



CHAPTER 44

LEARNING AND EDUCATION ADULTS WITH MENTAL EXCEPTIONALITY IN NIGERIA

Rosemary O. Igbo Prof.

Faculty of Education

*Alex Ekwueme Federal University, Ndufu-Alike
Ebonyi State*

Introduction

Beyond its description by FGN (2013) as an instrument par excellence, education is a veritable tool for survival. It is thus the responsibility of societies to provide education for citizens to ensure their survival, growth and sustainable development. What this means is that people acquire education not only for themselves, but for the betterment of the society in which they operate and live. The Nigerian society made adequate provisions in its constitution for equal rights of all citizens to education by advocating equality of educational opportunities for all the members. However, the extent to which these stipulations have been translated into reality in the actual services available for all is questionable because some categories of individuals are not included and served by the public education system. These include persons with various forms of exceptionality, which hinder their participation within the regular circumstances. Educating individuals with mental disabilities and other categories of exceptionality is crucial and most expedient to uphold the provisions made by the Nigerian constitution and stipulated in the national policy on education (FGN, 2013). A major goal of the Nigerian education system is to actualize the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) by 2030 and beyond with emphasis on inclusive education for inclusive development. The present nature of societal anarchy in the cultural, political and socio-economic aspects of the nation is overdue for positive change in actual educational practices and services. Zigler and Hoddap (1986) identified five personality traits among the individuals who are mentally exceptional. These are- low expectancy of success, fear of failure, need for social reinforcement, outer-directedness, and over dependency. However, a sixth trait emanates from low expectancy of success and fear of failure, which is learned helplessness. This is as a result of decrease in motivation relating to previous failures. The individual therefore believes that all his endeavors will ultimately yield negative outcomes, so there is no need trying.

Mental exceptionality refers to a developmental disorder that generally connotes substantial limitations in the mental operations of an individual. These limitations are exhibited as distorted intellectual growth, inappropriate reactions to the environment and performance in the academic, psychological, physical,



linguistic, and social domains (Beirne-Smith et al, 2002). In other words, it is a disabling condition that hinders the individual's ability to adequately apply full intellectual capacity in attending, assimilating, retaining and producing given information, skill and/or behaviour. It follows that an individual is mentally exceptional, if his performance in the areas of academics, communication, and adaptive skills come short of expectation in comparison to peers.

The factors that generate and influence mental disabilities are both biological and environmental. The biological factors occur before birth, while the environmental factors occur after birth.

Biological Factors: Biological factors include genetic dispositions, chromosomal abnormalities (Down syndrome, Phenylketonuria, Fragile X), toxic substances (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Heavy Metals), infections, maternal disorders, cranial malformation, among others.

Environmental factors: These may include family environments, living environments, lifestyle considerations (substance abuse -drugs, alcohol), and accidents that may lead to brain injury in the individual. However, according to Huttenlocher (1988), there is a link between the ability of the brain to develop and maintain certain structures and environmental stimuli. It is also crucial to mention that the extent of the disabling condition of a mentally challenged individual depends on early identification and the favorable conditions available in the home environment of the individual.

Another factor that could generate and influence mental exceptionality anchors on the co-existence or development of other types of illnesses or disorders. For instance, psychiatric disorders (leads to dual diagnosis), internalizing disorders (such as mood and anxiety disorders, which have higher rates in individuals with mental challenges than in regular individuals), thought disorders (like schizophrenia and dementia disorders including Alzheimer's disease), and conduct disorders. Developmental disorders such as cerebral palsy, epilepsy, and autistic disorders may also occur alongside mental disabilities.

General characteristics of Mental Exceptionality

1. Intelligent Quotient (IQ) from 75 – 70 or below
2. Deficit in more than one domain (area) of adaptive skills
3. Slower Development of social and language skills.
4. Combination of both academic and behavior problems.
5. Withdrawal from interpersonal relationships and inappropriate attention seeking behaviors.

Classes of Mental Exceptionality

Depending upon the extent of intervention, care and support needed by individuals with mental incapacities, could fall into one of the following classes-

Mild Mental Disability: These are the individuals who could be referred to as the educable mentally disabled (EMD). They are able to develop abilities adequate for them to succeed to some extent from an academically based



curriculum. In some societies, they are perceived as more or less "normal". They are also able to secure employment, and have to some degree, successful married lives.

Moderate Mental Disability: This group comprises the individuals who need a work/job curriculum. They demonstrate more difficulty in acquiring academic skills. They are the trainable mentally disabled (TMD). Their training focuses on basic functional skills (self-help skills). Individuals in this group are much more challenged than those in the EMD. They are less likely to secure and keep employment, and also less likely to have a satisfying economically sufficient life.

Severe/Profound mental Disability: Severe/profound mentally challenged constitutes the most dependent of all the categories in the spectrum. Individuals who find themselves in this group demonstrate substantial limitations in their intellectual as well as physical, and/or behavior faculties. They are therefore characterized by multiple disabilities that may affect their ability to see, speak, hear, move as well as make appropriate decisions that affect their lives. Most of these individuals require physical therapy and are usually on medication. Because of the medical complications that individuals in this group are prone to, their average life expectancy is far much shorter than those of their peers without such incapacity. Curriculum for this group will therefore focus on daily living skills in such areas as personal hygiene, grooming, feeding, communication, and toilet training.

This chapter is an attempt to define mental exceptionalities, discuss learning issues of adult's mental exceptionalities, Education of the adults in this category and Challenges in the learning and education in terms of policy implementation, curriculum, instruction, funding, staffing, strategies and Implications of these for the adequate learning and education of adults this category. The focus is essential to enhance sensitization and ameliorate the hindrances experienced by this category of special needs learners towards accomplishing their learning expectations and educational attainment.

Thesis Statement

Defining mental exceptionalities.

Discussion of learning issues in adult mental exceptionality

Education of the adults in this category.

Challenges of learning and education among mentally exceptional adults in terms of policy implementation, curriculum and instruction,

Funding, staffing, strategies.

Implications of these for the adequate learning and education of adults in this category.

Education and Learning among Mentally Exceptional Adults

Much demand is in the education sector worldwide, as governments strive to build knowledge economies and knowledge-based societies. These dramatic changes in the way we function seem to reflect a fourth industrial revolution that is branded by automation, digitalization and application of artificial intelligence



(ILO, 2019). The developments essentially displace old skills and intensify demand for new and diverse skills, necessitating effective adult learning and education (ALE) to help everyone utilize the changing and unlimited opportunities. To clarify the concept of adult learning and education, permit me to share the thoughts of Eduard C. Lindeman, who was the first expert to give a systematic account of adult learning and education. In his theory of education, education is regarded as a lifelong process. He pointed out that due to the constant development and change of social life and the surrounding environment; knowledge and information are in a cycle of constant transmission, supplement and update, which requires people to keep learning to adapt to the changes in the outside world. Linderman believes that adult learners should not only learn for the needs of work and survival, but also have the opportunity to enrich themselves. He insists that adult education is an inspiring life-changing tool. It should not only help people improve their skills and abilities in work, but also guide people to find happiness at leisure. The most valuable resource for adult learners is therefore the learner's experience and the purpose of adult education is to give meaning to all kinds of experience. Experience can enhance learners' autonomous learning and cognitive ability, while the basic function of adult learning and education is to promote the physical and mental development of adult learners. It is a powerful tool for social activists through which the personal code of conduct and cultural knowledge of adult learners should be enhanced to gradually improve the social atmosphere and order (Wallace, 1998).

ALE is an integral part of the right to education and lifelong learning, which comprises all forms of education (formal, non-formal, informal) and learning that aims to ensure that all adults participate in their societies and the world of work. This includes helping all adults to develop broad relevant knowledge and skills that cover three broad categories of literacy, continuing education/training/professional development and active citizenship (EAAE, 2019). The formal implies structured learning that typically takes place in an education or training institution, usually with a set curriculum and credentials. Non-formal is classification for learning that is organized by educational institutions but non-credential. Non-formal learning opportunities may be provided in the workplace and through the activities of civil society organizations and other groups. Informal education refers to learning that goes on all the time, resulting from daily life activities related to work, family, community or leisure. Examples include community weaving, dancing or sewing class. Though the concepts are fundamentally similar, differentiating between adult education and adult learning may be useful in making this discussion more intelligible. While adult education may mean training of adults by the use of an organized formal or non-formal plan of education with direct involvement of adult educators; adult learning could imply continuous learning as part of adult life, primarily the acquisition of skills and knowledge for personally relevant situations, without direct involvement of educational institutions or adult educators.



One aim of Special Education in Nigeria as stipulated in the National Policy on Education, Section 7, Sub-section 119 (FGN, 2013) is: To provide adequate education for all handicapped persons, in order that they may play their roles fully in contributing to national development. The question that thus arises here is: What constitutes adequate education and how can it be provided to this category? A functional approach is to consider the individuals first before their capabilities. The objectives of adult learning and education as stated in the same document (Section 4, Sub-section 66-72), would thus constitute the essential pilots in the process. These include to:

- a. Provide functional basic education for adults and youths who have never had the advantage of formal education or who left school too early. The target groups include migrant folks, almajiri pupils, illiterate and semi-literate adults, youths and adolescents; persons who left the formal school system early and are now willing to come back and continue schooling; and other categories-of disadvantaged groups; who are unable to have access to the conventional educational system and therefore require other forms of educational programmes to cater for their particular/peculiar needs and circumstances;
 - b. Provide remedial and life- long education for youths and adults who did not complete secondary education; and
 - c. Provide In-service, vocational and professional training for different categories of workers and professionals in order to improve their skills. The strategies include the following:
 - a. Nation-wide mass literacy campaign based on various strategies including that of "each-one -teach-one" or b. (Regenerated Frefean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques" PRA/REFLECT), Literacy by Radio and other innovative approaches.
 - b. States and FCT Agencies for Mass Education shall be responsible for the regulation of all Adult and Non- Formal Education classes/Programmes.
 - c. Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education shall continue to be under the supervision of Ministries of Education and FCT Education Secretariat.
 - d. Mass literacy programmes shall be provided free by the government to the beneficiaries.
 - e. IT and other infrastructural facilities, such as Libraries, Viewing Centres and Reading Rooms shall be provided in every community.
 - f. Community radios and radio literacy programmes shall be encouraged.
 - g. Public Private Partnership¹ should be encouraged in the organization and funding of mass literacy.
- The Federal Ministry of Education is:
- a. Responsible for the formulation of National Policy on Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education;



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- b. the appropriate body to enter into dialogue with International Development Partners on the subject of cooperation in the sphere of mass literacy, adult and non-formal education;
 - c. providing adequate funds for National Commission Nfor Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC) to address the challenges of eradicating illiteracy and provide Functional Literacy;
 - d responsible for mobilizing States/FCT and Local Governments to provide matching grants for the provision of Adult and Non-Formal Education.

The National Commission for Mass Literacy Adult and Non- Formal Education:

- a. Coordinates adult and non-formal education programmes nation-wide;
- b. Ensures uniform standards and quality control nationwide;
- c. Regulates in collaboration with national non-governmental organizations and corporate bodies for the implementation of the Mass Literacy Programmes;
- d. Trains the required manpower for the States/FCT Agencies using appropriate strategies;
- e. Develops curricula and didactic materials based on the National Curricula for mass literacy adult and non-formal education;
- f. Provides a nationally recognized basic education certificate;
- g. Provides appropriate programmes for the Acquisition of skills for inmates and other vulnerable groups;
- h. Organizes national and international training workshops seminars, lectures and symposia on topical issues in Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education;
- i. Initiates standard methods for integrating Mass literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education in the learning centres and grant necessary accreditation;
- j. Liaises with relevant national and international agencies concerned with literacy delivery in order to accelerate the development of Mass Literacy and Non-Formal Education; and carry out such other activities as are conducive to the discharge of-its functions.

State/FCT Agencies for Mass Education:

- a. Implement the National Policy on Mass Literacy Adult and Non~ Formal Education in the States and FCT;
 - b. Plan, research, organize, develop and manage State Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education programmes;
 - c. Regulate, monitor and ensure quality control of all private continuing education centres, skill acquisition centres, extra mural classes and other adult and non-formal education programmes provided by NGOs;
 - d. Set up and supervise the activities of the Literacy Network Committees in the states;
 - e. Liaise with non-governmental organizations in the States for the implementation of mass education programmes;
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- f. Train grass root personnel such as Area Coordinators, Team Organizers, Community Library Attendants and Facilitators;
 - g. Provide support services for adult and non-formal education including curriculum adaptation, mobile, and rural Libraries, Television Viewing and Audio- Listening Centres and Studio, visual teaching and learning aids; and
 - h. Ensure regular payment of salaries/allowances of NFE Facilitators and Personnel
72. Local Government Councils is responsible for:
- a. Day-to-day control and administration of local adult education programmes;
 - c. Feedback to the States/FCT and Federal Ministries of Education in respect of curriculum and materials adaptation, techniques of teaching and evaluation procedures and the collection of data;
 - d. Literacy Network Committee at local government, district, village, ward and centre levels are operating efficiently and effectively;
 - c. Physical facilities for rural libraries, reading rooms, television viewing centres and radio listeners' clubs.

Education is a dynamic life-long process that continues to evolve and change with the advancement of society. Nigeria is therefore obliged to continuously prepare and develop strategies for moving its citizens (advantaged and disadvantaged; able and disabled) along the lines of global changing standards to ensure the effective achievement of the set goals. Prior to adulthood, individuals with mental incapacities in Nigeria may never have received Special Education and do not have the privilege of being catered to for as long as they live. Research findings show that early identification of individuals with exceptional needs has great influence in their ability to master a lot of basic skills as well as develop coping skills that could enable them function as best as they could in the mainstream society. In the thoughts of Beirne-Smith (2002), they desire to work and participate in the society as other members of the society. This places the onus on the nation to help them achieve as much as possible, overcome the attitude of learned helplessness, experience success, and subsequently develop self-motivation towards their education in terms of skill development and acquisition. Beirne-Smith et al also suggest that the society could develop work/job programme for them, commencing from age 18, in three phases:

Phase 1- training and support services in a low stress work environment.

Phase 2- on-the-job training in companies and agencies with emphasis on job performance and low work stress.

Phase 3- follow-up services for individuals who were able to secure employment after the training.

The above could be modified to reflect the realities of Nigerian society in the stipulations of the existing NPE Special Needs Education stipulations (Sub-sections



119-124), which may be adapted to suit various age groups, while being subject to continuous review and reorganization. These include:

1. Providing access to education for all persons, in an inclusive setting;
2. equalizing educational opportunities for all persons, irrespective of their genetic composition, social, physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities;
3. providing adequate education for all persons with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation;
4. providing opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented persons to develop their talents, natural endowments/traits at their own pace in the interest of national development; and
5. Designing a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups.

The following strategies are currently being explored by the Federal Government:

- a) Contribute to the funding of Special Education programmes across the country;
- b) Be responsible for policy formulation and modification relating to the Special Education programmes;
- e) Coordinate and supervise 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;
 - Encourage national and international donor agencies/financial institutions to assist in funding and implementing Special Education programmes; and
 - In conjunction with relevant ministries or agencies, carry out regular data updates of the number of persons that require Special Education services across the country.

The Federal and State Ministries of Education in collaboration with appropriate bodies, provide special programmes for gifted and talented persons as well as other categories of special needs persons, especially in:

- a. Early identification, intervention, placement and nurturance;
- b. Early admission into educational institutions;
- c. Provision of the necessary facilities to effectively challenge and develop the intelligence of these persons; and
- d. Monitoring the progress of these persons with special needs from the time of entry/enrollment and Out-of-School transition.

All necessary facilities, equipment, materials, and other assistance devices that would ensure easy access to quality education of special/multi-needs persons include the following:

- a. Perkins Braille, White/mobility cane, brailed textbooks, Abacus Braille talking watch;



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- b. audiometers, speech trainers, hearing aids, ear mold machines etc.
 - c. educational/psychological gadgets, for persons with intellectual disability;
 - d. calipers, prostheses, crutches, wheel chairs, artificial limbs, etc. for physically impaired;
 - e. standard library, audio-visual equipment, internet facilities, etc. for the gifted and talented persons;
 - f. computer technology and accessories for persons with visual impairment; and
 - g. long sleeve shirts, trousers, sun glasses, hats and special classroom boards.

Special Education Training

- a). Special Education training and retraining is to be provided for all categories of teachers/facilitators in learning facilities and institutions 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;
 - iv. Use of computers with jaws for persons with visual impairment;
 - v. Total communication speech technique/sign language, the 3 Rs, etc, for the hearing impaired; and
 - vi. Daily living activities or skills for persons with intellectual exceptionality.
- b). Special training and retraining of the personnel to develop capacity building and to keep abreast of latest teaching and learning techniques for the various categories of disabilities, the gifted and talented.
- c). The teacher/learner ratio is stipulated as 1:10.
- d). the structures and facilities take into account special needs of persons with physical disabilities e.g., ramps instead of steps; wider doors, wheelchairs, lower toilets, others. Facilitators are required to arrange regular sensory, medical and psychological screening assessments to identify children requiring Special Education.

The need to embark upon the strategic education programme for adults with mental exceptionality in the society is double folded. Firstly, the fundamental human right of the individuals in relation to equal educational opportunity has to be upheld. Secondly Nigeria is a developing nation, and needs an established system of accountability on the part of the government to cater for all persons in line with the national goals and ideology. The nation mandatorily ought to live up to the expectations of the citizens in all spheres of governance and project education both as a right of everyone and the ultimate instrument of excellence for advancement. This is not only achievable by effective implementation of the provisions made to work out policies and strategies in the educational guidelines,



but also the only way to go for all round optimal development of all categories of citizens and all sectors of government.

Identification Strategies for Mentally Exceptional Adults in Nigeria

There are no norm test instruments (specific for the Nigerian mainstream culture) to help identify this category of persons in classified groups for instruction. The nation is experiencing, in quantum, the major factors that cause and influence learning and behavior problems, which include poverty, marriage/family instability, poor living standards and insecurity. See Figure 1). As a matter of fact, Nigeria may be disadvantaged in many ways if Special Education services are not treated with the required urgency. Among the tools that could be employed for identification are: the use of family, developmental, academic, work/employment history of the individual, including interview of about two or more caregivers/supervisors of adult (teacher, manager, former employer, priest, minister or family member) status. Evidence of difficulty in the areas of academic achievement, social interaction (communication with others), and/or employment difficulties (which may include drifting from one job to the other), all of which could be gathered during the interview with the individual are essential.

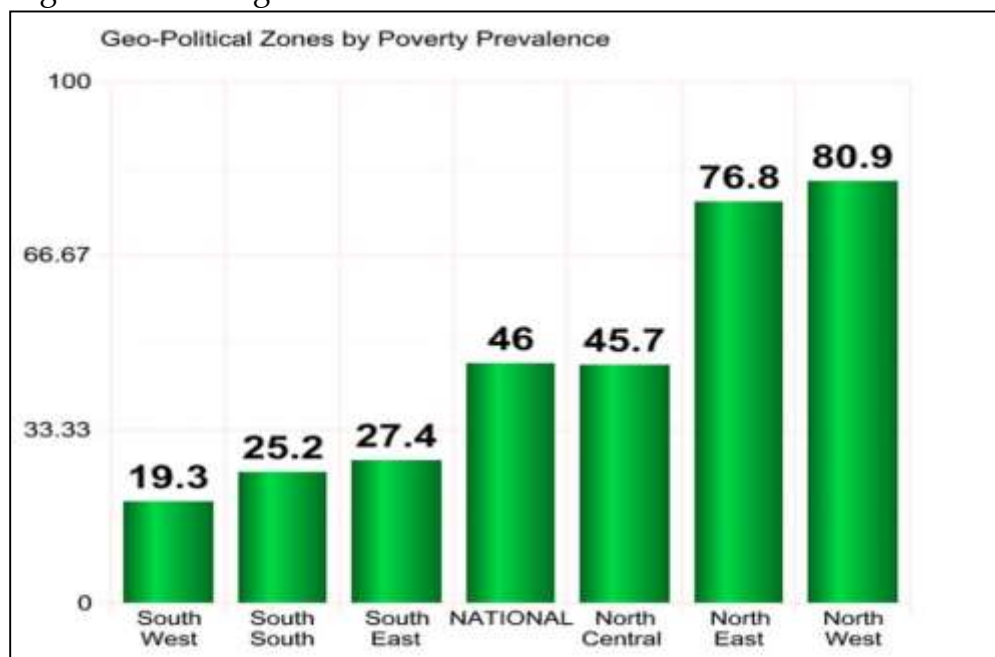


Figure 1. Source: United Nations (2015). The Global Multidimensional Poverty Index.

Some adults with mental exceptionality could be identified because in combination with the fore listed means of identification, they may have some mild physical deformities that may occur alongside their mental incapacity and draw attention to them. Down syndrome with Mongolian facial resemblance, being overweight and speech impairment or visual limitations are common examples.



Others may include frequent demonstration of significant socially inappropriate behaviours and in greater intensity than those not likely to be classified as mentally exceptional.

On the management of ALE in Nigeria, low level financing of the education sector contradicts recent information about Nigeria's GDP, which positions the country as a very large economy in Africa. Within this context, ALE is confronted with Nigeria's inability to adequately fund the education sector and ameliorate previously mentioned maladies that characterize its standing in the country. Figures 4 – 7 are graphic representations of budgetary allocations to education in the last ten years. It is a trend that simplifies the task of imagining what is spent on ALE and by extension, the education and learning of adults with mental exceptionalities. This is reflected by the consistent and continuous low allocation to education by governments in Nigeria since 2018 till date, despite the controversy about what percentage of the budget should be allocated to education. It is clear that Nigeria is reluctant to implement the recommendation by international partners, which urged countries to allocate to education a minimum of 15-20% of national financial plans (Obanya&Omelewa, 2018) to facilitate laudable policies that already exist.

Year	Capital Expenditure (N)	Recurrent Expenditure (N)	Universal Basic Education (N)	Total education (N)	Total Budget (N)	Education % of Total
2010	53,667,933,553	195,418,320,506	44,341,401,504	293,427,655,563	4,079,654,724,257	7.19
2011	35,068,896,911	304,392,631,774	54,328,643,090	393,810,171,775	4,226,191,559,259	9.32
2012	55,056,589,805	345,091,448,178	68,237,000,000	468,385,037,983	4,749,101,000,000	9.86
2013	60,140,591,038	367,375,116,850	72,246,000,000	499,761,707,888	4,924,604,000,000	10.15
2014	50,781,035,231	373,532,095,037	70,470,000,000	494,783,130,268	4,695,190,000,000	10.54
2015	23,520,000,000	392,363,784,654	68,380,000,000	484,263,784,654	4,493,363,957,158	10.78
2016	35,433,487,466	367,734,727,223	77,110,000,000	480,278,214,689	6,060,677,358,227	7.92
2017	56,720,969,147	398,686,819,418	95,189,395,583	550,597,184,148	7,441,175,486,758	7.40
2018	61,730,000,000	435,010,000,000	109,060,000,000	605,800,000,000	8,600,000,000,000	7.04

Figure 4: Nigeria Education Budget 2010 – 2018.

Source: Adedigba A. (2017). *Premium Times*, Friday May 29, 2020.

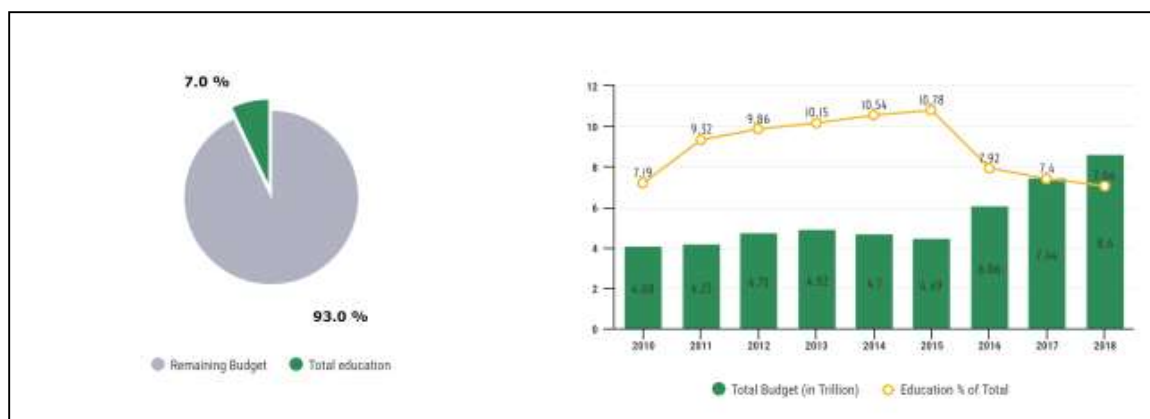


Figure 5: Trend Analysis of Nigeria's Percentage Allocation of Budget to the Education Sector.

Source: Adedigba A. (2017) in *Premium Times*, Friday May 29, 2020.

Conclusion

The provision of quality and affordable education for Nigerian citizens as well as "All" the individuals with special needs in the Nigerian society could put the nation on a higher pedestal, both within the nation and at international levels. The reason is that education is an instrument that the government employs to demonstrate care for its citizens in expectation of their contributions to national development and advancement. It is largely in the interest of Nigerian society that the citizens identify themselves with the national ideology and attain self-actualization along the continuum approved of by it, as illustrated in the constitution. Mentally exceptional adults have desires and aspirations like every other person; however, the circumstances of life accord them peculiar traits that put them on a different scale (Zigler, 1986). All they need therefore, is a structure that will cushion and balance the effect of such circumstances to accomplish success for themselves and the Nigerian society.

Implication of these for the adequate learning and education of adults in this category.

1. Adults with mental exceptionalities are not being adequately served in spite of the constitutional statements to accord all citizens the right to education irrespective of their life circumstances.
2. The special needs education policy provisions are laudable, but the objectives would only materialize if measures are taken to provide the required funding for effective implementation.

Suggestions

1. Assessment tool for identifying mentally exceptional adults is essential for seamless results-oriented efforts on the education of this category persons in the Nigeria education sector.



2. The Nigerian Special Education sector needs to engage in collaborative ventures with the adult and non-formal sector to achieve a formidable result through the Ministry of Education and the National Commission for Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Formal Education (NMEC).
3. Government should also implement the laudable provisions in the national policy on education Nigeria by reviewing upwards, the budgetary allocations to education to ease actions in the sector.

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