

# **Social Inclusion and the Challenges/ Opportunities Facing Persons with Special Needs in our Community by A. I. Ajobiwe**

**Ewa James Abua**

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.

A. I. Ajobiwe, Ph.D is a lecturer at the Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria. She has published many articles at Local and International Journals.

In this write up, the author without mincing words x-rayed the fact that the special needs persons over the years have been excluded to a greater extent from many facets of the societal organizations, gatherings or in the decision making processes. Also, they (the special needs persons) do not get equal attention as compared to the non disabled in terms of education provision, adequate and appropriate personnel, facilities, training and/ or job placement. Therefore, the idea of social inclusion is a bold step at arousing the consciousness of stakeholders, professionals concerned with services provision, non- governmental organizations, religious and philanthropic bodies toward enhancing/ensuring the wellbeing of the special needs persons in our communities.

The author upholds that social inclusion emphasizes on issues such as access to services, good social network networks in terms of relationships, interactions and transactions, decent housing, adequate information and supports, as well as the ability to exercise basic rights. Hence, working for social inclusion implies working towards pro-

viding equal opportunities for everyone. The author then pointed out that a person or group of individuals is/are said to be socially excluded when they experienced any or all of the following:

- Unemployment
- Ignorance/negative attitudes
- Inadequate income
- Difficulties in participating in decision making situations such as community groups, local committees, at local and national government as well as disfranchisement.

The author bare out her mind that the special needs individuals in the Nigerian communities are beclouded with poverty, unemployment, ignorance/negative attitude, lack/inadequate and/or inappropriate educational facilities, poor public health care facilities and many other issues which help to promote social exclusion in the society.

The author identified the agents of social inclusion to include: The government; the family; the religious bodies; the school and professionals which she implore should promote social inclusion through their various programmes and by ensuring that the special needs persons are not only granted the opportunities for good education or appropriate rehabilitation and training, but should also be given the opportunity and encouragement to participate, as well as utilized all the skills acquired for their wellbeing and for the development of the society.

This according to the writer can be attained through:

- Adequate funding of special needs education programmes.
- Adequate provision of social/recreational facilities.
- Passing the employment policy into law which makes it paramount for government providing jobs for the special needs persons.
- The National Policy on Education should be given a legislative backing that will make it mandatory for the government to provide all the required services/facilities and as well ensure the services so provided get to the appropriate consumers (the special needs persons).

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