-language laboratories, transportation to the school, conducting a diagnostic assessment to identify the nature, type and degree of MD, identify their educational needs in line with the identified condition(s), provision of caregivers. Once this is done, the curriculum will be accessed through appropriate accommodations such as multi-level instruction, cooperative learning, activities-based learning, mastery learning style, use of appropriate technology, and peer support.

In addition to this, for learners with MD, the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) should be applied in the school and this includes explicit instruction, differentiated instruction, curriculum-based evaluation, alignment of Individualized Education Programme (IEP) goals with core curriculum, proper use of augmentative and alternative communication devices, micro-switches, task analysis, wait-time (giving more time), pictures and real objects and provision of resource room facility as well as the encouragement of tolerance and appropriate interaction with others. Also, the teachers need basic training for different disability areas for better handling and delivery of content.

vi. Intellectual Disabilities

The following strategies when provided, these categories of learners will access education: Physical, social, and attitudinal change, transportation with shuttle services, applications of relevant therapies, learner-centered activities, mainstream school with specialist support, parental involvement, and provision of additional support services. To ensure access to curriculum, there is a need for collaboration between the schools, home and hospitals, provision of appropriate and adequate assistive technology, sports facilities, assessment for evaluation, and



trained caregivers to accompany and attend to the learner in schools. For cerebral Palsy, the following are needed, play devices for exercising hands and limbs, development of functional skills and regular therapy as may be required by the learner etc.

vii. Health Related Impairment

This category of learners includes: emotional disturbance, epilepsy, leprosy, speech and language impairment. To access education in an inclusive setting, they need the provision of shuttle bus services, first-aid kits, note takers, tape recorders that can be replayed regularly for mastery of contents, various types of therapies and other support services, trained caregivers to accompany learners to school, engagement of parents/guardians in the movement of the learners to school and encouraging the learners to move in the company of other learners.

viii. Vulnerable Groups

There are many categories of learners that belong to this category of special needs. They include: nomads, street urchins, almajiri, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) etc. These categories of learners have no observed physical needs; however, they need special attention to have access to education in an inclusive programme. Therefore, the following strategies need to be applied for proper access to education. Free access to enrolment in school, close proximity of the school to homes, provision of bus services, equipment, school facilities including sanitary and collaboration with home where they exist and are known.

ix. Others

The Gifted and Talented learners, as well as those with Albinism, are classified as other learners with special needs because in most cases educationists see them as regular learners but they have challenges that prevents them from coping and benefiting in regular educational processes/settings. Therefore, for these categories of learners to have access to schools and curricula, Basic Education Institutions need to provide the following: Admission and close proximity of schools to home, Computer Assisted Instruction (CAI), bibliotherapy, enrichment, acceleration, pull-out techniques programmes for the gifted and talented learners. For learners with albinism, the following should be provided: ophthalmic consultation, sunshades, optical glasses, -visual and other learning aids, regular counseling, skin protection, wearing of caps, appropriate placement in the classroom, magnified hand-lens, telescope as well as reading stand to provide equal opportunity to education.

Access to Quality Education

In addressing access to quality education, three issues are pertinent. They are:

a. Opportunity for Equitable Quality Education

Quality is a key variable of Inclusive Education (IE). It explores holistically the conditions that are pertinent in the implementation of the programme. Variables to be explored under quality includes infrastructure which should have the following: classroom colour = blue, green and off-white, specialized furniture because they



need to be adapted. Other features include: class size, floor space, window width, swing doors, ramps, corrugated tiles, minimal slope floors, disability elevators, etc. the sanitary facilities should include regular and lower-based toilets and handrails in the toilets, etc. The lighting should include a slit, reading lamps, and bright classrooms. It is also important to have the required equipment as may be needed by all different categories of learners as well as CCTV for security purposes where its affordable.

b. When is Quality Education Opportunity Provided

Quality Education Opportunity happens when learners with or without special needs access and fully participate in teaching and learning. There should be an adjustment as appropriate and teaching strategies should meet the individual needs of the learners. The quality of school life should be measured in terms of academic achievement, social adjustment, and overall improvement in interactions within and outside the school environment. The key feature of quality inclusive teaching and learning should be that every learner has equal access to high-quality education regardless of special needs. This is because, when inclusive learning is introduced, learners are naturally offered the same level and quality of education. Teaching all learners in the same place at a time ensures that no learner is left behind on any curriculum. Teachers also often have unique styles, patterns and paces, so being taught by the same teachers helps learners acquire equal access to lesson content. Notwithstanding this, lessons should still be adapted to suit the needs of all learners.

Differentiated learning opportunities can be adapted to suit each learner's needs and optimize their environments to help them reach their full potential. This should be done because all learners have equal rights to education, classrooms should be made up of learners with mixed abilities, no learners should be separated from main groups based on discrimination, appropriate activities should be planned and each learner's personal needs taken into consideration, Create an accessible environment (e.g. wheelchair ramps, and visual alternatives to lesson content for learners with hearing impairment) and support should be provided for all learners to enable them to reach their full potential.

c. Collaboration for the Provision of Support Service Providers:

These support services are the services provided to children with special needs to enable them to focus on their education or for proper management. They are provided by the following para-professionals: sign language interpreters, learning disabilities, Visual Impairment, Gifted Education, Hearing Impairment, Speech and Language, Low-vision experts, Audiologists, Physiotherapists, behaviorur Management, Pathologist, Physician, co-teachers, Itinerant teachers, Braillists, Reading specialists, Occupational therapist, School Nurse(s), social workers, Caregivers, Braille Repair Technicians, Community-Based Rehabilitation Specialist.



Best Practices for System Strengthening and Sustainability

The strategies for system strengthening are provided with the responsible agencies because inclusive education requires adequate funding/services of different areas. For the Universal Basic Education Institutions to achieve this, efforts should be made to: build the regular teachers capacity for adequate development and training on special needs, ensure the assessment of disabilities areas, provide curriculum adaptation and Material development, quality assurance (monitoring, evaluation and Mentoring, School infrastructure and construction, improved lighting system, provide improved ICT, and emphasize entrepreneurial skills training, additional funding , ensure awareness creation and sensitization on inclusive education as well as parental and community participation.

To succeed in sustaining the provision of any of the above areas, there is a need for improved stakeholder engagements ranging from the Ministries, Agencies and Departments (MDAs), International Development Partners (IDPs), local and international NGOs, CBOs, FBOs, CBOs, the Organized Private Sectors etc. This is necessary because inclusive education programme requires different partnership arrangements for effective implementation.

Conclusion

This chapter has expensively presented the narrative to support the point that there are good number of learners with special needs the that the Universal Basic Education Institutions has been making tremendous efforts to provide opportunities to basic education inclusive basic education for all categories of learner. However, quality impacts are not recorded because, the Basic Education Institutions may not be using the principles and ideologies of inclusive education. Therefore, this chapter, presented the need for inclusive education implementation framework that will contain the strategies for improved equitable access to quality education. It also out lined necessary guide that will be applied for greater sustainability of the inclusive basic education programme.

Suggestions

1. It is suggested that Basic Education Institutions should make committed efforts to perform the roles and responsibilities outlined in the National Policy on Inclusive Education.
2. Basic Education Institutions are encouraged to adopt the principles and ideologies of inclusive education in the implementation of an inclusive education framework.
3. The implementation of inclusive basic education should be guided by Key Performance (KPIs) Indicators, particularly to determine the inclusive education impacts on the education system.

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