

**SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS: IDENTIFICATION PLANNING
AND MONITORING**

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INTRODUCTION

The greatest headache a professional special educator has is planning to disseminate information to fellow practitioners, and stakeholders. Workshops and seminars such as this give us the enabling “playground” to think special education and discuss special education. Since we are all stakeholders the topical issues of concern to the above workshop teams are very familiar to you all. Let me break my topic down into sub-themes.

Special Education Needs

The critical question and food for thought in this workshop is (1) what are the needs of persons with disabilities in Nigeria and in your various states in particular (2) have your various states in the North –East zone of the federation been able to identify and articulate programmes and services that best suit the different type of persons with disabilities in your states. (3) have your various states been able to know the actual total number of the different types of persons with disabilities in your states (4) have your various states been able to carry out needs assessments of the various categories of persons with disabilities in your states. If your answers are “yes” then further answer the following questions: (1) how many persons are visually impaired in Bauchi States, for example and how many of these are of school age. How many of these are ready to enter primary, secondary or University

How many children in your state have problem with learning difficulties or learning disabilities. In your state Special Education Department, do you have the unit for Learning Disability, unit for the Gifted/Talented, Unit for the Visually

Impaired, Unit for the Hearing Impaired, Unit for the Mentally Retarded, Referral unit, identification and assessment unit etc. How many personnel do you have working in each of these units at your state and local government levels.

Do you have special education administration: planning and monitoring unit within the Department or Division of Special Education in your state and local governments. If the answer is "Yes" then answer these questions:

- (1) How many audiologists do you have in your primary schools working with children with hearing impairments?
- (2) How many new audiologists do you think Buachi State government would require by next year 2008 to effectively render services adequately those these categories of children requiring their services at that level

Need for work – plans or modules

Each state has a dire need to development special education work-plans service programmes for the different categories of persons with disabilities. The work –plans will enable your states to state their special education services objectives clearly. It will enable you to match plans with existing approved policies and guidelines. It will help you come out with an implementation workshop blueprint. It will help you match your intended performance/services with types of personnel and their actual needed numbers. It will enable you match equipment with needs and categories of disabilities. It will enable you match needs with materials and infrastructural modifications. It will enable you select methods and relevant techniques.

Strategic planning for the commencement and implementation as well as sustenance of any programme or services might be at hand at any given times. In this plan time of onset and how it will be started will be clearly spelt out. Where and when, as well as, cost implication are mapped out within this strategies plan. Different and all types of targeted time frames are put in place for the success of the programmes/services. Programmes goals and objectives are clearly define here. Targeted audience are defined.

Adequate and effective services delivery implies monitoring and effective control of the organizational daily programmes and activities. By this, this writer means that monitoring is the only effective way to regulate, guide, coordinate, align performance with the aims and objectives of special education programme services.

Another word for monitoring is control. It means bringing within limits or maintaining the performance of a group or their characteristics and values within prescribed limits. It is a process of monitoring activities to ensure that they are being accomplished as planned and correcting any significant. An effective monitoring or control system ensures that activities are completed in ways that lead to the attainment of set goals (Robbins, 1994). Monitoring or control involves communication and interactions by means of memoranda, meetings, conversations and sometimes by signals such as facial expressions. Most organisations or parastatals have their formal management monitoring or control system consisting of the following steps: (a) Establishment of standards to enable the employee knows what is expected of him/her before anything can work. Standards are established levels of quality and quantity used to measure

and guide performance (b) Evaluation performance. This involves checking for deviations and determining if those deviations exceeded control tolerance level. Evaluation requires accurate measurement of what is taking place compared with set or stipulated standards. (c) Managerial Action. The manager must consider which action to take to correct performance when deviation occurs. The action may be to ensure that such a deviation is detected before any corrective action is taken.

Management monitoring or control systems usually focus on finance, operations, information, performance of overall organisation, and of course, the people themselves. A budget is, therefore, a typical example of a piece of design aimed at assisting management to control operations of all financial services rendered in an organizational programmes. A budget is a formal written summary or statement of management's plan of action for a specific period of time expressed in financial terms. Once adopted, a budget becomes an important basis for evaluating performance. It promotes efficiency and detects waste and inefficiency. Budgets must equate with planned objectives and therefore need monitoring to maintain its goals. At present, it appears that federal guidelines for funding educational services for persons with special needs have not been clearly delineated from general education formula which favours general education funding to the detriment of special education programmes. The "per capita" or item – by –item budgeting system used to run special education services in most countries of the world is yet to be applied in Nigeria. This system makes it easier to track both human and equipment/material resources.

Identification, Planning and Monitoring

Identification, planning and monitoring are three synonymous words that are so inter-twined in special education that enable special education administrators, planners, and implementors to stay within the agreed boundaries of their action plan. Identification of special educational need involves the delineation or articulation of policies, policy – objectives and goals. Here, services and types of services/programmes types are defined. In identification, not only are problems and needs identified services and services patterns or type are equally tied to programmes. Administrative goals and objects are also tied to administrative patterns depending on the types of disabilities and needed programmes.

Identification involves human resources analysis otherwise known as occupational/services/programme sector analysis. This stage carries out needs analysis, manpower needs analysis, problems or disability –type analysis, services/programme needs and types, determines categories and types of workers in each type of job or disabilities areas, determines learning needs, job titles; specify skills needed and their training etc. identification helps bring out required objectives. The end product of an identification process which is sometimes referred to as a sector analysis is to: (a) identify cluster(s) of problems, disabilities, or occupations either in units or sub-units (b) bring out a complete list of all jobs involved at an appropriate job levels in a given occupation(s) and (c) show a realistic ordering of training priorities based on identified needs. (Akerejola 2001). Each sector analyzed gives you the up to

date need of that time for you to plan around and programme around without error since you have been able to discover and arm yourself with concrete facts.

What are we planning for Special Education?

Professionals in Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences always plan to identify and manage the needs of persons with disabilities of all categories. Special education professional aim at using the existing national goals and objectives to plan and promote success of persons with special educational needs thereby empowering them to be relevant to their communities and environment. There are two prong goals of special education: (a) Adequate education for all special children and youth (b) a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries whether impaired or gifted.

In planning to achieve realization of these two prong goals the National implementation blueprint (1990) on the handicapped outlined ten specific policy directives. These are: (a) setting up a coordinating body; (b) carrying out a census of persons with disabilities; (c) maintaining a data bank on the handicapped, (d) making provision or the production of highly trained and efficient personnel for the education of persons with disabilities; (e) Including the handicapped in schools as well as introducing elements of special education into the regular schools; (f) establishing special schools for those who are not able to benefit from regular systems; (g) implementing free-education at all level where possible; (h) Making provisions for vocational schools for those who require it; (i) providing for early identification of handicapping conditions in clinics (j) collaborating with the Ministries of Health, Social Development and

Labour where necessary. In programming for persons with special needs which one of these ten policy directives can one beat his chests to say "Yes" we have achieved or made a concrete reality.? How often have professionals in the field been called upon to work out ways and means for the realization of these policy directives? The implementation work–plan or module(s) are yet to come out or are still trickling out. This makes it difficult for one to track an outlook or a systematic approach to special education services delivery programmes in Nigeria. Before going further, let us ask ourselves if we have any document currently existing in Nigeria titled: Human Resources Analysis in Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences? Do we have any titled: Equipment/materials Resources Analysis in Special Needs Education. Do we have on: Physical Facilities Resources Needs Analysis in Special Education and Rehabilitation Sciences in Nigeria.

Special educational needs must, therefore, be spelt out unit by unit, needs by needs in order to match relevant approaches with the needs of optimum outcome or results to be achieved or attained. Precision planning and systematic organogram, systematic training charts, systematic phase by phase plan with time frames attached can be achievable at the national, state and local government levels. This will bring in consistency and predictability of events programmes, services etc to be achieved and accomplished. Above all people will know that things are purposefully ordered and organized.

Conclusion

There is, no doubts, that in today's world, services/programmes delivery packages are purposeful, well ordered and organised. Their predictability levels are high. This is more so in Special Needs Education. So, identification, planning and monitoring services implementation, monitoring and evaluation are all processes in resource control management in special education.

References

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