

Maximizing the Economic Efficiency of Children with Exceptionality through Qualitative and Functional Education

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Abstract

Since it is widely accepted that there is ability in disability, then the innate talents and ability of children with exceptionality must be developed for them to live a life meaningful to themselves on one hand to their society on the other. This paper examines how a result oriented education programs will enhance economic efficiency of exceptional children thereby minimizing street begging which has made exceptional persons undermine their potentials, leading to loose of dignity and integrity becoming nuisance to the public and as a result deserve no respect and unable to make any meaningful contribution to the economic development of their society, The paper concludes by giving some suggestions and recommendations for enhancement of economic efficiency of exceptional children.

Keywords: Exceptional Children, Functional Education

1. Introduction

Although the existence of deviant human behavior and development aroused curiosity and focused interest on normal and development, mystical and super naturalistic interpretations of deviations persisted long after natural

istic explanations of the more ordinary behavioral events and developmental sequences had been generally accepted. It seems that belief in evil or benign spirit as the cause of disability has been evident from the beginning of recorded history. The substitution of naturalistic for supernatural explanations of the unusual in human behavior and development has been a slow process and is not complete even today.

The substitution of a naturalistic for a supernatural explanation of the origins and nature of the deviant characteristic of an individual did not solve the problem of the nature of the person. In some respects, the demonological conception of the exceptional person was a qualitative, as contrasted with a quantitative one.

A qualitative conception of individuals is that they constitute separate and, in many ways, distinct categories or classes of people. As separate categories of people, they are considered to have traits and characteristics which make them fundamentally different from the general run of humanity. The titles of certain books and courses – the “psychology of” the deaf, etc - suggest that there is a separate kind or category of psychology which explains these categories of people and that such explanations are fundamentally different from the psychology of normal people (Telford & sawrey, 1977)

Such a view implies that a separate and unique set of conceptual categories or ways of thinking is required to understand and deal with exception individuals. They are supposed to learn, perceive, think, and adjust in ways which are unique to them; therefore they cannot be understood in terms of those principles of learning, thinking, perceiving, and adjusting which have been derived from and are applicable to normal people.

The quantitative conception of exceptionality holds that the differences between the deviant groups, on the hand and the normal, on the other, are differences only of degree and not of kind. Thus, the perpetual, conceptual, learning, and ideational processes of all people- whether normal or deviant- are fundamentally the same. We all learn, retain, recall, perceive, think, and make personal and social adjustments according to the same general principles and patterns, but some of us do these things faster, better, more accurately, or more appropriately than others.

Who are the exceptional children?

Literatures abound on classifications and categories of those experience different form of disabilities (MBA, 1991; Meyen, 1990; Gearheart and Weisham, 1980). Such disabilities are explained in terms of deafness, blindness, mental retardation, physical and health impairment, emotional or behavior disorder.

Disable child is operationally defined as a person below 18 years, who is unable to function as could naturally be expected. Put differently, he or she has a defect that makes it difficult for him or her to function

properly. If the convention on the rights of a child recognizes that “a disabled child has a right to special care, (special) education, and (special) training to help him or her... achieve the greatest...” then, the child must be an exceptional child with exceptional needs, and could be simply called a ‘special child’. (Biodun Solomon, 2000)

Exceptional children can therefore be operationally defined as persons under 18 years, who require exceptional care in order to function effectively. This definition encompasses children who are mentally retarded, physically handicapped, visually impaired, hearing impaired, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, gifted and talented. Exceptional children can then be defined as those with intrinsic or extrinsic problems, which require adaptation in their educational programs to achieve their maximum potential. In other words, an handicapped person with an intrinsic problem can be taught to function optimally if the society in which he lives makes provision for his peculiar needs (e.g. wheelchair, hearing aids), while a child living with extrinsic problems such as extreme poverty, suffers severe deprivations which invariably limit his ability to learn (Akinterinula, 1997).

Society’s response to exceptional children has come a long way. As our concept of equality, freedom and justice have expanded, children with disabilities and their families have moved from exclusion and isolation to inclusion and participation. Although the speed of these changes has been described as a painfully slow process of integration and participation (Cremins, 1983), the history of special education can be summarized as one of progressive integration (Reynolds, 1989).

Empowering the exceptional children

Empowerment of children (the exceptional one inclusive) is an essential duty any nation owes its citizenry. Education, basically offers the foundation for empowerment. Ejiogu (1991), describes education as an instrument par excellence for affecting national development and a dynamic instrument for change. Education is the best legacy any parent can leave for his child. It is the most valuable possession anybody can have, and a very important ingredient of changing an individual’s life.

However, in Africa and some other third world countries, illiteracy rate amongst exceptional children is still very high. Many exceptional children do not have access to education. This has led to the poor economic status of disabled people, lack of confidence and self-worth, lack of participation in decision making, this is also responsible for their street begging. It then means that if exceptional children would have access to education, some of the social ills like street begging would be reduced. For them to be economically empowered, they should be armed with appropriate skills. These skills only come through a functional, special and vocational education program.

Vocational education & empowerment of exceptional children

Even though, disable persons all over the world including Nigeria, are gradually but steadily becoming up by themselves as far as their economic and social emancipation in the society is concerned, the discovery is still made that a very large percentage of the disabled population are losing out of this new consciousness due to their lack of access to vocational rehabilitation which for all practical purposes can be described as the viable alternative to the continued marginalization of the disabled. Vocational rehabilitation is a process of restoring a disabled individual to the maximum usefulness of which he or she is capable physically, mentally and vocationally. The range of rehabilitation services may naturally vary from country to country, and from locality to another in the same country.

However, services commonly made available and which should form the basis of any standard and effective program include:

- I Full evaluation of the disabled person, include medical diagnosis to determine the extent of the extent of the person’s handicap and to relate this to the kind of work such person will be able to do.
- ii. Guidance & counseling services for the purpose of vocational adjustment.
- iii. Surgical, psychiatric and hospital care and therapy, if these are necessary to reduce or eliminate the handicap.
- iv. Supply of mobility aids such as artificial limbs and other prosthetic and orthotic devices.
- v. Providing training for the right job, for the disabled persons, including personnel adjustment training and remedial education where these are necessary.
- vi. Providing all other services including sheltered workshops for the severely disabled and work adjustments centers for those who need such facilities.
- vii. Payment of maintenance allowance to the disabled and provision of transportation for him during the training period.
- viii. Provision of equipment, tools, and licenses needed by the disabled individual for work as trainee employee of an established independent business entrepreneur.

- ix. Placement services including follow up on placement; and
- x. Finally, training of special personnel e.g. vocational rehabilitation counselor, instructors, interpreter for the deaf and brailist for the blind.

Conclusion

The education provided for the exceptional children is incomplete until the job-ready exceptional children are given employment thereby securing the empowerment. Getting Nigerians to employ exceptional children requires enacting enabling laws. Employing these children is not enough. There should be supportive services aimed at providing them with the needed assistance and beefing up their knowledge where necessary. Consequent upon this, the exceptional children, if lifted from the quagmire of disability through functional, qualitative education and gainful employment, can achieve higher state of existence.

It is therefore imperative for affirmative action to be taken at all levels local, state and federal to provide access to education and gainful employment for the exceptional children. This affirmative action will require substantial resource commitment and political will to implement. The implementing agencies and individuals should be carefully chosen to ensure success and avoid delays and frustration in the process

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