

# Reviews and short reports

## Access and Quality of Special Educational Needs Service Delivery in Nigeria by prof. Florence Banku Obi

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In Ajobiwe, T. A., & Adebisi, B. A. Eds. (2013). *Access and quality of special educational needs service delivery in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Glory-Land Publishing Company.

Prof. Florence Banku Obi is a scholar of great repute. A professional special educator, who holds the views that 'what is worth doing is worth doing well'. This philosophy of hers is boldly articulated in the content of this paper.

In line with the global best practices and current trend in

Educational service delivery for persons with disabilities around the world, the writer explored the world wide clarion call to increase access and quality of education for the Nigerian special needs persons in particular and the world in general. She acknowledged the role of parents as stakeholders in the education sector as well as key players through the taxes they pay.

The global trend with regards to the need to increase access and quality in the provision of special educational services to millions of special needs children across the world is an urgent task and an obligation to nations that aim and mean well for their children and leaders of tomorrow. Referencing to Education For All declaration and the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action, (UNESCO, 1994), the author presented a debatable ground to stakeholders in the education sector looking at the

Nigerian scenario on the access to quality of educational service delivery and special needs children in Nigeria.

Forecasting into the future of access and quality in the provision of special education needs in Nigeria, she presented to readers a background to the educational policies and philosophy as they relate to education of Nigerian special needs children. The view of the author as portrayed in this article is that the philosophy and policy of special needs education in Nigeria sees education as 'instrument par excellence' for effecting national development (NPE, 1981, 1988, 2004). To buttress her point, the author provided an extract of a section of the policy which pictures the nation's philosophy of education with regards to special needs education. For instance, she observed that section 1 subsection 4 c of the 1988 and 2004 policy documents stated that "every Nigerian child shall have a right to equal educational opportunities irrespective of any real or imagined disabilities, each according to his or her ability". Whereas section 1 and section 5c of the philosophy states that "the Nigeria philosophy of education shall be based on the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the country across board both in and out the normal school system". Beautiful and promising as the philosophy appeared to hold for all Nigerians including the special needs children, the author noted some flaws with particular regards to implementation and observed some reservations on the sincerity of Government especially in Nigeria and her agencies responsible for the implementation of these well articulated policies. With pessimisms, the writer remarked that the policy and philosophy of Nigeria education is a laudable one and shall be a welcoming development if and whenever this shall be actually implemented upon for the benefits of Nigerian disabled children.

Again, presenting readers with more details on the education policy and philosophy of Nigeria, the author applauded the contents of sections referring to the special education services and programmes in Nigeria. The paper insisted that the contents of the policy are marred with several contradictions particularly to inclusion, integration as well as the use of special units and classes in regular schools.

Perhaps as a personal opinion or based on evidence in the field and professional experience, the author queried with indignation the idea by which Nigeria and many African countries education policies are informed and influenced by external drives rather than internal considerations and variables that may be stemming from the context of our own culture and social orientation.

On the current trend and best practices, the writer agreed wholeheartedly to the fact that inclusive education is the ideal option of making education accessible to the special needs children for better academic and social integration thereby opting out of segregation and institutionalization.

Other pertinent issues raised and ironed out in the paper included question of access and quality, the issue of best practices in special and general education, forging a collaborative partnership in special education service delivery, Virtual library and ac-

cess to special needs service provision, Technologies and persons with special needs, Legislation and access to special education service provision, Government efforts at access and quality among others.

In rounding off this discourse, the writer expertly drew the attention of all readers and professionals of the noble field of special needs education to the fact that the question of access and quality in the provision of special education services to the special need children is never synonymous with building more special schools or expanding existing ones nor merely placing special needs children in regular schools and classrooms but rather a total rethink, careful planning, adequate and appropriate funding, provision of basic infrastructure and material, Removal of all forms barriers, An access library, Access to appropriate technologies and a competitive curriculum that would eventually earn for the special needs child a recognition in the society.

Finally, the author sounds a note of warning to all on the danger of politicisation of these vital issues at the detriment of the teaming population of special needs children waiting to better their lives from this approach to educational service delivery.

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