

Chapter Thirteen

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The present state of education industry in Nigeria in general and Special Needs Education (SNE) in particular, has in recent times drawn the attention, interest and concern of parents, professionals and other stakeholders in both regular and Special Needs Education (SNE) at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Consequently, workshops, seminars and conferences are held to examine the situation with a view to proffering lasting solutions on the way forward.

According to Egbo (2005:2), despite many well-intentioned educational policies that have been adopted by the Federal government e.g., the 6-3-3-4 Secondary School structure and the new Universal Basic Education scheme (UBE), education in Nigeria has fallen victim to the nation's chronic social and political challenges that tend to reduce institutional efficiency

Similarly, Maduewesi (2005:4), affirms that, whereas in the past various committees and commissions (Ashby 1959, Longe, 1989, Etsu-Nupe 1997, Vision 2010) setup to examine the education system had pointed out the need for system-wide reform and revitalization, the outcome never went beyond piecemeal, and in final analysis, ineffective reforms.

Some pertinent questions arise here: Why do these reforms – policy innovations and changes, become ineffective in the final analysis? What is the present situation like in the administration of education industry as a whole and Special Needs Education in particular? What is the mandate and the way forward?

This chapter is poised to examine some of the current revelations in the entire education industry and with reference to special education, in terms of policy making and administration as enshrined in the National Policy on Education (NPE).

CONTEMPORARY STATE OF EDUCATION

At a recent National conference of the Nigerian Primary and Teacher Education Association (NPTEA), Egbo (2005) laments thus:

With particular reference to Nigeria, Education is at a crossroads. It is marked by gross under-funding, mismanagement, inadequate infrastructural facilities, over-crowded classrooms, strikes, non-payment of salaries, sporadic closures and deterioration at all levels.

Again, Maduewesi (2005:4-5), highlighted the contemporary situation in the education industry in Nigeria as follows:

- Phenomenal growth in enrolment without corresponding expansion in physical facilities;
- In some parts of the country, low participation in education by girls has persisted while in another part boys early withdrawal from school has become a feature;
- The definition and assignment of roles to various stakeholders in education was not done while Government is perceived as the sole determinant, and provider ...

The foregoing are some of the manifestations of problems militating against the entire education industry in Nigeria. However, one may wish to know what is obtainable in the area of special needs education.

THE STATE OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

The present administrative situation of SNE in Nigeria cannot be anything different from the one obtainable in the

general education industry. This is true in the saying that, "what goes around, comes around". A review of some related literature may illuminate some of the problems encountered in the administration and delivery of special needs education services in the country.

In a situational report on "the state and future of special education in Delta State" Onwubolu (2005), laments that, poor funding, lack of interest in the education of exceptional children, lack of adequate personnel and equipment are problems deterring the growth and development of special needs education in Delta State.

In a similar report, Lere and Yakwal (2005), decried the seeming zero legislative base for special education in Nigeria in particular, and Plateau State in particular. However, they are quick to mention the cheering news of the latest efforts in legislating for persons with disabilities in Plateau State. Furthermore, in the evaluative study of Cross River State Special Education Programme, Ntukidem *et al.* (2005), abstracted that facilities/equipments were grossly inadequate and only 36.1% of teachers had professional qualifications to teach children with special needs.

Ozaji (2005), observed that there is very little to talk about quality assurance in Special Needs Education (SNE). He contends that unless urgent steps are taken to institute internal and external quality control measures in SNE in Nigeria, the situation will continue to deteriorate

Generally, Ekwama (2003), discussed problems of equipment, teacher-training, facilities, funding, law, and administrative rigidity as key problems inhibiting the steady growth of special needs education in Nigeria.

ADMINISTRATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION (SNE)

It is observed that the problem with education in Nigeria (Special Education inclusive) is not that of policy formulation and reforms, but to a larger extent, it could be with the administrative structure on ground. For a better comprehension of how special

needs education is administered, the understanding of the role of administration in an organization becomes imperative.

FUNCTIONS OF ADMINISTRATION

Gulick cited in Musaazi, (1982), defines administration as 'POSDCORB', an acronym which represents: Planning (P), Organising (O), Staffing (S), Directing (D), Co-ordinating (C), Reporting (R.) and Budgeting (B). Furthermore, Musaazi contends that administration:

- Exists to implement the decisions of an organization
- Influences the results to be achieved, the direction to be pursued, and the various priorities to be recognized within the organization;
- Determines, in large measure, the organizational climate and working relationship;
- Can help to make employees more productive;
- Help to assemble and to ensure effective use of resources;
- Unifies and co-ordinates the human and material resources available for use in the organization;
- Evaluates the quality and quantity of outcomes actually accomplished;
- Shapes to a large extent, the image and prestige of the organization;
- Tries to build into the organization provisions for innovations, for change, and for development.

The National Policy on Education (2004: sect. 10(96) P.⁴⁸) states that, "The Federal Ministry of Education has the responsibility of co-ordinating Special Education activities in Nigeria in collaboration with relevant Ministries, governmental organizations and International agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WHO, etc). However the administrative setup of the Federal, State and Local Governments Education Ministries and Departments do not enable effective special education service delivery. Ideally, the special needs administrator's work is supposed to center around aspects of the administrative process,

such as planning, decision-making, organizing, communicating, co-ordinating, motivating, budgeting and evaluation. However, in practice, this is far from being exercised due to some administrative bureaucracy.

At the Federal Level, Special Needs Education (SNE) Unit is now a Division, not a Unit in the Ministry of Education (MOE) as it used to be. It is headed by a Deputy Director – Special Education, who is answerable to a Director, Permanent Secretary, Minister of State and the Minister of Education as the overall Chief Executive of the Ministry of Education (MOE) respectively.

Below, is an outline of the administrative structure of Special Education Division (SED) of Federal Ministry of Education (F.M.E)

At the state level, the administrative structure is similar to that at the Federal level. The structure flows from the head of the Ministry of Education downwards the Commissioner, Permanent Secretary, Director of Schools, and Deputy Director Special Education Unit (the Coordinator or Head of Special Education Unit) respectively. There are other officers and support staff of the Special Education Unit (SEU) under the Deputy Director Special Education Unit.

Planning in Special Needs Education Service Delivery is very crucial to the success of meeting the needs of Special Needs Persons and children in particular. Maduwesi (2005), highlights the effects of lack of educational planning which resulted to phenomenal growth in enrolment without corresponding expansion in physical facilities. That the 1976 Universal Primary Education (UPE) was hampered by the inadequate and inaccurate data.

Officers in charge of special of Special Education Division at Federal, Units at State and Local Government levels are supposed to be involved in decision making. This is because, “Nothing for us, without as”, will effectively meet our needs and that of our client - persons with special needs. But the situation is that such SNE officers are limited to being “Deputy”, “Supervisor”, or “Assistant”, and are usually not part of the executive committee.

The end result may be inadequate and haphazard decisions on issues that concern Special Needs Persons.

Adequate organization and coordination are indispensable in the administration of SNE. However, in the Nigerian context, these are lacking at Federal, State and Local Government levels. For proper coordination a joint office of the various ministries and other collaborators is suggested at the Federal, State and Local Government Levels. Similarly, administrative units for each category of field of special education is advocated (Ihenacho, 1986). This will facilitate identification, assessment and invariably the provision of accurate and up-to-date statistics of special needs children (SNC) at various tiers of government, which Maduwesi (2005) observes, that the gathering, storage and usage of reliable educational data have not become an established practice.

Budgeting and Finance is another crucial area special needs administrators should note and advocate. It is clearly stated that, "Federal, State, and Local Governments shall fund these programmes within their areas of jurisdiction". (NPE, 2004: Sect. 10: 96 (d). However as noted earlier, there is a general problem of funding and fiscal planning right from Federal, State and Local Governments. Ihenacho (1982), and Ozoji (2005), recommended that in budgeting for Special Needs Education (SNE), the consideration should be cost per head of the Special Needs Children (SNC), and not cost per category.

It is hoped that the 2% budgetary allocation for Special Needs Education under the UBE by the Federal Government will be religiously "given to Caesar, what is Caesar's".

Monitoring and evaluation of programmes in Special Needs Education is very essential. It is expected that all activities should be evaluated in order to find out to what extent the goals and objectives are accomplished.

SUGGESTION FOR THE WAY FORWARD

- Special education administration be taught and offered as core course at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

- Area of specialization for the gifted and talented be introduced in the Department of Special Education and Rehabilitation Science
- M.Ed. and M.Phil / Ph.D. students of Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences be posted to Federal, State, Local Government Ministries and Departments with Special Education Units for their internship. In this way, they will gain firsthand experience in SNE administration as well as contribute their wealth of knowledge where the need arises.
- A monitoring and evaluation committee should be set up to assess the activities of Special Needs Education in the various units of the Ministries / Department of Education, at the States and Local Government levels.
- A Commission for Specials Needs Education is long overdue.

CONCLUSION

The state of education industry at large is presented alongside some problems encountered in the administration of SNE in Nigeria. The functional roles of administration and their implication in administration of Special Needs education were examined. However, one cannot conclude without re-echoing the prophetic advise of the "Apostle of Educational Eclecticism", Egbo, that: government and all stakeholders in education must bear in mind that any nation that tinkers with its educational system is in effect, toying with the very essence of its existence. (Egbo, 2005:8). By extension, any Government that negates or relegates the field of Special Needs Education (SNE), is toying with the potentials of a community of gifted, talented, the disadvantaged, and the other known categories of persons with Special needs.

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