

**EXPECTATIONS OF PUBLIC AND NATIONAL LIBRARIES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE
EDUCATION AT THE PRIMARY AND POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION LEVEL**

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Abstract

This paper examines the expectations of Public and National Libraries towards inclusive education at the Primary and Post-Primary Education Level. The need for integrating libraries into the scheme of inclusive education in Nigeria is becoming more critical in order to align with demand of contemporary society and global philosophy of giving every member of the society a sense of belonging. To actualize the fundamental objective of inclusive education, expectations are high for the various sectors and stakeholders in the educational domain. This paper focused on x-raying the expectations of Public and National Libraries as a social institution towards realization of inclusive education at the Primary and Post-Primary Education Level in Nigeria. The paper highlights on the concept of inclusive education, the rationale for inclusive education in national development, the expectations of public and national libraries in inclusive education at the primary and post-primary level. Recommendations were made based on the identified challenges.

Keywords: Education, Public Libraries, National Libraries, Inclusive Education Primary and Post-Primary Education

Introduction

Education is the bedrock for growth, the key to development, the greatest investment and asset and enhances sustainable development in a nation and the libraries as the educational tool for sustainable development has a great role to play towards the realization of the broad goals of education (Iroka and Ndulaka, 2018). Education is a potent instrument for development of the individual and the society at large (Omede & Danladi, 2016). According to Asian Development Bank (2010), better education, it is said, and more of it, will reduce poverty, promote democracy and social justice, reduce intolerance and conflict, spread the benefits of information and communication technologies, guarantee a sustainable future- and ensure that all of humankind is included in those achievements.

Education for learner experiencing disabilities is undergoing revolutionary change (Bunch, 2008). Special education is conceptualized as the type of educational practice in which learners treat admitted and provided with education that is commensurate to the state of the learner (Eunice & Orodho, 2014). One among the various forms of special education is inclusive education. Inclusive education is a symbol of respect for all of humanity. The genesis of inclusive education can be traced from the concept of special education.

Inclusive education represents a significant change in the world of school and more generally of all the educational settings, to promote the integration of students with special needs in the group of their peers,

schools are required to adapt to accommodate a heterogeneous group of students with a variety of needs (Dipace, 2013). Inclusive education is on the global agenda to attract the involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders (Mugambi 2017). The implementation of inclusion in Nigeria will inevitably create new and increased demands on special education, as well as other stakeholders (Ajuwon, 2016).

Inclusion involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures, and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children (UNESCO, 2009). The issue of equality and inclusion has been on the international agenda for a number of decades now. This has been demonstrated by the different frameworks for action in order to address the different forms of inequality and disparities in education (Samkange, 2013). However, there are different stakeholders that have special roles to play in the actualization of the inclusive education agenda and education in general. One of such is the library.

Libraries have since ages been associated with education. Ogunsola (2008) posited that the development of education and growth of libraries are highly synonymous. They serve as veritable tool for sustainable development through the support they offer to the educational sector (Iroka & Ndulaka, 2018). Thus, Libraries in general and public libraries in particular, play important role in all aspects of societal development, especially when viewed against its user, which consist of all categories of people in the society (Saleh & Hasisi, 2011). Libraries provide the platform on which successful education systems are built through the provision of access to information. Fundamentally, libraries and librarians are obligated to acquire, organize, and make information accessible to all categories of users regardless of their age, status, gender, ability, or even disability. In other words, the ability to provide equal and nondiscriminatory access to library resources and services is the hallmark of modern librarianship. Phil, Carlsten and Kooiji, (2017) opined that Libraries over the years have been saddled with the responsibilities of providing information resources to users irrespective of their status, races, background etc. Libraries are a part and partial of education system as hub of information resources and service. Libraries are differentiated learning arenas characterized by multiplicity in content, and from an educational perspective, they are treasures that cannot be ignored.

Libraries constitutes the collective memories and knowledge of peoples and civilizations, complex and multiple library resources can potentially engage pupils with very diverse abilities and social, linguistic, historical, cultural and gender backgrounds (Pihl, Carlsten & Kooij, 2017). However, some people are most times left out in the information world and they are those are physically and mentally challenged. In this part of the world, the physically and mentally challenged are mostly not considered when planning on projects such as building schools, libraries etc Despite their challenge, some individuals still want to achieve their dreams and aspirations by getting educated in schools just like other normal children. Iwu-James Izuagbe Itsekor Fagbohun Asaolu and Nwokeoma (2018) also noted that children living with one form of physical challenge or another often receive less attention. They are denied access to a quality education as a result of their disabilities.

Nevertheless, there are different types of libraries which include national libraries, public libraries, special libraries, academic libraries, school libraries etc. These libraries occupy central position in the overall education development in any nation. However, it is the intent of this paper to examine the expectations of public and national libraries towards inclusive education at the primary and post-primary education level.

Literature Review

Inclusion

Inclusion means that students with special needs met in a mainstream education system that embraces a wide diversity of learners. It is a process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all children, youth, and adults through increasing participation in learning cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion within and from education (Mugambi, 2017). Inclusionary practices are anchored on the principle of fundamental human rights and fundamental human rights here implies all students, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities have a right to be educated in the same classroom setting where possible (Oladele, Ogunwale & Dawat, 2016). Broadening the definition of inclusion beyond disabilities to cover all barriers to education was therefore seen as a way to profoundly transform education

systems and learning environments, get them to welcome and respond to difference and diversity and genuinely achieve education for all (ADB, 2010).

Inclusion, as noted by Olofunke and Oluremi (2014) may be partial or full. Full inclusion is the integration of all students, even those that require substantial educational and behavioural supports and services to be successful in regular classes, and the elimination of segregated special classes. Partial inclusion on the other hand represents a situation where students with special needs are educated in regular classes but when there is need for any special service like speech therapy, these students with special needs are pulled out of the regular classroom for these special services. Full inclusion means persons with disabilities will be in the regular classroom with their non-disabled counterparts. In this instance, the curriculum and required facilities would be adapted to suit the needs of persons with disabilities (Oladele, Ogunwale & Dafwat, 2016).

The issue of equality and inclusion has been on the international agenda for number of decades now (Samkange, 2013). This has been demonstrated by the different frameworks for action in order to address the different forms of inequality and disparities in education. Ford (2013) citing Gilhool (1989) refers to inclusion as the practice of students with disabilities learning alongside their peers in general education classroom. Fourie (2007) sees social inclusion as all efforts and policies to promote equality of opportunity to people from all circumstances and from all socially excluded categories. According to Ajuwon (2008), supporters of inclusion use the term to refer to the commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he/she would otherwise attend. It involves bringing the ancillary services to the child, and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students).

The goal of inclusive education is to allow every student the chance to learn and participate in a class that provides challenges and opportunities for success (Dipace, 2013). In line with UNESCO policy guidelines on inclusion, it is seen as a “process of addressing and responding to the diversity in the needs of all children, youth, and adults through increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing and eliminating exclusion with and from education (UNESCO, 2009).

Inclusive Education

Inclusive education has been internationally recognized as a philosophy for attaining equity, justice and equality for all children, especially those who have been traditionally excluded from mainstream education for reasons of disability, ethnicity, gender or other characteristics. Inclusive education is not a new idea. Communities have practiced inclusion for centuries and it is important to acknowledge and build on this wherever possible, so that inclusion becomes sustainable, with community ownership and involvement (Stubbs, 2008).

Inclusive in education is an approach to educate students with special educational needs and under the inclusion model, students with special needs spend most or all their time with non-disabled students (Nandini & Taji, 2014). Inclusive education is a multifaceted concept that requires educators at all levels of their systems to attend to vision, placement, curriculum, assessment, teaching acceptance, access, support, resources and leadership (Mitchell, 2015). Inclusive education is a process for increasing participation and reducing exclusion, in a way that effectively responds to the diverse needs of learners. Inclusive education system means that the whole education system considers the measures it must take to be able to provide an appropriate education with all children learning together. It supports the right to equal access opportunities to education. It rejects any type of segregation or exclusion of learners for whatever reason and refers to placement in education (Soriano, Watkins & Ebersold, 2017).

However, Oluka & Egbo (2014) citing Ozoji (2005) identified the goals of inclusive education as: to provide education for children for children with diverse learning needs within their structured school community; to make special needs children active members of the school community and then to help them achieve quality educational outcomes and to achieve social competencies; to build a supportive school community that is able to identify and minimize barriers to learning and participation; to educate more children better; to ensure successful learning and social experience competence; To empower children who are hitherto excluded and separated (or isolated); to enable students participate in mainstream education to

the best of their abilities; To build inclusive schools that can respond to diverse needs; to study the pressures that lead to some people in schools to feel excluded and separated; to attend imaginatively to diverse learning needs in the classrooms; to ensure improvement of student learning outcomes; to develop exemplary units of planning for diversity and to understand this diversity and to dismantle barriers to access and participation and facilitate achievement in scholarly and training.

Furthermore, Wosu, Iwundu and Ubani (2016), posit that the aims of special education are to: pursue a programme of inclusiveness and access in education; equalize educational opportunities for all children, irrespective of their physical, sensory, mental psychological or emotional disabilities; provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation and provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented children to develop their talents, natural endowments and traits at their own pace in the interest of national development amongst others.

Public and National Libraries

Public libraries are established to offer services to the communities where they are built. These service has to do with the provision of what people need in libraries, such service include the creations, collection, processing, storage, retrieval and dissemination of information. They support the process of learning to read and promoting education (Ekere & Ugwuanyi, 2011). Eze (2015) sees public library services as relating to any assistance or help offered to the public library users including the IDPs to enable them use the resources and facilities to satisfy their information needs.

The sole responsibility of establishing a public library is vested on the government (Federal, state and local government), with the sole objective to provide an enabling environment for the people to have access to information which is vital for the development of the individual and the society at large. Users of public libraries encompass all a members of a given community where one particular public library is located. It is in this regard that public libraries are commonly referred to as omnibus because their clientele are undefined; they cut across all sections of the society including the literate adults, children, illiterates, neoliterates, mental derailed etc. (Agu, 2014).

A national library on the other hand is a library especially established by the national government of a country to serve as the prominent repository of information for that country (Uzoigwe, 2017).

Rationale for Inclusive Education in National Development

According to Boyi (2013), in all nations, inclusive education remains the instrument for effective national development. Here in Nigeria, development is championed through education, which is often assumed to have significant influence. He sees education as the cornerstone of achieving a sustainable national development. Also, education provides consciousness, awareness and enlightenment to individuals in order to properly pursue their aspirations and yearnings. Without one-to-one specialized instruction, disabled students would simply not learn and futures would be scarified (Ferguson, 2008). Inclusive education becomes important for every community member to access education as this will lead to an increase in social and political awareness, heightened aspiratory self-assurance and assertiveness (Olofunke & Oluremi, 2014).

ADB (2010) justifying the necessity of inclusive education, noted that it improved the efficiency and cost-benefit of education systems; it promote economic, social and political development, it promote social cohesion and inclusion, it fulfill internationally mandated goals, and help in realizing human right. There is great nexus between quality education and national development. Quality education is a variable tool for scientific discoveries, national development and transformation of a greater society to a greater height (Thom-otuya & Inko-tariah, 2016). The quality of education in Nigeria can be enhanced for national development if there can be a synergy of all stakeholders in education.

Providing an inclusive education to all is necessary because it is linked to human, economic, and social development goals (Mugambi, 2017). Sambo and Bwoi (2015) expressed that in Nigeria, inclusion still remains in the realm of theory and far from practice. Special needs education in Nigeria is still grappling

with problems of policy implementation, an environment that is not conducive for practice and a lackadaisical attitude of the people and government.

As noted by Garuba (2003), the inclusion movement believes that children with special needs should be placed in the regular school classroom which they would have otherwise attended, if they had been normal children. In other words, each child belongs to the regular classroom and therefore, there should be no condition imposed, to exclude him/her from that environment. According to Olofunke and Oluremi (2014), it is also discovered that when put into proper practice, inclusive education, all students attend and are welcome by their neighborhood schools and are supported to learn, contribute and participate in all aspects of the life of the school.

Akinbola (2011) opined that given the importance of education in any society, it would be a great disservice to exclude a segment of society from this benefit. He noted that in Nigeria, children with disability have been systematically segregated and accommodated only in special schools separate from their peers who have no disabilities. Secluded education therefore should be discouraged while inclusive education should be encouraged. Inclusive education as noted by Garuba (2003) promotes a sense of cooperation and the feeling of togetherness in the learning; promotes favorable completion among school children of different abilities, endowment and background; it also provides a means of building a cooperate school community, where all are accommodated and able to participate. Inclusive education therefore, is important in the development of Nigerian communities because bringing student with and without special needs together show the younger generation that a diverse group of people make up a community and better than another (Olufunke & Oluremi, 2014).

Expectations of Public and National Libraries in Inclusive Education at the Primary and Post – Primary Level

Libraries ensure lifelong education by providing various information resources by resources they also support education by providing supplementary textbooks, reference material and even non-print materials (Iroka and Ndulaka, 2018). The mission of the public library includes meeting the learning, recreational and informational needs of their users. They provide an open learning environment for the community. Ifijeh, Iwu-James & Adebayo (2016) posit that one of the most important role public libraries can play in digital inclusion is provision of internet services to users. According to Sankange (2013), the concept of “*equality of opportunity*” focuses on the provision of educational resource to all regardless of the level of ability. It is premised on the understanding that the state has an obligation to create conditions and opportunities for citizens to fully develop their skills without hindrance emanating from different form of discrimination.

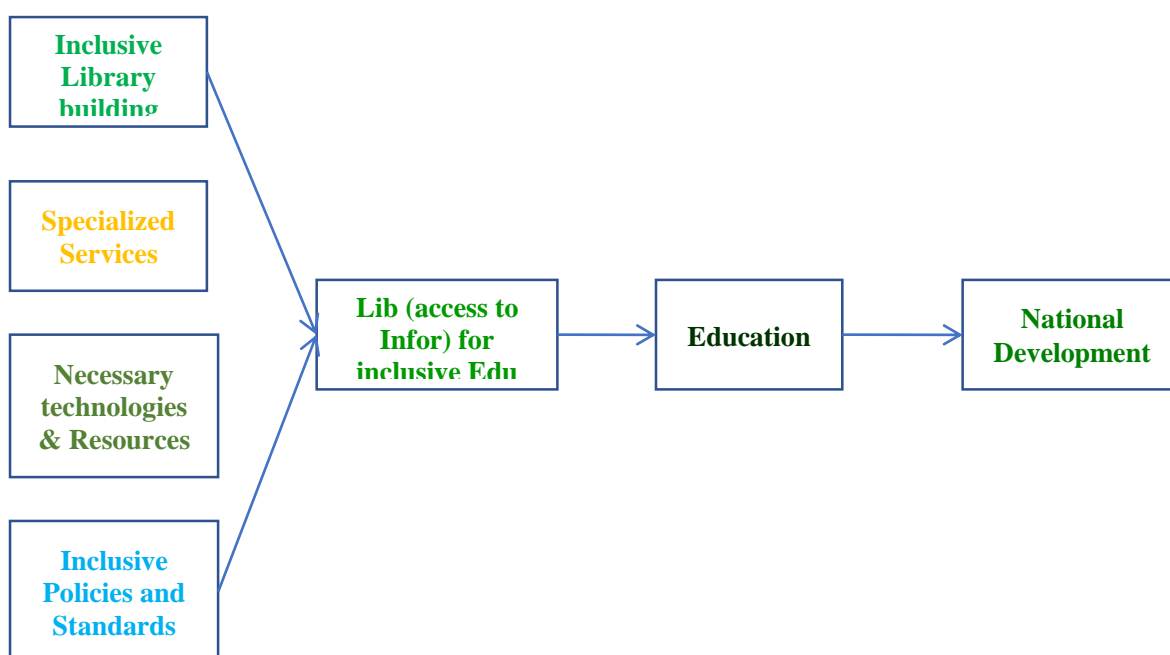
Nevertheless, the expectations of public and national libraries in inclusive education at the primary and post primary level include:

Specifically, public and national libraries are expected to provide the following library services in line with the ideology of inclusive education at the primary and post-primary education levels.

- Provision of information resources relevant to needs of students and pupils.
- Provision of handicapped library services to cater for the information needs of the pupils and students that are physically challenged.
- Provision of Braille library services for the visually impaired students.
- Provision audio information resources to meet the needs of the blind.
- Provision of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities.
- Provision of language translation equipment for the benefit of those that hardly understand English language.
- Provision of specialized and mobile library services for special students.
- Establishment of community information centres.
- Supervising and ensuring that school libraries in Nigeria operate within the stipulated minimum standards.
- Supporting school libraries with relevant and current information resources.

- Training of school/teacher librarians in order to equip them with relevant skills necessary for best practices and optimal service delivery.

Researchers' model for Expectations of Public and National Libraries in Inclusive Education at the Primary and Post Primary Level



Challenges of Public and National Libraries towards Sustainable Inclusive Education

According to Agodi and Obasi (2016), many challenges militate against public libraries performance and the challenges revealed include: inadequate infrastructural facilities, poor funding, inadequate environment, poor motivation of workers.

- Inadequate funding:** Libraries in Nigeria are inadequately funded and as such cannot cope with high cost of providing information resources to meet the needs of the students and demands of inclusive education.
- Unavailability of technological facilities:** Public libraries in Nigeria hardly provide technological facilities. For instance, Braille resources are hardly available in Nigeria public libraries thus making it difficult for public libraries to meet the information needs of visually impaired groups in the society..
- Lack of skilled and innovative librarians:** There is dearth of skilled, qualified and innovative librarians in both public and national libraries, this to great a extent affect the extent that library services can be provided in line with the inclusive education philosophy.
- Lack of space:** To effectively provide library services in accordance with the ideology of inclusive education, space is a necessity, however, in Nigerian libraries, public libraries are not spacious enough to accommodate large users and equipments.
- Lack of well defined mobile / outreach library services:** Mobile/outreach library services provided by public libraries in Nigeria are not well defined and as such does not make provisions for inclusive education philosophy.

Conclusion

Libraries no doubt exist to assist man in their quest for knowledge and information. However, more importantly, the public libraries exist to support educational development in any nation of the world. The paper has conveyed the expectations of public and national libraries towards inclusive education at the primary and post-primary education level in Nigerian environment. It is obvious that there is a connection between services provided by public libraries and the success of inclusive education in any society. Therefore, libraries remain a vital tool through which inclusive education can be achieved in Nigeria settings.

Recommendation

The followings will help in repositioning of public and national libraries towards inclusive education at the primary and tertiary education level.

- i. **Adequate funding of public and national libraries:** There is need to adequately fund libraries in Nigeria. The issue of inadequate funding should be addressed either through provision of fee-based library services or other avenues through which the library can be self-sustained since most government leaders are not showing interest in library development in Nigeria.
- ii. **Recruitment of skilled and innovative librarians:** The era of library services being restricted to the physical library services being restricted to the physical library environment is gradually giving way to modern approach to library service delivery. Therefore, leaders of public and national libraries should endeavour to recruit highly skilled and innovative librarians that will be ready to adapt and adopt new trends in the delivery of library services, especially in line with government policy of inclusive education.
- iii. **Provision of space to accommodate users and information resources:** Heads of libraries should endeavor to provide adequate space that would be large enough to accommodate users, information resources as well as technological facilities that will be used to deliver information services in line with inclusive education ideology.
- iv. **Redesigning of mobile /outreach library services in line with inclusive education:** It is imperative that leaders of public and national libraries should redesign mobile /outreach library services to make it all inclusive. An all holistic approach should be adopted to ensure that services are provided with inclusive education in view.
- v. **Community e-library services:** There is need to provide community e-library for the various categories of students at the primary and post-primary school level.
- vi. **Collaboration with non-government agencies and private organizations:** To effectively provide library services that will meet the demands of inclusive education, efforts should be made by heads of libraries to partner with non-governmental agencies and private organizations interested in educational development.

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