

## REALIZING THE GOALS OF EFA ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

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### **Abstract**

*Education has continued to be a veritable tool for socio-economic development of any nation. Nigeria and other sub-saharan nations continue to lag behind in education of all (EFA) by 2015. Especially with regards to persons with special needs. The 1990 Jomitein. Education for all declaration couldn't have come any better. The Nigeria Government domesticated the declaration by signing into law UBEC in 2004 in which education of persons with special needs were clearly spell out and included. Ever since then, the stakeholders involve has made positive steps in realizing the goals that the EFA target was set for 2014. The paper examined the goals which were aimed at meeting education for all by 2015 on persons the EFA goals by 2015. However, the paper recommended that adequate funding scholarship automatic admission should be provided for special population and that any negative treatment on special population should be dealt with by law.*

### **Introduction**

The first Universal Human Rights Declaration on People's Right to Education was made in 1948; it asserted that everyone has the right to education. Decades after, it is clear that many people are still being denied this basic human right. To that effect. Education for all (EFA) which is an international initiative was launched in Jomitein. Thailand, in 1990 to bring benefits of education to "every citizen in every society" for the purpose of forging a global consensus and commitment to provide basic education for all/ universal Basic Education (UBE) is the programme which grew out of that conference (Dike, 2000).

Evidences also bound to show government expenditure on provision of facilities infrastructure and enactment of policy framework for the attainment of the EFA goals.

Among our population in this country are large numbers of children and adults who differs so markedly in mental, physical, emotional or behavioral. Characteristics from their normal peers as to require special help in realizing their optimum potentials (Zakari, 2004). He further stated that: Educators and laymen alike have recognized the special needs of these groups of people and these recognition has resulted in a number of programmes designed to give appropriate assistance in various capacities. On the educational level, this has taken the form of provisions to serve handicapped children in the regular classes of the school or to provide instruction appropriate to their abilities.

### **Education for All (EFA) Goals**

There are six internationally agreed education goals aimed at meeting the needs of all children youth and a adults by the year 2015. These are:

1. Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children.
2. Ensuring that by 2015 all children particularly girls, children in difficult to ethnic Mennonites have access to and to complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality.
3. Ensuring that the learning needs if young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life – skills programmes.
4. Achieving 50% improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015. Especially for women and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults.
5. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2015 and achieving basic education in brief. Achieving in basic education of good quality.
6. Improving all aspects of the quality of education ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all especially in literacy, numeracy and essential like skills.

From the above, the goals of EFA clearly indicated how special people were included in the Education For All Goals (EFA). But since we are talking about Education For All. It is pertinent to discuss Basic education in brief.

### **Basic Education**

Basic Education is the foundation for sustainable life-long learning. It provides reading, writing and numeracy skills. It comprises a wide variety of non-formal and formal education activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy.

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was formally launched for the pursuant of Education For All goals in Nigeria on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1999. It was to be a universal, free and compulsory education. Since the year 2000, Nigeria laid foundation for achieving the six (EFA) goals mentioned above. The Federal Government prepared legislation for UBE in 2000, but ut was done until 2004.

### **Persons With Special Needs**

Persons with special needs are those categories of individuals who have a special ability that needs special attention. This attention can be attained through an educational programme known as Special Education. According to NPE 2004, special education is a formal special educational training, given to people (children and adults) with special needs. This group of people may be classified into three categories:

- i. Disabled – which includes visually impaired persons, physically and health impaired, mentally, retarded, speech impaired and so on.

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- ii. The disadvantage – which includes nomadic pastorals, migrant, fishers, hunters and so on.
  - iii. The Gifted and Talented – which includes individuals who have high I.Q and are naturally endowed with special traits?

This is contained in the NPE 4<sup>th</sup> Edition 2004 as it was stated that Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria in collaboration with UNESCO, UNDP, WHO, UNICEF and so on will have the responsibility for coordinating special education activities.

It was stated that Agencies, NGOs and Federal Ministry of Education will make sure that children with special needs shall be educated freely at all levels of education i.e primary, secondary and tertiary level of education. They will also ensure that facilities are provided for children with with special needs across schools such as Perkins, bailer, white/mobility cannel. Brailed textbooks, abacus and so on.

The policy also stated that special education training and special training and retraining of the personnel to develop capacity building and to keep abreast of latest teaching techniques, for the various categories of disabilities the gifted and talented shall be made available to meet up with the Education For All (EFA) policy by 2015.

### **EFA Achievements in Nigeria**

The rekindles in EFA in Nigeria was demonstrated in a variety of ways; the infusion of basic education metaphor in our various protocols by the Federal Government in Conformity with the aspiration of the international community, signing of memorandum of understanding by various state Government which ushered in the collective determination to contributed funds towards the eradication of illiteracy in their respective policies etc. this tendency was spearheaded by the UNDP in the case of mass literacy campaign and the World Bank in the case of primary education (Tahir, 2006).

The formal launching of UBE in 2004 stigmatic a remarkable determination of FME in achieving the six goals of EFA.

FME, education statistics (1996) showed that only 14.1 million out of 21 million school age children are enrolled in primary school UBE was born from these starting statistics to promote education among all citizens (Amanze, 2008).

Another clear demonstration of Government readiness to reinvigorate the EFA movement in Nigeria was the setting up of EFA action plan in 2001 to domesticate the international EFA goals by setting up her own targets to meet EFA 2015 target.

The EFA action plan targets were systematic targets in different levels and facets of education in Nigeria specifying time frames and levels of achievement that would lead to attaining EFA Goals by 2015 (MGDS report, 2004).

The specific areas include early childhood care and development, primary education, junior secondary school and adult literacy. In adults literacy for instance, the action plan says there should be recruitment and training of 260,000 adult literacy classes and nomadic education. By 2015 it targets of 50% reduction (20 million) of illiterates in Nigeria.

When you look at the above activities of EFA in realizing its goals, much is not done for the special population. Some of the secondary schools established for the mentally retarded were closed down for instance in kano state, some schools for mentally retarded are now converted to normal secondary schools. This could be attributed to poor enrolment of mentally retarded in the schools and non challant attitudes towards special population.

Although significant changes has been found in higher institutions where special education departments were established to trained manpower who will educate people with special abilities. For instance following are some of the institutions that has special education departments; University of Jos, B.U.K, U.N.N, UNILAG, FCE (T) Bichi.

Moreover, facilities needed to boost the morals of people with special needs in many of the blind schools is not sufficient. Mainstreaming of these special students becomes a problem as Braille's and other vital facilities are not provided or available to meet the challenges of special needs. Talking about EFA assessment regarding special population is not addressing problems of handicapped conditions. This is because EFA Goals has not created much impact for the disabled persons. Just take for instance, the gifted and talented person have special schools almost spread across the country. For instance study of science and technical courses are designed for the talented and gifted children. There is a ministry of science and technology. Universities of science and technology, colleges of sciences and technical courses but for the disabled, such schools were very few

### **Problems of EFA in Realizing its Goals by 2015 on the Education of Persons with Special Abilities**

It is widely acknowledge fact that Nigerian Government efforts to get its citizens properly educated in line with the stated EFA Goals, the derivative targets set by EFA plan action (2001) and the MDG's target on education by 2015 may not yield the much desired results. Due to the following reasons

#### **Poor Funding of Education**

The biggest problem of education in general is that of funding. To this end. The African Network Campaign on EFA represented by Waruku Boyz (2012) has said a head to the 5<sup>th</sup> ordinary session of the conference of Ministry Education. African Union (COMEDAF) IN Abuja that, Nigeria is among the 26 African countries not likely to achieve the EFA target by 2015 because may African countries have not given premium to education in their budgeting proposals.

#### **Poor Enrolment**

Enrolment is one of the problem bedeviling the realization of EFA Goals especially persons with special disability. In the Northern part of the country most disabled persona roam about the stretch in the mane of begging. As such some special schools has to be close down or converted for other educational purposes UNESCO

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(2012) reported that “there are 20-40 million illiterates presently with 97% of poor Hausa – speaking girls child and handicapping conditions in Northern Nigeria”.

### **Problem of Infrastructure**

Despite heavy investment in educational infrastructure in Nigeria, current status of classrooms furniture’s, toilets, water, school administrative offices, laboratories etc. is deplorable. The general poor infrastructure facilities in education can also be attributed with poor infrastructural facilities in special schools. The World Bank (2006) has estimated that an additional 251,000 classrooms need to be constructed at a cost \$36billion.

### **Lack of Manpower**

Special schools have insufficiency of manpower needed to trained persons with special ability, the awareness was not created on the need to concentrate and to consider people with special needs.

### **Conclusion**

The realization of EFA Goals by 2015 and its impact on special population cannot be met. This is because of so many reasons which poses a stumbling block for achieving the EFA Goals by 2015. Parents with special children do not want to enroll them in schools because of their condition couple with poor funding of education. Therefore, realization of EFA Goals in Nigeria by 2015 with regards to people with special abilities can hardly be achieved because some important problems as mention above were not addressed.

### **Recommendations**

My recommendations are as follows:

1. A high level of understanding of the plight of persons with special needs is required by everyone in the society to enable Nigeria maximize the God-given potentials of special population.
2. There should be a gradual and sustained grassroot campaign to enroll special population in the mainstream of education at all levels so as to enhance National Development.
3. A quota for the employment of special population after graduation into political offices and strategic positions should be provided by all the stakeholders involve like NGO’s.
4. Adequate funding, scholarship, automatic admission should be provided to the special population. This will increase greater enrolment and participation of persons with special needs into special schools.
5. Adequate planning and conscious legislation should be available in order to solve the problems of persons with special needs.

6. There should be an outright ban on street begging so that rehabilitation center is established for adequate rehabilitation of a person with special need.
7. Any negative treatment to those with special abilities should be made punished by law.

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