



CHAPTER 5

MEDIA AND EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (PWDs) IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

The term people with disabilities (PWDs) refers to all persons with disabilities including those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various attitudinal and environmental barriers hinders their full and effective participation in the society on equal basis with others (United Nation Commission on Human Rights, 2018). The United Nations (2014), report showed that there are approximately 1 billion PWDs in the world. This represents 15 per cent of the global population. This means 1 in 7 people globally has one form of disability or the other. In both developed and developing countries, evidence suggests that PWDs are disproportionately represented among the world's poor and tend to be poorer than their counterparts without disabilities.

In similar manner, economic and social exclusion is a part of the daily lives of persons with disabilities and is a breach of human rights and a major development challenge. The rich diversity of our society inclusive of all its members – including PWDs– can help strengthen fundamental human rights and contribute to development for all. It is important to note that the PWDs despite their challenges or impairment are equally humans and as such must not be denied access to any fundamental human rights due to any disability. One of the fundamental human rights of every citizen is education. Education is the process of acquiring relevant skills, traits and competencies which are needed for meaningful living in the society and for contribution to national development [Federal Government of Nigeria, (FGN), 2004]. As all other citizens, PWDs need to be given equal educational opportunities as their counterparts without disabilities their disabilities notwithstanding.

Over the years (due to disabilities) most PWDs have been denied access to education. Some of the reasons include that there were no facilities to help mitigate the effects of their disabilities on their education. According to Reading Rocket International (2004), PWDs face numerous challenges which tend to hinder their progress in general or conventional education. Some of the challenges include (but



not limited to) inability to stay on task, distraction, poor time management and problems with movement within the school premises. These challenges have made some of the PWDs to be stigmatized and advocates against stigmatization succeeded in moving a motion for mainstreaming education also called inclusive education. Mainstreaming or inclusive education is a form of education that allows PWDs the opportunity to be educated in general education with other people without disabilities. This is to reduce the issue of stigmatization when PWDs were only given special education in special schools (Umolu, 2015). With the current evolution in technology and the application of same in education, there may be hope for the PWDs.

Disability is defined as the umbrella term for impairments, activity limitations and participation restrictions {World Health Organization,(WHO) 2006}. This definition stresses that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others (Okoli, 2016). Disability refers to a multidimensional occurrence which has evolved from people and their surroundings (WHO, 2001). In the same vein, the Malaysian Disability Act (2008) defined persons with disabilities as those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments; which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society.

Similarly, the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) (2016), stated that a person with disability means such a person has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their 'ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This means that one cannot be said to be disabled unless the impairment is to the extent that normal day to day activities of such a person is distorted as a result of the impairment.

From the definitions posited from different scholars, one can define PWD as a person with a form of impairment which hinders him or her significantly from carrying out his or her normal daily routine activities.

According to Okoli (2016), the prevalence of disability in Nigeria is at 3.2% according to the National Baseline Survey on Persons with Disabilities in Nigeria. In the same manner, the Global Burden of Disease estimates the number of children aged 0-14 years experiencing moderate or severe disabilities is at 93 million (5.1%), with 13 million (0.7%) children experiencing severe difficulties. Gregory (2018), outlined the characteristics of PWDs to include but not limited to; inability to stay on tasks, poor concentration or low attention span, poor time management, difficulty is performing a task or class assignment and challenges with mathematics tasks. PWDs are first and foremost humans. As people they have individual abilities, interests and needs. PWDs are moms, dads, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, friends, neighbors, coworkers, students and teachers. Their contributions can enrich our communities and society if they are empowered like others to acquire education, live, work and share their lives.



PWDs face serious challenges more than their counterparts without disabilities. The most challenging problem of people with disabilities is that of accessibility or mobility. Most PWDs are denied access to some facilities. Some persons with disability move around with wheel chairs (Narayanseva, 2022), hence they do not have the privilege of moving about at will or freely. To make matters worse, most of the public places like eatery, museum, parks, studios or gym are not built with this challenge in mind, thereby making it difficult if not impossible for PWDs to have access to such facilities like their counterparts without disability. Another challenge PWDs face is that of poor or lack of education. Nelson (2019), noted that many children with disabilities are segregated against (even by their parents) in terms of education. Despite the fact that education is a basic right for all humans, and as such should be made affordable and accessible by all humans yet, Tagore (2018), noted (with dismay) that many children with disabilities are denied access to education, and as such cannot function effectively in the society as their counterparts. There is also a challenge of stigmatization and stereotyping against PWDs.

Education is a fundamental human right of every child irrespective of any form of challenge or disabilities. Education has been defined by Ocho (2005), as the process through which individuals are made functional members of their society. Also Offorma (2009), saw education as the process of providing information to a novice in a bid to enable the novice develop his or her innate abilities which include socially mentally, physically emotionally, politically and spiritually. Federal Government of Nigeria FGN (2004), also asserted that education is an instrument per excellence for achieving national objectives. Education is a means of acquiring traits, competencies, capabilities and training which are pivotal to meaningful living in the society. Education is the process of becoming critically aware of ones reality in a manner that leads to effective action upon it (Oniye, 2009). This is because an educated person understands his/her world well enough to deal with it effectively. The world is ever-changing and as such it takes adequate education to train the mind of citizens to adjust to the ever-changing environment. The importance of education cannot be undermined. It liberates the mind from obscurity of the available opportunities in ones environment. Education is also a means of transmitting, preserving, transmitting and improving the culture of any society (Ocho,2005). Education is a potent tool to address poverty and diseases of the mind. Acquiring relevant education puts one at a leverage position above his mates. This is because one will be better disposed to utilize the acquired skills and competencies to solve his life challenges and those of his country (Obanya, 2012). It is in the recognition of the importance of education to mans emancipation that it was made a fundamental human right. Every child is to be given access to education in order to be able to contribute to national development. Over the years, PWDs have been denied education in general schools not until the advocacy for inclusion was promulgated. However, the inclusive education has not satisfactorily



solved the educational challenges faced by PWDs. There may be need to introduce media as part of the process in the education of PWDs.

Media as a term refers to the inclusion of different mediums that are used for communicating, transmitting, and broadcasting to the public or masses (Brian, 2011). It uses a wide range of audio-visual materials as well as electronic or electromagnetic mediums to share news, information, entertainment, ads, etc with the target audiences or general public. Media can be seen as the different forms of technologies which are used to reach out to a large group of people simultaneously through communication (Investopia, 2018). Wikipedia (2019), noted that media is simply a platform that disseminates contents to a vast audience concurrently. They represent avenues of communication which help the transfer of information, ideas, messages, contents, files or information from a sender to heterogeneous audience at the same time irrespective of location. Michael (2021), stated that media transmits information electronically via films, radio, recorded music, or television. Media helps to spread information throughout many different regions of the world simultaneously and cost-efficiently as distance is never a barrier. Media is very important due to the numerous roles it plays in the society. Media helps in expanding the horizons of thought of the citizens and facilitates communication which is a primal necessity for survival (Muhammed, 2013). Based on the current realities in Nigeria, media can improve governance and the actions of those in power and alerting the public to corruption and abuse of trust (Chowdhury & Shyamal, 2004). The mass media as a supporter of social changes serve as a giver of information (Brian, 2020). Equally media enlightens the public on any issue as well as plays a supporting role which requires decision taking on the attitudes, beliefs and social norms of the masses (Okonkwo & Chidi, 2020). Therefore it is envisaged that if media is incorporated in the education of PWDs, there may be an improvement. It is based on the premises above that the present paper is set to examine how media can help enhance the education of PWDs. In order to achieve the stated objective the following issues were addressed in the paper namely, media and people with disabilities (PWD), using media to enhance the education of people with disabilities, implications of the study to PWDs, conclusion and recommendations.

Media and PWDs

As a result of lack of legal knowledge about the functioning of the mass media as a socio-cultural hobby and information on the common rights of PWDs, this has led to the difficulty in identifying the process of understanding, evaluating and formulating behavior among society. In other words, the information obtained is loose and not empirical. Media plays an important role in providing information and influencing people's thinking, it takes into account the interests and policies set by the government. According to this assumption, the absence of information on various aspects of the nation especially PWDs will cause citizens to fail to fulfill its obligations to issues of equal rights among disabled persons. According to Harold



(2018), the media provides monitoring of the surrounding environment and community component coloration in relation to the surroundings. Continuing, Harold averred that the media should control, shape, and help the public to understand the world around them and act as a driving force for socialization.

Low level of awareness due to the lack of information disclosure in the mass media in the community about the rights of equality is identified as a barrier to PWDs. It is the duty of the media to create awareness about government regulations about the PWDs to all sectors of the economy to reduce discrimination and stigmatization. Factors that can alter the negative attitude towards the PWD are with the media; if they are able to feed the society with such. However, the media is more concerned with providing information on the undesirable attitude of the public towards the PWDs rather than educating the masses on how well to relate with the PWDs (Ibrahim & Herr, 2012). If the media performs her civic duties well towards the PWDs it will enable the PWDs to be granted and given all the means for them to live normally and independently.

Over the years, PWDs have been regarded as individuals to be pitied, feared or ignored. They have been portrayed as helpless victims, repulsive adversaries, heroic individuals overcoming tragedy, and charity cases who must depend on others for their well being and care. Media coverage frequently focused on heartwarming features and inspirational stories that reinforced stereotypes, patronized and underestimated the capabilities of PWDs. This is not healthy, and must be redressed. The media needs to take fresh turn to educate the masses about how best to relate with PWDs in the society especially in terms of their education.

Using Media to Enhance the Education of People with Disabilities

It has been established that the media is a great tool for human advancement. All citizens rely heavily on information provided by the media to excel in all walks of life. The education sector is not left behind. Media has been applied in many areas to improve education delivery in our schools. For example Gusen (2013), pointed out that the media (via computer application) has been used in different ways to enhance education. Continuing Gusen noted that media is used in the area of power point lecture delivery, examination conduction, students' enrollment and administration, personnel management and students progress reportage among other uses.

The world of education is currently undergoing a massive transformation as a result of the digital revolution (Collins & Halverson, 2009). As a result of this digital revolution, it is both important and practical to make use of the availability and accessibility of technology in designing educational or training programs especially for PWDs. Technology has the potential to contribute to a better quality of life for students with some disabilities, which is more than just a matter of convenience (Wehmeyer, Palmer, Smith, Davies, & Stock, 2008). The use of technology in education is now very inevitable considering the fact that every citizen is entitled to quality education. No child is to be denied education by reason



of having any form of disabilities; that is why media has to be applied in education to enhance the education of PWDs.

Media can be applied in many areas in order to facilitate the education of PWD. According to Ghaleb (2014), one of the ways media can be used to facilitate the education of the PWDs is through the use of assistive technology. Assistive technology refers to any item or piece of equipment or product system (either acquired commercially, off the shelf, modified, or customized) which can be used to increase, maintain, or improve functional capability for individual with disabilities. It also refers to technological tools that can help students to bypass their academic weaknesses (Mull & Sitlington, 2003). The disabilities faced by PWDs may not allow them to achieve maximally as their counterparts without disabilities. The use of any form of assistive technology will help reduce to the barest minimum the extent to which the disability limits the child's learning capabilities. Some examples of assistive technology include but not limited to hearing aids, sight advancer, loudspeaker, advanced organizer, calculator, brail, language translator, speech to text software and text to speech software among others.

For maximum benefit to be achieved in using assistive technology, Mull and Sitlington (2003), gave three guidelines which are:

- i). Assistive technology can vary significantly in cost from one device to another and sometimes can be too expensive for families or schools to afford, so, the funding resources for assistive technology must be addressed in the transition process. Additionally, it is important to identify the necessary device early, so this device can be located, and the student can have time to be trained to use it.
- ii). The assessment of students' needs and the demands of the postsecondary environment should determine the appropriate selection of assistive technology.
- iii). Training students in using the assistive technology properly will help them to increase their educational gains.

Media literacy education is another area where media can help the education of PWDs. media literacy education aims to enhance students' competencies in access, analysis, creation, reflection, and action (Hobbs, 2010). Friensem (2017), noted that when teaching media literacy, usually educators can choose to focus on analysis, production, or both. The application of media literacy has been found to be effective in some quarters. By applying media literacy analysis, students can learn alternative ways to analyze, reflect, and communicate their interpretations of media representations. However, though both media literacy practices of analysis and production can promote various skills, the issue of access is still the major barrier for students with disabilities. That is why Dobransky and Hargittai (2006), called for a policy to encourage access to assistive technology for people with disabilities who want to use online communication. This has led to many assistive technologies being made available to support mobile media and online engagement (Schaffhauser, 2016).

In the same manner, the use of Internet and digital devices in education is another way media can help enhance the education of PWDs. The use of the various



social media platforms in education can help PWDs to overcome some of their learning challenges. Students with different disabilities can use information and communication technologies (ICTs) in a variety of ways. For example, a research by Fichten, Asuncion, Barile, Fossey and De Simone, (2000), showed that most students who are blind use software that reads what is on the screen (e.g., text, links) and/or hardware that produces Braille output of what is on the screen. Students with low vision use software that enlarges the size of visual elements, software that reads what is on the screen, and/or large screen monitors. In the same vein, students with mobility and hand/arm impairments use a variety of ergonomic adaptations including software based keyboard adaptations, virtual keyboards, and a variety of alternative mice. Many of these students can benefit from voice dictation software, allowing them to speak content and commands. Some students also use word prediction software to speed up typing. For students with hearing impairments, a variety of electronic dictionaries as well as both general use (e.g., spell-check, grammar-check) and specialized writing aids (e.g., word prediction software) can be helpful.

Similarly, computer based and mobile chat programs such as Windows Live Messenger are also useful. When accessing video and audio clips, these students often use subtitles/captions when these are available. Students with speech/communication impairments can use a notebook or tablet computer to communicate with others in face-to-face contexts. For class presentations, such affected students can use a word processor with a multimedia projector instead of speaking. Students with learning disabilities can use equipment developed for students with the disabilities mentioned above. For example, students who have dyslexia or other reading problems can use software that reads what is on the screen as well as screen magnification and highlighting. Students who have difficulty with grammar and spelling sometimes find dictation software helpful. The application of these media in education of PWDs, will go a long way to ameliorate the learning challenges of PWDs and equally help to enhance same.

Implications for Special Needs Education /Persons with Disabilities

Based on the issues discussed in this paper, the following implications apply to special needs education or PWDs:

1. The education of people with disabilities will be enhanced academically if the necessary assistive ICT are provided for their education in the various inclusive schools.
2. If the government puts the unique challenges of the PWDs into consideration and restructure the architecture of some public places like media outfits, gyms, schools, studios, restaurants, hospitals to have easy movement, the PWDs will be able to utilize such facilities for their own benefits as their counterparts without disabilities.
3. When teachers in the various inclusive schools are given training on the rudiments of special needs education (especially media literacy education), it will help the teachers to effectively utilize media technologies to enhance



their teaching of the PWDs; this enhanced teaching of the PWDs will make for improved academic performance by the PWDs in the various inclusive schools, leading to quality education.

Conclusion

The paper has examined how the media can be of effect in enhancing the education of people with disability. Education is a fundamental human right and as such no citizen is to be denied education irrespective of any limitations. Over the years PWDs have been stigmatized in many ways. The study has shown the wrong ways media has presented PWDs to the society and also the various ways media can help improve the education of PWDs. They include through the use of assistive technologies, media literacy education among others. The paper concludes that if media is applied in the education of PWDs there will be better performance by PWDs.

Suggestions

Sequel to the issues discussed in the paper the researcher wishes to make the following suggestions:

1. inclusive schools should design their buildings and classrooms taking into cognizance of the mobility challenges of PWDs.
2. equal access to health care should be given to persons with disabilities.
3. the media should use their office to advocate for the betterment of PWDs.
4. the media should avoid broadcasting biased contents against PWDs.
5. teachers in the various inclusive schools need to be adequately trained on the aspects of special needs education especially media literacy in order to cater for the education needs of PWDs.
6. the government is urged to assist inclusive schools with funds to be able to provide some basic assistive technology devices to help PWDs.

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