

Administration of Special Needs Education Programme in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja: Problems and Solutions

Ogunode Niyi Jacob¹, Deborah Jegede², Ajape Temitope Solomon³

^{1, 2, 3} University of Abuja, Nigeria

¹ogunodejacob@gmail.com

²jegededeborah30@gmail.com

³ajapetemitope@gmail.com

Abstract

In Nigeria, Special Needs Education programme is a very special programme designed for persons with disabilities and persons with Special Needs. The Special Needs Education programme is being implemented in all the 36 states and in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The administration of the Special Needs Education programme faces many problems across the country. This article discusses the problems facing the administration of special needs education programme in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Secondary data was used to support the points raised in the article. This study sourced secondary data from print material and online publication by recognized institutions and individual author. Special needs programme in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) faced with the problems of; inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, poor supervision, inadequate instructional materials, poor planning, institutional corruption, lack of data to plan and poor implementation of Special needs education policies. To solve these challenges, this article recommends: that the government should increase the funding of Special need education, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, employment of more professional teachers, provision of adequate instructional materials, ensure effective supervision and planning of the special need programme.

Keywords: *administration, special needs education, planning, programme, problems*

Introduction

The Federal Capital Territory Education Secretariat administers education in Federal Capital Territory. Federal Capital Territory Abuja is home to many educational institutions, both public and private schools. The educational system in Federal Capital Territory of Abuja includes basic education (nine years), post-basic/senior secondary education (three years), and tertiary education (four to six years, depending on the program of study). The other forms of education include mass education and special education. According to Nigeria's National Policy on Education (2013), basic education covers nine years of formal (compulsory) schooling comprising six years of elementary and three years of junior secondary education. Post-basic education includes three

years of senior secondary education. In Federal Capital Territory, planning of education for implementation of national plan document is handle by the Federal Capital Territory Education Secretariat. The Education Secretariat has the following departments: department of Administration and finance department of policy, planning, Research and Statistics, department of Quality Assurance, Department of Higher Education, department of special needs education and special units (Abubakar, & Ogunode 2021).

The Department of Policy, Planning, Research and Statistics in FCT education Secretariat handle planning of education in the territory and it is mandated with the following functions: i. it is the think-tank of the Secretariat to provide information required for daily decision making, policy planning and general management of education in the FCT. ii. Serves as the desk for the Secretariat's participation in national education policy meetings such as the Joint Consultative Committee on Education (JCCE), and the National Council on Education (NCE). It also coordinates the development and domestication of FCT specific education policies iii. It collates Education Secretariat's input to all ministerial platform presentations and reports on yearly education Score Card. iv. Responsible for coordination of Sector Level Strategic and Operational plans. v. Ensure that education data & information from all subsectors of education, for public & private sectors, regarding pupils, students, learners, institutions, facilities & resources are collected by the Department, analyzed & reported. Co-ordinates activities of EFA, SDG and Partnership in Education, including International Development partners (Abubakar, & Ogunode 2021, FCTES, 2020). Administration and Planning of education for FCT implementation of national plan guideline is done by the department of education in the federal capital authority development in collaboration with other agencies and education stakeholders in federal capital territory. The Federal Capital Territory is host to many educational institutions which include the early child education, basic education, junior secondary school, senior secondary school, higher institutions and other forms of education like the special needs education, adult education and gender education and nomadic education.

Special Needs Education is among the educational system in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, Nigeria. Special Needs Education is design to promote Special Needs Education sensitivity at all levels under Federal Capital Territory(FCT) policy on education for all Federal Capital Territory(FCT) residents regardless of their disabilities and to ensure Special Needs Education sensitivity in the establishment and delivery of all forms of education programmes in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT).The purpose and objectives of Special Needs Education in Nigeria and in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja according to National policy on Special Needs Education (2015) includes:

- i. To take care of total service delivery of the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child, irrespective of setting (school, home and hospital).
- ii. To provide adequate and qualitative education for all Persons with Special Needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavours.
- iii. To ensure that all Persons with Special Needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nation's socioeconomic and technological development.

The Special Needs Education Unit is saddled with the following functions:

- i. Ensures an effective implementation of Special Education Policies and Programs articulated by the Education Regulatory Bodies
- ii. Initiates and reviews periodically Policy Guidelines on the Establishment and Operations of Special Needs Institutions/Centers in the FCT-Abuja
- iii. Carries out all sorts of school inspection visits
- iv. Organizes and conducts capacity building workshops for teachers, school Administrators and Education Policy makers
- v. Undertakes consultancy services for persons with Special Needs, their parents, school Administrators, Teachers and others.
- vi. Seeks collaboration and partnership with other organizations within and outside Nigeria with the view to augment Government efforts in the Education of persons with Special Needs
- vii. Coordinates and relates directly to the Education Secretariat all the activities of Special Needs education from the Educational Boards, Agencies and Departments.
- viii. Attends Workshops/Seminars locally and internationally
- ix. Attends JCCE meetings to discuss issues related to the education of persons with Special Needs (FCTEDUSEC 2021). The special need education in Federal Capital Territory faces many challenges (Abubakar & Ogunode, 2021). The aim of this article is to discuss the problems facing the administration of Special Needs Education programme in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

Concept of the Administration

Educational leadership is the hub around which all activities in education rotate. The Federal Ministry of Education shall be the coordinator of government at the various levels. Therefore, for effective administration of the education of Persons with Special Needs in Nigeria, there shall be three major operational divisions which represent the three levels of government–Federal, State and Local Government. The Federal Ministry of Education shall coordinate the activities of State Ministries of Education. There shall be regular inspection and counseling at other levels of governments on matters relating to implementation of programmes for the education of Persons with Special Needs (National policy on Special Needs Education 2015).

The administrative structure of the education for Persons with Special Needs shall follow the existing administrative structure of the regular school system. Government, however, shall ensure that specialists of the education of Persons with Special Needs are available at Zonal, State and Local Government levels.

- i. Each State shall establish at least one diagnostic and assessment centre for early identification, analysis and placement of Persons with Special Needs to determine proper and adequate intervention.

- ii. Each Local Government Area shall establish at least one pilot inclusive setting to accommodate Persons with Special Needs to meet their needs (National policy on Special Needs Education 2015).

The government shall provide the instructional materials for the Special Needs Education. Instructional materials constitute an integral part of the conception of the physical facilities. It includes general classroom materials, clinical services materials, diagnostic and assessment materials etc. reading text, films, educational soft-wares and technological soft-wares. The supply of instructional materials shall therefore correspond with the Special Needs services being rendered. Thus, the schools, the units, centers, clinics, and laboratories shall be designed to deliver Special Needs services that are enriched to staff, equipment and materials in order to give equal opportunity for optimum or maximum development of human potential and intelligence through quality programme services ((National policy on Special Needs Education 2015).

Concept of Special Needs Education Programme

According to National policy on Special Needs Education (2015) Special Needs Education and Rehabilitation Services (SNERS) is a formal Education given to Persons with Special Needs. It is tailored towards Individualized Educational Programme (IEP). It is rendered at school, home and hospital bound settings and can be classified into three categories: Persons with Disabilities at-risk children/youth and Gifted and Talented Children/Youth. Obani (2004) views Special Education as the education that is concerned with children who have been adversely affected to a greater extent by one or more of these factors. Special Education deals with children with special learning problems, difficulties and needs. It applies special methods and uses special equipment that takes the special problem of the children into consideration. Obani (2004) observes that Special Education looks beyond the ordinary methods and provision of the conventional school system in order to tackle the problems affecting the handicapped child's ability to learn effectively. Special education is "Child Centered and not Subject Centered". According to Mark (2015) the objectives of special education include:

- a) To protect each student's condition from further aggravation by arranging a programme of activities within his limitations.
- b) To correct or ease the student's remediable weaknesses or misalignments.
- c) To assist the student in understanding and accepting his own limitations.
- d) To develop the best possible organic vigor or condition in view of the individual's limitations.
- e) To develop skill and knowledge of recreational sports and games suitable or adaptable to the individual's limitation.
- f) To develop the student's knowledge of and appreciation of good body mechanics and efficiency.
- g) To help students make satisfactory social and emotional adjustments to problems imposed by their disabilities,
- k) To help students gain securities through improved function and increased ability to meet the physical demands of daily living. The purpose and objectives of Special

Needs Education according to National policy on Special Needs Education (2015) includes:

- i. To take care of total service delivery of the physical, mental and emotional disabilities of the Nigerian child, irrespective of setting (school, home and hospital).
- ii. To provide adequate and qualitative education for all Persons with Special Needs in all aspects of national developmental endeavours.
- iii. To ensure that all Persons with Special Needs develop at a pace commensurate with their abilities and to contribute to the nation's socioeconomic and technological development.

The following shall be provided for the administration of Special Needs Education:

Special facilities that are free of architectural barriers or have appropriate architectural modification, Special equipment and materials, Resource centers, Diagnostic and assessment centers, Supportive services, Personnel development, Scholarships for Persons with Special Needs, Workshops and seminars, Special library, Transportation, Administrative and management services and Monitoring and data collection and records.

Problems facing Administration Special Needs Education Programme in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

Special need programme in Federal Capital Territory (FCT) faces the problems which include; inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, poor supervision, inadequate instructional materials, poor planning, institutional corruption, lack of data to plan and poor implementation of Special needs education policies.

Inadequate Funding

Inadequate funding is an enormous problem preventing effective administration of special needs education programme in Federal Capital Territory, (FCT). The allocation released for implementing the special needs education programme annually is not adequate to implement the programme. Inadequate funding is a problem facing the entire educational system in Nigeria. The federal, states government and local government are not will to implement the recommendation of 26% UNESCO for educational sector administration in all the developing countries. This inability of the government at every level to implement the recommendation is affecting the administration of education, especially the special needs education programme. Nwoagba (2013) identified funding as the major constraint and barrier to the growth of special needs education in Nigeria. He went further submitted that coordination of services and offering individual supports to children with special needs demand additional money and inadequate funding hinders professional development in special needs education. In most cases, the administrators of special needs education do not access the fund for special needs, making the children with special needs to suffer unnecessarily in the areas of infrastructure, equipment and learning materials.

Inadequate Infrastructural Facilities

Inadequate infrastructural facility is a very big challenge facing the administration of special needs education in Nigeria and especially in Federal Capital Territory. There are inadequate facilities in the special education schools in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The specialized facilities designed for the teaching and learning in the special needs education programme are in short supply in the school. The school lacks basic facilities such as Special Needs laboratories, clinics and resource centers within the various existing centers/schools with the provision of virtual learning resources, hyperlinks and computer networks. Lack of facilities and materials has been one barrier to special needs education in Nigeria. The lack of support services pose barrier to enrolment and education of persons with special needs. Evidence suggests clearly that most students with special needs cannot enroll into special or regular schools in the country, as they may not receive support services to assist them in the schools (Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia 2014, Anumonye, 1991; Eleweke, 1997). The lack of facilities and support services for effective inclusion imply that many academically qualified students with special needs, especially students with visual and hearing impaired, may not attend regular neighborhood schools or Nigerian colleges and universities. Data have it that the provision of support services in public special and inclusive schools are lacking. At the tertiary level, Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia (2014), Adeniran (1998) and Akinpelu (1999) observed that many students enrolled into the colleges and universities in Nigeria were frustrated out of their programmes or perform poorly because of the nonexistence of support services. The inability of the government to provide adequate infrastructural facilities is affecting the administration of the special needs schools. Shortage of infrastructural facilities in many educational institutions is because of inadequate funding, poor facilities planning, corruption, increase in population and poor maintenance culture.

Inadequate Professional Teachers

Inadequate professional teacher is another challenge preventing effective administration of Special Needs Education in Nigeria. Professional teachers trained to teach in special need school are inadequate in the country and this is affecting the administration of the programme. Teachers are key to implementing teaching programme. The place of teachers cannot be replaced in the administration of special need programme. The administration of education is influenced by the availability of qualified professional teachers. So, the shortage of professional teachers is a problem facing the administration of the special need education programme in Federal Capital Territory, (FCT). Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia (2014) observes that manpower employment and development is one of the major barriers to the special needs education and its policies at national and international levels. Universities and Colleges turn out graduates in disability related fields every year but ever remained under-used and unemployed. Special Needs education teachers, psychologists, physiotherapists, social workers, Nurses, Doctors, vocational instructors etc are not really employed directly to take care of educational, motor, social, psychological, vocational needs of persons with disabilities. Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia 2014) and Vandeh (2003) disclosed that the successful education of students with special needs requires the involvement of the different professionals, who will be of help in the areas of

identification, referral, diagnoses, treatment and provision of appropriate educational services. John (2017) identified shortage of teachers, inadequate instructional materials, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate funding and poor quality of education as the problems facing the special education across the country. There are factors responsible for the inadequate professional teachers in the educational institutions today. Poor manpower planning, corruption, inadequate funding, limited teachers training institutions and poor motivation of teachers.

Poor Supervision

Poor supervision of the special need education programme is also another challenge hindering the development and implementation of the programme in Nigeria. The supervision of special needs education programme is weak, like other forms of educational institutions. The supervision system and monitoring and evaluation team set up for effective supervision of the programme are ineffective and weak. Supervision is key to the realization of educational objectives. When supervision is ineffective, it affects the effective of the programme. The realization of the objectives of the programme becomes difficult. Factor that account for poor supervision of special needs education programme in Federal Capital Territory and other part of Nigeria include poor funding of supervision, lack of transport facilities, insecurity, shortage of supervisors, lack of capacity development of supervisors and shortage of supervision materials.

Inadequate Instructional Materials

Inadequate instructional material is a major problem affecting the administration of special needs education programme in Nigeria and in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The special need school lack adequate instructional materials to deploy for teaching and learning. Many teachers and students do not have adequate instructional materials and aids to support teaching and learning in the school. The shortage of this material is affecting the administration of special needs programme in Federal Capital Territory. Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia (2014) submitted that hearing and vision aids, electronically adapted mobility devices, are continuing barrier to providing equal access for education of persons with special needs, and the facilities and equipment needed for vocational and recreational education are inadequate or inexistent. There are slow efforts by federal and state governments to gain the equipment, materials and learning aids and in some states as governments differ somehow in the help given to persons with special needs (Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharia 2014).

Poor Planning

Nigeria educational system is suffering from effective planning. The educational system in Nigeria lack sound planning and effective supervision. Poor planning of educational system in Nigeria is responsible for poor implementation of educational programme. The entire educational system include the special needs education is poorly planned. The attitude of Nigerian political actors towards educational planning is not encouraging. Educational planning in Nigeria have not been priorities as other sub-unit of education and this is affecting the development of educational planning. Educational planning is key to the realization of educational objectives. The poor planning of special needs programme in Nigeria and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) is responsible for the

poor implementation of the programme. Poor planning of the special needs programme is also responsible for maladministration of the programme. The poor planning of the programme is responsible for shortage of professional teachers, inadequate infrastructural facilities, shortage of instructional materials, inadequate funding and poor supervision. The planning method and approaches adopted for the planning were not suitable. The approaches and methods fail to take into consideration key factors like population explosion and scarcity of funds. The inability to plan the programme well at the first stage is affecting effective implementation of the programme in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). According to Abubakar & Ogunode (2021) submits that there are many challenges facing the planning of education in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria, especially the planning of special education.

Institutional Corruption

Institutional corruption is another problem facing administration of education in Nigeria. Corruption has penetrated the educational institutions. Allocation meant for the provision of educational services like planning, supervision, quality assurance and procurement of infrastructural facilities are mismanaged and misappropriated by some officials and political officeholders. The high rate of corruption in the ministries, departments and agencies of education is affecting the administration of educational services such as the special need programme in Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Lack of Data to Plan

Lack of data to plan and take decision is a major problem facing the administration of the special needs education programme in Nigeria and in Federal Capital Territory and in Nigeria. There is no data on the real number of people with special needs that needs educational services. There are no data on special needs enrolment and teachers' needs. The inability to access quality and reliable data is affecting the administration of the Special Needs Programme in Federal Capital Territory and in Nigeria. Noun, (2005) observes that data collection is an important variable of consideration while setting targets. It is based on the data that any target can be quantitatively set. However, without data, realistic target cannot be set. While gathering data, there is a need to ensure that the mode of collecting such data is to a great extent reliable and consistent with the set target. Invariably, reliability and validity of data must be taken into consideration as much as targets are being set. Fabunmi, (2005) on his part noted that in Nigeria, most planning officers still use the manual information system to plan a system that is fast becoming outdated in the modern world, and this serves as barrier to effective educational planning, once information is still manually retrieved. But in the days of computerized management information system, information retrieval is adequate. Ogunode (2021) submits that lack of educational data for educational planners constitutes a very big problem to effective educational planning in Nigeria.

Poor Implementation of Special Needs Education policies

Poor implementation of special needs education policies is another big challenge facing the administration of the special need education programme in Nigeria and in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Policies are planned and designed to realize the objective of education. Educational policies help in addressing various challenges facing

education delivery in the country. Policies designed for implementing special needs education programme have not been implemented in the various states across the federation. Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharía (2014) observed that Article 3, Salamanca Framework for Action (1994) advocates that “schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social and linguistic conditions”. This statement formulated the very new direction of special needs children with the regular school environment. Since 1994, developing countries of the world, including Nigeria, has been very slow in implementing this framework, probably because of poor funding and lack of political will. This had been a barrier to the increase in the participation of students with disabilities in schools and in treating all learners based on equality and non-discrimination (Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharía 2014, Adebisi, 2010). There are many factors responsible for the poor implementation of the special needs education policies in Nigeria. According to Onlinenigeria, (2007), one major problem of implementing inclusive programmes for persons with special needs in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Inadequate funds are affecting the administration of special needs education programme in Nigeria. Rufus, Jummai, Suraju & Eucharía (2014) also claimed that the shortage of funds leads to shortage of resources, inadequate facilities, unemployment of personnel, etc. For persons with disabilities to receive adequate supports, inclusiveness, required materials and resources, etc funding will play prominent roles. UNICEF (2017) concluded that lack of funding and political will is responsible for poor educational programme implementation in Nigeria.

Way Forward

To address these problems identified in this article, this study made the following recommendations: that the government should increase the funding of Special need education, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, employment of more professional teachers, provision of adequate instructional materials, ensure effective supervision and planning of the special need programme.

- 1) Government should increase the funding of the special need education programme in Federal Capital Territory.
- 2) The government should provide adequate infrastructural facilities in the special need school in the territory
- 3) The government should employ more professional teachers and deploy to the special need school in the territory
- 4) More instructional materials should be provided in the special need school in Federal Capital Territory
- 5) There should be effective supervision by the relevant agencies and department to ensure delivery of quality education in the school
- 6) The government should ensure that special need programme are well planned before implementation to avoid implementation programme
- 7) Data on special need education should be generated and aid effective planning and decision-taking process.

- 8) The government should ensure all Special Needs educational policies are implemented and formulated.

Conclusion

The Special Needs Education is a special education programme formulated and designed for persons with different disabilities and special needs. The key to the realization of the objectives of the programme depends on effective administration. There are challenges facing the administration of Special Needs Education is a special education programme in Nigeria in specifically in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This article discussed the problems facing the administration of special need education programme in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The following were identified; inadequate funding, inadequate infrastructural facilities, inadequate professional teachers, poor supervision, inadequate instructional materials, poor planning, institutional corruption, lack of data to plan and poor implementation of Special Needs education policies as the administrative problems facing the administration of Special Needs programme in Federal Capital Territory (FCT). To solve this challenges, this article recommends that the government should increase the funding of Special need education, provide adequate infrastructural facilities, employment of more professional teachers, provision of adequate instructional materials, ensure effective supervision and planning of the special need programme.

Acknowledgment

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