

EMPOWERING PEOPLE WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT; FINE ART AS AN OPTION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION



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ABSTRACT

Education is a tool for empowering people including the hearing impaired and a starting point for reduction of poverty. Through vocational education, persons with hearing impairment can possess necessary knowledge and skills to be self-reliant, have integrity, dignity, and contribute to national development in the face of unemployment. The paper concentrates on the concept of vocational education, concept of hearing impairment, fine art as an option in vocational education, method of empowering persons with hearing impairment, the paper concludes that, hearing impaired persons are with varied abilities and are capable of accelerating themselves to self-reliant, self-supportive if empowered with the right vocational subject (Fine Art) through vocational education. Based on these, the paper propose six recommendations as a way forward in the education of students with hearing impairments.

Introduction

Education is the bedrock of every nation. It is a transformer, a process through which an individual develops skills, attitudes, abilities, values and knowledge.

Reynold in Atama, (2012) summarized education into four components namely the power to do, the power to know, the power to think and the power to feel. Education develops an individual to be productive, self-supportive, self-reliant and to be able to contribute to national development. Education is a tool for empowering people including the hearing impaired and a starting point for reduction of poverty. It is based on these views that government of every country including Nigeria declared that education is the right of every child handicapping condition notwithstanding and set out strategies through the National policies on education to empower her citizenry.

The National policy on education (2004) stipulates adequate education for all children with special needs in order to meet the challenges of their learning and training needs. Abubakar, (2013) observed education as the greatest investment a nation can make for the development of its economic, social and human resources. Through vocational education, persons with hearing impairment can possess necessary knowledge and skills to be self-reliant, have integrity, dignity, and contribute to national development in the face of unemployment.

Concept of Vocational Education

Vocational education is an educational programme that sorts for talents and develop relevant skills that empowers people to work as professionals and technicians or take up employment in a skilled craft or trade. Vocational education prepares students to gain practical experience in a chosen career.

The National policy on education (FGN 2004) provides vocational education with the purpose of training manpower particularly in craft, advance craft, technical level and imparting necessary skills to individuals to be self-reliant economically.

Kolo (2008) opined that Nigerian educational system is not meeting the needs of persons with special needs neither is it sufficiently educating the average ones. This could be one of the reasons while persons with disabilities including the hearing impaired live in abject poverty, resorting to begging and total dependence on their families and significant others for charity and assistance due to poor implementation of vocational education in Nigeria.

Dada, (2015) affirmed the inability of persons with disabilities to live a normal life as a result of inadequate skills. It is an already established fact that people with disabilities including the Hearing Impaired face barriers in getting jobs.

In addition, Ekpoma, (2013) asserted that despite the acquisition of high degrees and certificates by persons with disabilities, they are still disadvantaged and vulnerable to discrimination in employment.

Currently in Nigeria, there is high rate of unemployment, inflation, high cost of living and scarcity. How will person with hearing impairment cope with the economic downturn? The hearing impaired in the society is always at the receiving end.

Further to the above factors, WHO, UNESCO, ILO (2004) observed that, there is a strong correlation between disability and poverty, meaning that poverty leads to increased disability and disability leads to increased poverty. Therefore the need to consider the appreciation of fine or creative art as a core vocational skill for persons with disabilities as it will enable them to develop their imaginative, aesthetic, and intellectual content thus making the artist to become the convergence of popular culture, appreciate their environment and enhance their opportunity to earn a living,

Vocational skills in fine art can empower persons with hearing impairment to become useful to themselves, their communities and the society at large. If their

potentials are harnessed and appropriately channeled through fine art as a vocational subject, they can contribute to the tax base of the economy, become employers of labour, employees and economic assets. The stakeholders in the education of persons with hearing impairment should pay great attention on their empowerment through vocational education such as fine Art.

Concept of Hearing Impairment

Hearing plays a critical role in learning. Difficulty in this sense is a problem to an individual especially in learning. Hearing impairment is a general term referring to all types and degree of hearing disorder.

Auwalu, (2020) describes it as any condition that reduces the hearing acuity of an individual and makes it impossible for him/her to perceive and interpret auditory signals (sounds). A child is hearing impaired if he/she has some difficulties in understanding the speech of other people. Any impairment, damage, deviation, imperfection occurring in the organ of hearing that could limit the ability of an individual to hear clearly.

Fine art as an Option in Vocational Education

Fine Art is a creative activity that involves the use of imagination to produce new things or idea. Fine Art is an activity requiring great skills or accomplishment. It is solely for imaginative, aesthetic or intellectual content. Fine Art includes drawing sculpturing, painting, literature, music, dance, textile design and dyeing. Fine Art is the right vocational activity to empower persons with hearing impairment. Hullender, (2005) stated that empowerment of persons with Hearing impairment through Fine Art can develop skills which will enable them take control of all aspect of their lives and environment which will result in confidence building, insight and development of personal skills.

Method of Empowering Persons with Hearing Impairment

Persons with hearing impairment rely on their visual stimuli and tactile stimuli to gather information and learn. Ozoji and Omole, (2014) stated that in the absence of one sense, the other senses become stronger as a compensation for the missing sense. Hearing impairment is a problem in hearing which also affect the speech and language development. The National technical institute for the deaf (2012) claimed that visual world is of more significance to the hearingimpaired to communicate their complex emotions and idea. Fine art becomes a viable vocational activity that can empower persons with hearing impairment as it enables them to communicate and express their thought through painting, drawing, sculpture, textile design and dyeing. These activities can be learned through training of the sense of hand coordination, vision and imagination. As it is being used in the world of special education—there is ability in

disability. Persons with hearing impairment have certain characteristics of creativity that can enable them function and excel in the world of fine art (Kolo, 2008).

A great majority of persons with hearing impairment depend on school to learn everything they need to know about life and living. Majority of parent can neither sign nor communicate effectively with their children. In situation like this, the children are deprived of early learning. It will be surprising to note that a child can grow up with a father for so many years without knowing that he is called “daddy”. Fine Art can empower persons with hearing impairment with speech and language skills which are required for communication, interaction and daily living. Creative drawing illustration can be used to teach words, stories on the environment.

Conclusion

Persons with hearing impairment are among the vulnerable group neglected in our society. They are persons with varied abilities who are capable of accelerating themselves to self-reliant, self-supportive if empowered with the right vocational subject (Fine Art) through vocational education. Fine Art offers a solution to unemployment and economic problems of persons with hearing impairment. They need to be exposed to real life learning experience which can be obtained in Fine Art as a vocational subject

Suggestions

The paper recommends the following:

1. Fine Art as a vocational subject should be integrated into functional curricula and school programmes of persons with hearing impairment
2. The government should enforce full implementation of vocational education (Fine Art as option) for persons with hearing impairment at all levels of school programmes in order to eradicate poverty and unemployment in our society.
3. Government and stakeholders should provide the needed infrastructure, materials and equipment for Fine Art training of persons with hearing impairment.
4. Parents and significant others should be encouraged to create opportunities for vocational skills (Fine Art) for their children for their sustainable development
5. There should be massive awareness programmes through the mass media on the importance of vocational education (Fine Art) to persons with disabilities
6. There should be increase in the funding of the education of persons with hearing impairment. Therefore, fine art is another viable activity that can enhance learning, language acquisition and facilitate retention in persons with hearing impairment.

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