

Governance and Corruption variables and the Education of Persons with Special Needs in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

The study adopted descriptive survey design. Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 30 most experienced special educators in University of Ibadan (South West), University of Nigeria, Nsukka (South East) and University of Calabar (South South). There were two research questions posed to guide the study. An instrument for data collection was named "Special Educators' Perceived Governance and Corruption Variables Impeding PWSN Education Questionnaire" (SEPGACIPEQ). The instrument was face and content validated by three experts. The reliability coefficient of .81 was deduced through the use of Cronbach alpha statistical technique. Frequencies were the descriptive statistics used for the analysis of data collected. It was found among others that non implementation of education policy and misappropriation of funds meant for special education impede education of persons with special needs. It was therefore concluded that governance and corruption variables impede the education of the Persons With Special Needs (PWSN). The recommendations, among others, include governments making efforts to implement policy of education and proper utilization of money meant for education of persons with special needs.

Keywords: Governance, corruption, persons with special needs, education

Introduction

The period of renaissance heralded the recognition of persons with special needs (PWSN) and made their education imperative (Abang, 2005). This was a popular era that ushered in positive attitude towards persons with special needs. The western world started that and it spread to other places including Africa (Abang, 2005). This was how the concept became popular in Nigeria to the credit of missionaries. The missionaries started school for the blind, deaf, physical and health impaired among others (Eke, 2006). This breakthrough became an eye opener that truly blazed the trail. The government of Nigeria came in by providing grant in aid to these missionaries. After that, the government took over the management and control of education of persons with special needs alongside those without special needs (Eke, 2006).

This came to fruition in 1977 when there was inclusion of special education in the National Policy on Education. According to Maikasuwa (2014), the National Policy on Education 1977, among other objectives, gave tangible meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, mental and emotional disabilities notwithstanding. This was supposed to serve as a blueprint to operating special education. After that came the National Policy on Education in 1981, 2004 and 2013. The last one was in 2015 that came to ensure that those with special needs are given adequate education and considered in today's mantra of inclusion.

Notwithstanding the above effort, there is remarkable criticism which indicates the fact that all is not well with the education of persons with special needs in Nigeria. The National Policy on Education which cuts across the years of crafting them had always received boost but the practice has remained a challenge. This has subjected this special population to helpless situation in their education and might eventually make them lose the opportunity derivable from education. The continuity of such might in the end subject them to beggardom which carries with it stigmatization, discrimination and frustration.

The above development has been observed by many people concerned with the education of persons with special needs. The idea of educating them alone and even combining them with those that have no special needs through segregation and mainstreaming/inclusion respectively have not yielded expected dividend (Eke, 2000). In the end, education of persons with special needs have not come to fruition. There

are efforts made by some stakeholders to help out but all to no avail. The challenges bedeviling this litany of efforts made the researchers to contemplate on other ventures. One really wonders what has been frankly done.

The issue of national policy has been reiterated above. This supposedly comes from the government. Governance is the process or the power of governing. It is a specific system by which a political system is ruled. In this study, Governance is a system involving the group of people that make up an administrative body that decide fate of education of persons with special needs in Nigeria. The government therefore decides the welfare of its subjects which includes persons with special needs. President Bush of America (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002) asserted that Americans with disabilities should have every freedom to pursue careers, integrate into the workforce and participate as full members in the economic marketplace. Maikasuwa (2014) citing Nwachukwu described persons with special needs as those who deviate from the ordinary child such that he/she requires special attention, special services and other areas that could make life more meaningful and worth living. This justifies the fact that persons with special needs require assistance in more ways than one, to make success in their education. The author further observed that the National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) have unanimously passed a bill for an Act to ensure integration of Nigerians with disabilities and vest it with the responsibilities for their education, health care and the protection of their social, economic, civil rights, etc.

It is a good thing to recall that the Deputy Senate President, Ike Ekweremadu (personal communication, 13th August, 2018) highlighted plan of governance that shall capture everybody including the disabled, the young and even the women, so that equal representation is assured. This is a leeway for persons with special needs which for now cannot be established. The education of this special population has not been given the deserved attention in Nigeria. The forgoing had been reiterated by Abang (2005) and Eke and Olayi (2017) that National Policy on Education, though well-articulated, has not been made realistic. Abang had always emphasized the negative attitude of people towards persons with special needs. The government is made up of persons who are politicians. There have been significant attempts by the National Association of Exceptional Child (NAEC) and National Association of Special Education Teachers (NASSET) for proper placement of education of persons with special needs by the

government, but to no avail. Inclusion of persons with special needs is now in vogue, but at best qualified in principle without practice in Nigeria. Many authors and researchers have attributed the failure to lack of human and material resources. This is regardless of the fact that the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN, 2015) has proposed that inclusion should go beyond just in school to include hospitals and homes. Ozoji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016) uncovered that the bane of realization of this good goal is lack of human and material resources. There is another seemingly impeding factor to the education of persons with special needs.

Corruption is suspected to be another bane in the education of persons with special needs. Corruption is an act of corrupting or of impairing integrity, virtues, or moral principle. In this study, corruption is something evil, a departure from what is pure, simple and correct, which is bound to mar realistic and quality education for persons with special needs. This therefore borders on the political will of the leaders which sorely underscores what becomes of special needs education in Nigeria. There are evidences of allocation of funds for special need education in states but the question is utilization of such funds for their sake. One desk officer (personal communication, 20th, July, 2018) disclosed that, yearly there used to be significant amount of money for special needs education but never has such funds been utilized as scheduled. One wonders what that means if not gloating over persons with special needs whose education is frustrated. Some international organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations do their best but doubt in individuals or group of people that are used as stakeholders remains a challenge. One John (personal communication, 11th June, 2017) uncovered how dishonest persons take delight in deceiving these NGOs and International Organization under the cover of serving persons with special needs. This is very appalling. Moreover, it has been shown in social media and others how some persons pretend to be persons with special needs for ulterior motives. There are other acts of corruption that mar success of education of persons with special needs. These therefore provoked the present researchers to carry out this study to investigate governance and corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to investigate governance and corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs in Southern Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to investigate:

1. Governance variables that impede education of persons with special needs
2. Corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs

Research questions

Two research questions guided the study.

1. What governance variables impede education of persons with special needs?
2. What corruption variables impede education of persons with special needs?

Methodology

This study adopted descriptive survey with the purpose of investigating Special Educators' perception of governance and corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs in Nigeria. The population for the study was 42 Special Educators that abound in the three Universities' academic staff list for 2017/18. This included 15 members for University of Ibadan (South West), seven (07) members for University of Nigeria, Nsukka (South East) and 20 members in the University of Calabar (South South). Purposive sampling technique was used to draw 30 most experienced special educators in three universities in southern Nigeria in cognizance of their experiences and respective status.

An instrument constructed by the researchers used for data collection was named "Special Educators' Perceived Governance and Corruption Variables Impeding Persons with Special Needs (PWSN) Education" (SEPGACIPE). The instrument was face and content validated by three experts, two from Special Education and one from Measurement and Evaluation. A reliability coefficient of .81 was deduced as a measure of internal consistency through the use of Cronbach alpha statistical technique. Frequency was the descriptive statistics used for the analysis of data collected. In decision making, the four response options used the modified four point likert scale; for items one through five : "Well articulated", "Fully implemented", "Partially implemented" and "Not implemented" where as items six through 20 had: "Strongly agree", "Agree", "Disagree" and "Strongly disagree". The Strongly agree and Agree are put together such that if the summation resulted to 15 or more it was adjudged

agreed, Likewise if Disagree and strongly disagree summed up to 15 or more, it was adjudged disagreed. Same for implemented in one hand and partially/not implemented on the other hand. The researchers and their assistants helped in making successful data gathering of data. The effectiveness of the foregoing by the combined efforts of the researchers and research assistants guaranteed the 100% return rate of the copies of questionnaire that were given to 30 special educators that served as the sample of the study.

Presentation of results

Research Question one: What governance variables impede education of persons with special needs?

Table 1: Frequency of Special Educators’ perceived governance variables that impede education of PWSN in Nigeria.

S/N	Items	Well Articulated	Fully implemented	Partially implemented	Not implemented		
1.	NPE, 1977	28	0	10	20		
2.	NPE, 1981	28	0	9	21		
3.	NPE, 2004	29	0	12	18		
4.	NPE, 2013	28	0	7	23		
5.	NPE, 2015	30	0	10	20		
				SA	A	D	SD
6.	Only very few politicians are interested in the education of PWSN			25	4	1	0
7.	Nigeria has not implemented inclusive education			23	6	1	0
8.	Constitution of Nigeria is not PWSN friendly			13	12	5	0
9.	Attitude of government demoralize abilities that abound among the disabled ones			11	12	5	2
10.	Children with gifts and talents are not attended to			12	10	7	1

The above research question sought to investigate special educators’ perception of governance variables that impede the education of persons with special needs. Primarily, the special educators uncovered their perception across the years on the

National policy on Education. The policy from 1977 through 2015 was well articulated yet none was fully implemented. That of 1977 had 20 for not implemented and 10 for partially implemented. 1981 was perceived by 9 and 21 as partially and not implemented respectively. 2004 policy was perceived by 12 as being partially implemented and 18 not implemented. 2013 policy had 7 for partially implemented and 23 for not implemented. 2015 policy has 10 for partially implemented and 20 for not implemented.

Variables identified that impede education of PWSN included that only very few politicians are interested in the education of PWSN which had frequency of 25 for SA and 4 for Agreed which put together was 29 and as such identified as impeding variable. Inclusive education not yet implemented in Nigeria is another impeding variable hence with SA (23) and A (6) that add up to give 29. Constitution of Nigeria is not PWSN friendly is an impeding variable hence with frequency of 13 (SA) and 12 (A) that summed up to 25. Attitude of government demoralizing abilities of the disabled is an impeding variable hence it had 11 (SA) and 12(A) that both is 23. Children with gifts and talents not being attended to is an impeding variable with total frequency of 22 where SA is 12 whereas A is 11.

Research question two: What corruption variables impede education of persons with special needs?

Table 2: Frequency of special educators’ perceived corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs in Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD
6.	No commitment in budgeting for PWSN	10	6	9	5
7.	Budget for PWSN in the states is not utilized for them	20	7	3	0
8.	Funds for PWSN is misappropriated	14	10	6	0
9.	Integrity of stakeholders of PWSN is questionable	20	5	5	0
10.	Facilities from donor agencies are misused	10	4	10	6
11.	Some persons pretend being disabled for ulterior motives	22	8	0	0

12. Some special educators are cheats hence dishonest	3	6	10	11
13. Some deceive NGOs in the name of serving PWSN	22	7	1	0
14. Some deceive International Institutions in the name of serving PWSN	22	7	1	0
15. Leaders of PWSN have ulterior motives	6	6	10	8

The research question 2 sought to investigate special educators' perception of corruption variables that impede the education of persons with special needs. No commitment in budgeting for PWSN had 10 for SA, 6 for A, 9 for D and 0 for SD. This implies that the item is taken as agreed as 10 and 6 summed up to 16 and therefore considered corruption variable that impedes education of PWSN. Budget for PWSN in the states is not utilized for them had 20 for strongly agreed and 7 for agreed that both summed up to 27 and therefore perceived as variable that impedes education of PWSN. Funds for PWSN is misappropriated had 14 for SA and 10 for Agreed that together came to 24 which implicates that it is an impeding variable. Integrity of stake holders of PWSN is questionable is another impeding variable hence with total sum of 25 from SA and A that are respectively 20 and 5. Some pretend being disabled with ulterior motives has been identified as impeding variable hence it has frequency of 30 from both SA and A that are 22 and 8 respectively. Deceiving NGOs and International Institutions by some individuals in the name of serving PWSN are other impeding variables hence with respective total of 29 from SA (22) and A(7).

Discussion of findings

It was found in the study that National Policy on Education from 1977 through 2015 were well articulated but none was fully implemented, as they remained only partially implemented. This corroborated the assertion of Eke and Olayi (2017) that the National Policy on Education across the years were well articulated but not realistic. This gives credence to other literature that corroborates same. The response of the respondents are therefore thinkable, hence, even the most recent one that is specifically set aside for special education has not been implemented. It was further found, as impeding variable, that only very few politicians are interested in the education of persons with special needs. This finding takes roots from people's attitude towards persons with special needs. Abang (2005) reiterated that there is negative attitude of

people towards persons with special needs. Non implementation of inclusion of persons with special needs was found as another impeding variable. Inclusion is about the best thing that can happen to persons with special needs in this country. This finding lends credence to assertion of Eke and Olayi (2017) that inclusion is not yet realistic in this country. Ozoji, Unachukwu and Kolo (2016) went further to state that inclusion is not realistic due to human and material resources. The foregoing cannot be made realistic according to them except upon the commitment of the government. Nonetheless, FRN (2015) uncovered the plan to expand inclusion beyond school to include home and hospitals. Constitution of Nigeria is not PWSN friendly is another impeding factor as found in the study. One wonders why the finding is so while, Maikasuwa (2014) revealed that National Assembly (Senate and House of Representatives) have unanimously passed the Bill for an Act to ensure full integration of Nigerians with disabilities and vest it with the responsibilities for their education, health care and the protection of their social, economic, civil rights, etc. This implies that the above promises to PWSN by politicians are just political gimmicks and far from reality. The other findings disclosed other impeding variables such as attitude of government on abilities of disabled ones and non-recognition of gifts and talents in people. This finding is disheartening when it comes to mind the attitude President Bush of America (President's Commission on Excellence in Special Education, 2002) asserting that Americans with disabilities should have every freedom to pursue careers, integrate into the workforce and participate as full members in the economic marketplace. The fate of the disabled and persons with gifts and talents hang on the balance as can be inferred from the finding.

There are other findings based on corruption variables. It was found that no commitment in budgeting for PWSN, Budget for them in states not utilized for their sake and funds for PWSN misappropriated are corruption factors that impede the education of PWSN. This showcases elements of corruption which is act of corrupting or of impairing integrity, virtues, or moral principle. This finding has the backing of revelation of one desk officer (personal communication, 20th July, 2018) that yearly there used to be significant amount of money for special needs education in budget but never has such fund been appropriated as scheduled. It was found in the study that some persons pretend to be PWSN with ulterior motives and some deceive NGOs in the name of serving PWSN are both impeding factors. This finding is akin to what One John (personal communication, 11th June, 2017) uncovered how dishonest persons

take delight in deceiving these NGOs and International Organization under the cover of serving persons with special needs. These are all cases of corruption.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it is therefore concluded that there are obvious governance and corruption variables that impede education of persons with special needs in Southern Nigeria. Among governance variables are non implementation of the National Policy on Education and inclusion, politicians' lack of interest in the education of persons with special needs, the constitution not being friendly with persons with special needs and the persons with gifts and talents not being attended to. That of corruption variables include no commitment in the budget for persons with special needs, the budget meant for them is not so utilized, funds misappropriation, lack of integrity of the stakeholders, cases of cheats and deceits all of which impede the education of persons with special needs.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and conclusion drawn, these recommendations are made:

1. There is need for leaders in government to have the political will to recognize persons with special needs and which should be demonstrated in their manifestoes with the determination of making that result oriented.
2. The ministry of education of Nigeria should be pragmatic in the current policy so as to make real the latest National Policy on Special Needs Education. At best the government of Nigeria should create and recognize Ministry of special needs education and charge it with function of actualizing the current and latest policy of special needs education.
3. The constitution of Nigeria should spell out categorically the issue of free and compulsory education for persons with special needs at least to a level possible that shall aid their independent lives.
4. Budget for special education should be prepared by the government to reflect federal, state and local levels and money earmarked for that utilized by body of men of integrity at each level.
5. The International organizations and the NGOs should guard against any form of fraud by being ever ready to set up a committee to evaluate, examine and inspect any project targeted to help persons with special needs.

6. The philanthropists, NGOs and International organizations should be reached by different institutions or organization of persons with special needs to assist in developing the abilities in the disabled as well as the gifts and talents in people so as to help complement and supplement the available efforts of the government.

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