

# RESOURCE ROOM/CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN AN INCLUSIVE SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

Education is a tool for stimulating the self-awareness of individual; developing his in-built potentials and integrating him to the norms and values of the society with the aim of making him useful to himself, his family and society at large. Education is essential for all children whether handicapped, gifted and talented or not. The world has come to embrace the fact that it is not only essential to educate the special child but to educate him effectively. Consequently, in this paper, attempts have been made to advance reasons why the Resource Room/Classroom should be adequately managed in an inclusive system of education so that the special child can gainfully participate alongside with the normal child. The paper also highlights the place of Resource Room/Classroom Management in relation to the physical structure, classroom arrangement for exceptional learners and disciplining children with special needs. The conclusion and recommendations are on how to make the Resource Room/Classroom Management successful in the inclusive system of education.

## **Introduction**

The realization that education is a powerful tool for the transformation of society and the key to cultural, economic, political and social development has propelled a country like Nigeria towards providing a qualitative education for her citizens. The right of the special child to receive "an appropriate education have been realized, an act that resulted in major changes within our educational system.

The effort to provide formal education for every citizen (the special children inclusive) resulted in the establishment of the Universal Primary Education Scheme (UPE) in September, 1976. The UPE scheme drove into school almost all children of school age. All kinds of children were found in school i.e. normal children, slow learners, gifted children, mentally retarded, among others. Section 8:54 of the National Policy on Education (1977) revised (1981) states that:- "Government has already directed that all children including the gifted as well as those with physical, mental and learning difficulties must be provided for under the education system" It further states that "The corollary of UBE therefore is that special education arrangements must be made for the handicapped and the exceptionally gifted"

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) was launched in 1999 and this also aimed at ensuring that all school age children including the children with special needs are enrolled and that all necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to their education shall be provided such as "inclusive classes and units into ordinary/pupil school under the UBE scheme" section 96:C)(1).

## **Special Education and the Beneficiary**

Special education is that "education which provides suitable facilities, specially trained teachers and specialized materials and methodology for children who are physically, emotionally and mentally handicapped to the extent that they cannot derive maximum benefits from the regular school programme"<sup>1</sup>(Mba, 1975)

The National Policy on Education (2004), Section 10:94 states that "special education is a formal special educational training given to people (children and adults) with special needs" This group of people may be classified into three categories:

1. The disabled;
2. The gifted and talented;
3. The disadvantages.

**1. The Disabled:** People with impairments (physical, sensory) and because of the impairment/disability cannot cope with regular school/class organization and method without formal special educational training. In this category, we have people who are:

- a) Visually impaired (blind and partiality sighted).
- b) Hearing impaired (deaf and the partially hearing).
- c) Physical and health impaired (deformed limbs, asthmatic).
- d) Mentally retarded (educable, trainable, bed ridden).
- e) Emotionally disturbed (hyperactive, hypoactive, the socially maladjusted/behaviour disorder).
- f) Speech impaired (stammerers, shutters).
- g) Learning disabled (have psychological/neurological educational phobia or changes).
- h) Multiple handicapped.

**2. The Gifted and Talented:** These are people (children and adults) who have/possess very high intelligent quotient and are naturally endowed with special trait (in arts, creativity, music, leadership, intellectual precocity, etc.).

**3. The Disadvantage\*!:** These include the children of nomadic, pastorals, migrant fishermen, migrant farmers, hunters, etc. who due to their lifestyle and means of livelihood are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision and therefore require special education to cater for their particular needs and circumstances.

However, the focus of this paper is on other groups: the disabled and the gifted and talented.

### **School Placement Options**

Various placement options have been adopted in the education of children with special need over the years. These include segregation, integration/mainstreaming and recently, inclusion.

Ademokoya (2003) remarked that professional bodies and international organizations began to condemn integration for allowing for some bits of discrimination against children with disabilities. Today, according to Parrel (2000), there are major changes in policy and practice in the education of children with special needs. The principle of inclusive is what is now advocated,

### **Inclusive System of Education**

Inclusive simply means placement of all students with disabilities alongside with the able bodied in the same classroom.

Knoster (1991), explaining the difference between mainstreaming and inclusive, states that mainstreaming is placing special students in regular education classes when they are ready, while inclusion means integrating students with disability regardless of the nature and severity into all the activities of a general education classroom, school and surrounding community. Inclusive education aims at providing students with special needs, access to all the educational facilities, resources and the built environment that the able-bodied students have access to.

The basic components of inclusion according to Shea and Raver (1994) include, among others:

- a) All learners attend the school that they would be assigned if they had no disability.
- b) A zero-reject philosophy would be in place, that is no learner could be excluded from receiving educational services regardless of the disability.
- c) Placement would be age and grade appropriate with no self-contained special education classes.

Nevertheless, an inclusive system of education is seen to be the most realistic, since the handicapped children live most of their lives with non-handicapped in the society. Since children with special needs are children who deviate markedly from other children in learning and functioning that they need additional school services to be able to learn at their own rate using the Individualized Education Plan (IEP).

The IEP will be developed to meet the student's individual needs (Knosten, 1991). The modification in the educational programmes of these children depends on many factors among which is the nature and degree of impairment, whether it is mild, moderate severe/profound.

In the light of the above, this paper will now examine the place of the resource room/classroom management in an inclusive system with key focus on:

- 1) Physical structure.
- 2) Classroom arrangement for the exceptional learners; and
- 3) Flow to discipline children with special needs.

### **The Resource Room**

The resource room is one of the modifications in the education of children with special needs. A room is specially one or more specialist teachers who are available to offer educational assistance to students who require help in their respective subjects. These children register in the ordinary classes and only spend a portion of the day in a resource room with the specialist teacher. The children come to this room at scheduled times to get their specific needs met by a specialist in their area of difficulties. The resource teacher diagnoses the child's problems and tells the regular classroom teacher in whose room the child spends part of his school day.

The resource room teacher is also responsible for providing materials and educational methods, which would enable the students to adjust in the regular classroom. The main role is to develop instructional materials and lessons and supplement the designed programme found effective for remedying the particular problems.

### **Classroom Management**

This simply means putting classroom resources into effective use. Classroom resources are the pupils (both normal and the children with special needs) and all the equipment in the classroom. The task of classroom management rests upon the individual class teacher. In order to carry out the responsibility of classroom management successfully, the teacher should bear in mind that pupils in the classroom are different. Some are bright, while some are shy and withdrawn, some are introverts and some are extroverts. They have their likes and dislikes since they come from different backgrounds.

The inclusive system of education thus, brings together both non-handicapped and handicapped peers together in the same classroom. The regular teacher and sometimes the special needs to arrange the classroom resources in an orderly manner for effective management to create room for effective teaching and learning.

### **The Place of the Resource Room/Classroom Management in Relation to**

- 1) Physical structure;
- 2) Classroom arrangement for exceptional learner; and
- 3) Disciplining children with special needs.

This will be discussed in relation to some categories of children with special needs earlier highlighted who are the beneficiaries of inclusive system of education.

#### **1). Physical Structure**

The physical structure is an integral part of the learning environment. A number of features constitute what we regard as physical structure. These include: the buildings, all the spaces between the buildings, the corridors, toilets, the lawns and classroom, equipment, playground or field, fence, etc.

However, the physical structure of the resource room/classroom and its relationship with classroom management is determined by the nature of handicapped children involved. The resource room and classroom building should be designed and built with the handicapped people in mind. The school building needs to have corridors on which children with special needs can walk safely.

There should be ramps and railings provided whereby one in a wheel chair can be wheeled into building housing the classroom and the resource room. There should also be elevators. The provision of these facilities will make accessibility of the physically handicapped people to the building possible. The school buildings should have railings for easy accessibility for the visually impaired. Mobility of the blind will be easy if pavements with railings are built in our schools. Just like other normal children, the children with special needs also require playground or field to engage in various physical activities. There should also be the need for the aesthetic consideration i.e. beautiful arrangement of the physical structure. This will make the environment attractive to the children with special needs and they will be attracted to school environment for them to participate actively in the learning activities.

The toilet facilities available in the school should be suitable for the physically handicapped on a wheel chair. Can the blind child who is in the inclusive system use the toilet facilities conveniently? For the children with special needs to benefit, these physical structures need to be available to them. Adequate lighting and illumination which must be free from, glare and direct sunlight is required. Other

factors are colourful walls and ceilings. The floor should be in an admirable state.

The school furniture and equipment must suit the children with special needs. Classroom requires special equipment and adjustable desks and seats to make sitting conducive for the children with special needs. The classroom environment must be flexible and adaptable to individual needs.

Classroom adaptations for low vision students is such that many students benefit from desks with adjustable or tilting tops so they can read and write at close range without constantly bending over and casting a shadow.

With respect to school environment, the various categories of children with special needs need to be provided with various equipment to enable them function effectively in the inclusive system. For example, the visually impaired i.e. blind to function well in the school need a Perkins Brailer, typewriter, tape recorder, abacus, recorded books, embossed relief maps, empty cassettes, etc. For the hearing impaired, the deaf need a hearing aid, visual aids, sign language books, etc. Also the physically handicapped (crippled, or the amputee) will need a wheel chair, calipers, clutches and artificial legs or arms among others. However, most of our schools are not built with a person with special needs in mind. Such buildings (physical structure) can be referred to as anti-disability (Gbegbin and Raji, 2003).

For the resource room services and management to be effective in an inclusive system of education, there is the need for appropriate adaptable physical structure to be provided for the children with special needs.

## 2). **Classroom Arrangement for Exceptional Learners**

The classroom environment is a critical determinant for successful teaching and learning. Lindley (1964) coined the term prosthetic environment to describe classroom intentionally designed to facilitate learning. Prosthetic environment device can include: seating arrangements that stimulate responding and discourage distractibility, audio visual equipment that assists in highlighting and emphasizing important points, charts that provides consistent reminders of specific rules and classroom areas that encourage companionship and sharing.

Since needs of the children differ from one individual child to another, the classroom arrangement is done to make teaching and learning beneficial to the students with special needs and this arrangement differs from one child to another. For instance, the hearing impaired child, who is hard of hearing, can be placed on the front row in the class where he can hear the voice of the teacher. The special seating position in the classroom will also promote speech reading by the student. There is also the need for regular speech, language and auditory training instruction from a specialist. The service of an interpreter, if the child uses manual communication is also needed.

The teacher needs to use visual aids when possible. The visually impaired (blind or partially sighted) also need a seating position which will enable them benefit from the regular classroom setting. Classroom setting adaptation for low vision or partially sighted is that they should be placed in a position in front where they can see the chalkboard. Many low vision students benefit from desks with adjustable or fitting top as they can read and write close range without casting shadow bending over. For the children with speech impairment, there is the need to provide relaxed classroom atmosphere for them. The speech-impaired child should not be scolded, jested at or threatened in the class. The child should be made to feel at ease and accepted in the class, and be made to feel free.

Mba and Adeniran (1985), noted that a child who stutters should be given time to say what he wants to say without interference by the teachers. They added that teachers and even parents should study occasions that make a child stutter in order to identify and eliminate such causes.

Education of children with speech impairment is better done in regular schools {inclusive system} than in special schools. In severe cases of impaired speech, speech therapists (correctionist) who are specially trained will be required to effect the needed speech training of the children in the resources room or centres.

The location of the classroom setting for the autistic child should be in the least environment because the autistics students is usually distracted by noise. The door should lead immediately to the playground because whenever the students burst into tantrum he may want to run out of the classroom. Moreover, the playground should be fenced to prevent the child from wandering off. There should also be bathroom and running water as well as kitchen and laundry facilities that will be useful in the practical living skills. The classroom should contain all the necessary materials and equipment such as tables, chairs, desks, chalkboard, wall clock, bookshelves, storage shelves, record player, tape recorder with earphones, computer etc.

The autistics child exhibits self-absorption and is socially withdrawn. Karen (1998) states that there is the need for patience and understanding when dealing with the students with autism for the gifted and talented child who is mentally superior and capable of high performance may require additional

programmes beyond those provided to their peers in the regular schools.

The modification of educational programme for the gifted in relation to classroom arrangement is the method of:

a. Acceleration: which involves content acceleration where the gifted is given opportunity to move through a particular curriculum sequence at his/her own rate i.e. covering in a shorter period materials offered in the regular classes. Skipping classes i.e. double promotion.

b. Enrichment Programmes: which involve challenging the child with extra readings,

assignments, giving problem requiring independent research and thought, offering additional learning such as learning foreign languages, and helping him to develop initiative and creativity.

The classroom arrangement for the retarded most especially the educable mentally retarded is such that will require an individual education plan. (I.E.P). This is because the teacher is confronted with various degrees of intellectual capacities, different chronological ages and several combinations of learning abilities and problems. A planned programme of instruction should be adopted of each child and individual teaching should be given. According to Adcsina (2001) all of the teachings done with these children are primary therapeutic in nature and instruction under these circumstances is most effective when carried on in a relaxed friendly atmosphere using concrete materials. Modification of the child's program to (he regular classes will encourage the child to be interested with the regular school setting. From the above exposition in the various class arrangements for the different categories of exceptional children, there is no doubt that the school and classroom environment should be arranged so that concern for the child with special need is evident. The teacher serves as a figure for identification, a model for the pupils as well as a designer and provider of academic learning strategies.

### (3) **Disciplining Children with Special Needs**

• Since one of the inclusive system of education as highlighted by Okuoyibo (2001) is that all children in a school regardless of their strength or weakness in any area will become part of the community, it is therefore important that these children are given a sort of training that enables the individual to develop an orderly conduct and self control and direction.

However, the fact that there are various categories of children with special needs who also exhibit various degrees of impairment or disabilities, this will also bring about variations in the ways by which they can be disciplined. Nevertheless, the children with special needs should not be pampered or exonerated when an in disciplined behaviour is exhibited. They should be disciplined like every other child.

Generally, teachers can discipline children with special needs by presenting aversive stimuli or removing positive reinforces to inappropriate behaviour. Some of the ways that the teacher can discipline the child with special needs include:

1. Differential reinforcement of other behaviour: for example increasing social reinforcement of seat work and co-operative play behaviour to reduce a pupil's aggressive behaviour.
  2. Extinction: This involves ignoring disruptive behaviour: For example, not responding to students who call out an answer without first raising their hands.
  3. Verbal aversive or reprimand: This involves rebuking the child from exhibiting the inappropriate behaviour. For example, saying "No" to a preschooler who takes another child's toy
  4. Response cost: for example, taking away five minutes of recess time for failing to complete an assignment or fining a student's 10 percent for cursing.
  5. Time out from positive reinforcement: Removing the child from all chances for reward for a brief time: removal from the group
  6. Over correction: This requires the child to make restitution beyond the damaging effect of their behaviour. For example, making the child who steals another child's biscuits to return it, plus one of his own.
  7. School exclusion: For example, giving a three-day suspension for fighting in school
  8. Corporal punishment: This is the punishment that inflicts pain or bodily harm.
- Teachers of mildly retarded, learning disabled and emotionally disturbed students have used this method relatively frequently. A recent review indicated that corporal punishment is applied most frequently in response to fighting, classroom disruptions, disrespects, disobedience and truancy (Rose, 1983).

However, one of the most basic concepts for dealing with consequences and management is the Premark principle. It is often called "grand ma's law". The principle asserts that a lot probability activity,

Premark (1959). For example when a student finishes a spelling lesson (a low probability behaviour) the students will be allowed to go out and play football for five minutes (a high probability behaviour), since football is a very desirable activity, the students will have increased incentive to finish the spelling lesson. In view of this, teachers can make activities, food, or token contingent upon the completion of an academic task or performance of a specific appropriate behaviour. However, teachers can use motivational consequences to accelerate either academic or behaviour responses. Typical kinds of positive consequences to motivate handicap students include: Praise, attention, edibles, toy and games. On a simple level, the teacher may praise the students for completing an assignment or for exhibiting a desired behaviour. Efforts should be made by the teachers to decrease disruptive or other disturbances inappropriate by employing various disciplinary measures.

## **Conclusion**

The resources room/classroom management in the inclusive system of education cannot be successful without the co-operation of the regular classroom teacher and the special teacher, and other professionals-such as psychologist, speech therapist, audiologist, guidance counselors etc. Good motivation is desirable in any form of teaching; but it is essential for children with special needs. The regular classroom teacher must be accommodating by showing positive attitude in the presence of the handicap child in the class. He must develop the spirit of teamwork by utilizing the skills of resource teachers and other ancillary services when necessary to ensure that handicapped children benefit well in the overall educational programme.

The modified physical environment and school practices involving the resource room teacher, the regular teacher and the special teacher must meet the needs of the children. Favourable school attitudes and the arrangement of the classroom in relation to the availability of special materials and equipment will be a catalyst which will influence the successful implementation of the system-thus giving the children with special needs opportunities to learn as other students.

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