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Spring 4-23-2023

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Akindehin, Olumuyiwa Folajimi Mr, "Role of Librarians as a Prerogative For Using Assistive Technologies in the Education of People with Special Needs" (2023). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 7717. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/7717>

**ROLE OF LIBRARIANS AS A PEROGATIVE FOR USING ASSISTIVE  
TECHNOLOGIES IN THE EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

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## ***Abstract***

*The paper examined the role of the library in the improvement of inclusive education. Bringing to bear some stringent concepts; and ideas that the library management can imbibe, to improve the productivity of the special needs children. The paper also looked intently at the term special education, special needs education and also the benefits of special education. In this paper, the researcher tries to juxtapose the importance of considering the special needs learners, their information quest and needs. The researcher drew some conclusions and some recommendations were made at the end of the paper.*

***Keywords: Library, Inclusive Education, Education, Special Needs, Special Education, Information, Information need, Inclusive, Literacy, Information***

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role library plays in the education of learners with special needs, which is also referred to as inclusive education. The concept of inclusion is that cannot be left out in the scope of Nigerian educational system today. There have been diverse opinions about inclusivity and exclusivity of learners with special needs from the main classroom environment, which could be of a greater disadvantage to them, hence the need for inclusive education. There are many students today, who need special attention and care when it comes to educational assistance, but where the challenge is how best to disseminate quality and adequate information to these set of students. In this kind of setting, there are special trainers who are needed to help these children. In essence, these sets of trainers are there to guide the students in the right direction. Taking a cue from the topic it is pertinent to examine what the library is all about in a short explanation and then seeing how a good library education can be important in inclusive education.

What therefore does inclusive education mean? In a submission UNESCO said inclusive education as is a process through addressing and responding to the diverse need of all learners through the increment of participation in learning process, cultures, norms and rules guiding communities, and sthe reduction of exclusion from education and within education. In the literal sense of meaning every child is entitled to quality education no matter the level of impairment.

## **The Library System**

There have been different definitions of the Library; it becomes germane to point out some of these definitions. Iyanda and Sakiru (2006) defined library as “a building, an instructional and self development centre, which operates an integral part of the school environment”. Robertson (2005) In Agbato and Akindehin (2014) sees a library as an institution that manages the intellectual products that individuals can gain access to reality.

## **Major Laws of the Library**

There are five basic laws of the Library as postulated by Professor, S.R. Ranganathan, also known as the father of Library Science in India. Ranganathan (1931) in Bhoi (2017)

- ❖ Books are for use
- ❖ Every book its user
- ❖ Every user his/her book
- ❖ Do not waste the time of the user
- ❖ Library is a growing organism

### **Major Functions of the Library System**

The following represents the basic and major functions of the Library. It is pertinent to know that for an institution to be productive in a functional library, which ought to have been put in place, Iyanda and Salawu (2006); Nampoya (1986) in Agbato and Akindehin (2014);

- **Lending Services:** This is a very important activity of the Library, it involves charging, which is the act of loaning information materials to users and discharging, discharging is an act of receiving consulted materials back from users.
- **User education:** User education in the library is making the users aware of some rudimentary knowledge about the library and modus operandi. Users are exposed a bit to some specific areas and conceptual understanding about the basic library operations like the use of catalogue cards if it's still in use in the library or the use of OPAC (Online Processing Catalogue). It is very germane and pertinent that every user is made to know all these, thereby assisting them in knowing their ways around the library.
- **Materials for Consultation:** This include the materials in the library that cannot be loaned out but can only be made use of within the library e.g. slides, filmstrips, audio cassettes, radio cassettes pamphlets, periodicals, journals, etc.
- **Current Awareness Services (CAS):** This keeps the users abreast of the happenings in the library. The information can be disseminated through emails, periodical routines, library awareness (Display Racks).

- **Information Literacy Programme:** Information library programme is stemmed more on user education. This helps users locate and retrieve information in time without wasting time. It is a programme that teaches users how to locate information on the shelf.
- **Impact of Internet:** Digitization and Information Technology has taken charge of the library today through the advent of different networking tools. In this variance, automation (digitization) of the library is now the new trend developed in the library.
- **Repackaging information:** This is simply the transformation of information materials into local languages in order to make users have a deeper understanding.
- **Use of e-library:** Under the Librarians Registration Council (LRCN), different modalities have been fashioned to engender training of librarians. In order to get this done, under stringent policy of the minimum standard the National Information Technology and Development Agency (NITDA) was conscripted to establish e-libraries, Agbato and Akindehin (2014).
- **Review of Curriculum of Library and Information Science Programme:** The Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria (LRCN) has began an in depth review of the curriculum of library and information science programmes in Nigerian Universities, Agbato and Akindehin (2014).
- **Preservation of Library Materials:** This is an important factor in the library operations, materials are meant to be kept safe and secure at all cost. This means that the library materials ought to be preserved well because of humidity so as guard against wear and tear.

## **Inclusive Education**

Inclusive education has recently become an intriguing part of special education that cannot be sidelined in the recent past. In special education today it has become a bit difficult not to make reference to inclusive education and how it has affected the recent trend in the educational sector. The entrenchment of inclusive education curricular can be traced back to the Salamanca project in 1994.

Footo and Rinaldo (2010) in their work opined that, “inclusive education as the practice of bringing services and supports to the special need children in the general education classroom set to oppose to from their able bodied mates”. Ademokoya and Oyewumi (2001) saw, “inclusive education as an educational institution in which all available resource are collaboratively utilized to meet educational needs and challenges of all children who reside in its attendance area”. Nkwoagba (2013) refers to “inclusive education as a means of placing the disabled children with non disabled children in the same classroom and school environment where they are taught, play and communicate together without possibility of labeling and discrimination of any sort”. Awoniyi and Olayanju (2014) affirm that “inclusive education is an approach which requires value diversity so that the diverse learning needs and individual learner preference are identified and met”.

### **Need for Inclusive Education**

As stated earlier during the course of writing this paper, inclusive education as become one fundamental aspect of education today that cannot be jettisoned. Definitely, it has come to stay hence all educational sector would have to come in terms with this fact.

Just as stated in the Salamanca Project, children with special needs also deserve stable and quality education, without the feeling of being ostracized from the community of other learners. The basic point behind this is for them to feel and have that sense of belonging not only the educational sphere but also in the community where they belong, Danesi (2016).

Teaching aids becomes an essential part of this feature in the sense that children with special needs will extra instructional tool to boost their learning skill. It is the onus of the teacher or the instructor to ensure that these teaching aids are made available. For example, psychomotor equipments and other types which can help improve their learning skills.

In retrospect, there is no one who is not educable, be it the learning disabled, intellectually disabled, hearing impaired, visually impaired, hard of hearing, intellectually disabled, speech impaired to name but a few.

Danesi (2016), further asserted that, the inclusion of special needs children in nursery school system will give the children the ample opportunity to follow easily during class activities without feeling lost during class hours.

### **Benefits of Inclusive Education**

Okwudire, James and Unogwu (2013), posited the following benefits of inclusive education;

- Inclusive education gives the special needs children equal opportunities to employment which is the commonest problem of special need children in Nigeria
- It helps to promote sociability between the able special needs individual
- The cost of effect of education may be reducing compare to mainstreaming environment
- There will be reduction in children
- emotional problem and feeling inferior to the able bodied

In the real sense of this, inclusive education is a form of education foisted to change the course of education the world of education the world over. The library has an important role to play by ensuring that modalities are put in place to help children with disability gain access to the necessary information needed.



## **Conclusion**

Children with disability also need to be educated, hence they should not be ostracized, but they should be given the privilege to learn with their able bodied counterpart such that they can improve when it comes to learning. Also the role of the library is to make the environment well conducive for reading, for example the chairs must not be too tall and the most not be too tall too, thereby creating issues for sitting place.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations can be inferred from this paper;

- Teaching aids should be provided for learners with special needs to improve their learning skills
- No child should be seen as non educable, there could be varying levels of intelligential displayed, education must be free for all
- Instructors and teachers should under the peculiarity and treat them as such
- The library should bear in mind varying degrees of specialty when designing the library building
- Training and re-training of library staff to know how best they can attend to children with special needs

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