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Entrepreneurship Training in Special Needs Education: Assessment of Students with Disabilities

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Abstract

It is common knowledge that if individuals with special needs were given the opportunity, they can lead meaningful, productive lives, and contribute to the social and economic well-being of their family and community. It is equally strongly believed that education and lifelong learning opportunity can and must erase these gaps in economic and social development that effectively marginalise students with disabilities. This paper examines entrepreneurship, special needs education and authentic assessment of students with disabilities. Three major issues discussed here include: The need to obtain a conceptual framework of assessment as it bears in the programme arrangement for relevant entrepreneurship for students with disabilities: the need to reposition special needs education following the current imbalances and maladjustments as they obtain from inappropriate assessment practices: and the need to re-examine assessment purposes as they take effect on providing appropriate entrepreneurship education for students with disabilities. Quality assessment programmes remain crucial towards relevant education for the empowerment of students with special needs.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship Training, Special Needs Education, Students with Disabilities, Inclusive Education, Disability Empowerment

Introduction

The education of individuals with special needs in Nigeria must emphasize entrepreneurship development if it is useful to the demands of the individuals and the society. The country has experienced a lot of political and economic problems, which have resulted in unemployment, poverty and hunger for Nigerian families. The explosions of interest in entrepreneurship are in public policy, economic and community development strategy. It is becoming increasingly important to be clear on the education which has to be distributed equally to help individuals with special needs to be self-employed after his/her academic career. The present emphasis on vocational and technical education/training in the present 9-3-4 or 6-3-3-4 system of education is very crucial because it helps to inculcate entrepreneurship zeal and self-employment in the programme with regard to persons with special needs. The principles of equality of educational opportunity requires the removal of unfair barriers to education, so that individuals with special needs will benefit more and be self-employed (Glennerster, 1979) cited in Lare (2010) Entrepreneurship/education development must be significant to the needs of exceptional persons so that the individuals will be fully adapted to the existence in our present declining world economy.

Empowerment of individuals with disabilities is the ultimate goal of special needs education, and it is specifically formulated to provide special needs individuals with needed access to basic education to start them off properly to face the challenges of society and to live useful lives. Entrepreneurship for persons with special needs can no longer be emphasised. This is because, entrepreneurs drive any nation's economy, accounting for the majority of that nation's new job creation and innovation. According to US Census Bureau's (2002) surveys of business owners, self-employed individuals who have no paid employees operate three-fourths of US businesses. It therefore stands that any relevant educational arrangement towards entrepreneurship for students with special needs should start

with authentic assessment. Such assessment exercise should involve those ongoing procedures during which professionals determine individual goals and objectives related in specific areas of development in order to plan an education, this time relevant entrepreneurship programmes for the students. The outcomes of the assessment process should have a profile of the individual to enable those working with person to identify strength as well as weaknesses. Just as assessment measures provides educational practitioners a way for planning a series of specific curriculum experience that are based on specific goals and objectives related to the information derived from it (Osuorji, 2004).

A Conceptual Frame: Assessment

A good place to start from is to understand assessment as a major concern for specialist. Throughout their professional careers, teachers, guidance and counsellors, school social workers, school psychologist, school audiologist and administrators will be required to gives, scores and interpreted a wide variety of tests. This has obvious implication for their need to have a working knowledge of important facets of testing. It has become necessary to examine assessment from the baseline of testing including factors to be considered in assessment from the baseline of testing including factor to be considered in assessment if appropriate understanding is to be made about an individual with special needs for effective entrepreneurship education (Tulgan, 1999).

It must be understood that entrepreneurship is a employment strategy that can lead to economic self-reliance. For each person with special needs, self-employment provides them and their families with potentials to create and manage business in which they can manage and function. Entrepreneurship training in the case of person with special needs offers a solution. This is as it seeks to prepare them, particularly the youth to be responsible, enterprising and become entrepreneurs and dynamic thinker by immersing them in real life learning experience where they take risk, manage results, and learning from outcome (Griffin & Hammis, 2003). The above therefore indicate a comprehensive understanding of such person with disabilities, as such assessment should involve more than the administration of the test. When such students are assessed, sound consideration must be accorded the way they perform a variety of tasks in a variety of settings, or contexts, including the meaning of their performances in terms of total functioning of the individual and likely explanations for those performances.

Good assessment procedures take into consideration the fact that anyone's performance on any task is influenced not only by the demand of tasks itself but also by the nature of the individual and characteristics the individual brings to the task by factors inherent in the setting in which the assessment is carried out. In this context, assessment should be seen as the process of understanding the performance of students with special needs in their current ecology. It is a common knowledge that such assessment should always be an evaluative interpretative appraisal of performance, just as assessment goal is simple in sense and difficult in another.

Assessment: Factors to Consider

It should be recognized that assessment provides information that can enable professionals and other school personnel to make decision regarding the students they serve. At the same time, the information can be misused or misinterpreted the decision can adversely affect such students and their life opportunities. It is therefore at this point that it becomes necessary to examines such factors which include: current life circumstances developmental history, interpersonal factors, interpretation of performance and prognosis, it is well to remember with regard to assessment techniques available to a diagnostician for gathering information. In this connection, information classification depends on the time at which the information is collected and how it is collected (from observations, test and judgement).

An individual's performance on any task must be understood in the light of that individual's current circumstances. Current circumstances must be understood to be aware of what a person brings to a task, in authentic assessment. Health and disability are significant current life circumstances, just as the two can play important roles in students' performances. On a wide variety of task children and youths with special needs are apt to be lethargic and irritable. A person's current life circumstance is also shaped by event that makes up his/her history of development. Deleterious events in particular may have profound effects on physical and psychological development. Disabilities of any form may systematically restrict a student's opportunity to acquire various skills and abilities, just as it is not enough to assess a student's current performance. In addition to the skills, characteristics and abilities a student with special needs bring to any task, other factors affect the assessment process. These include extract personal factors as they concern how another person interpret or reacts to various behaviours including characteristics which can determine whether an individual will be assessed or not. The theoretical orientation of the diagnostician also plays a vital role in the assessment process. This is an addition to the conditions under which a student is observed or under which a particular behaviour is elicited, which can influence the performance.

Interpretation of performance is important in assessment of students with disabilities. After an individual's behaviour and characteristics have been considered in the light of current life circumstances, developmental history, and extra-personal factors that may influence performance, the information should be summarized. Here the assessor is expected to arrive at the judgement that when all things are considered, the steps "fit" a particular category. Such as: mental retardation, emotional disorder, learning disabilities, educational impairment, cultural or social disadvantages, backward, normal or even gifted and talented etc. Assessors, especially when they assigned negative labels often attempts to impute a cause for an individual's status. It must be noted that classification according to cause (etiology) is common in medicine and special needs education but less common in education and psychology. All assessments and classifications of students contain an explicit or implicit prognosis, a prediction of future performance. A prognosis may be offered for students both in their current environment and life circumstances (even in some therapeutic, ameliorative or remedial environment). Such prognosis should be made on the basis of empirical research rather than speculation.

Authentic assessment and Disability Entrepreneurship

Perhaps there is need to have a rethink on how special needs education has evolved overtime. Inappropriate assessment practices have been associated with imbalance and maladjustment relative with special needs education provision in the country (Osuorji, 2008). It is common knowledge that educational programmes in Nigeria are segregative in residential schools. Again, integrated educational (entrepreneurship) programmes are not available at primary and secondary school levels. Although the national policy of education (2004) indicates that schools should arrange sensory, medical and psychological screening assessment to identify any incidence of disabilities, it is evident that no step has been taken to this direction. An accurate statistics of students with disabilities is also lacking. The 1991 Census obtained a crude disability rate (CDR) of 0.04%. Again the crude disability rate from 2006 national census is being awaited till date. In another development concerning situation assessment and analysis of 2001, Hodges (2001) observes that populations censuses are not the ideal instrument for collecting data on persons with disability and that a comprehensive survey of disabilities in Nigeria is still being awaited (P187).

Another great concern is in the area of government policies. The National Policy on Education (2004) makes provision for what may be considered a moderate policy regime for special needs education (SNE). The objective include to equalize educational opportunities, provide opportunities for the gifted and to design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all beneficiaries. The policy delineates the beneficiaries as those with disabilities, those found with disadvantages and those who are gifted and talented. Policy statement in this regard cover free educations, school adjustment, inclusive education and provision for screening and assessment of disabilities. The policy has made some pronouncements which pose obvious implications for entrepreneurship education for students with special needs. The human society school environment in particular has warranted the social model of disability. This implicitly suggests that disability is not entirely an attribute of an individual, rather a complex social and environment construct largely imposed by societal attitude and limitations of the human made environment (Shea & Bauer, 1999). Consequently, any process of amelioration and inclusion requires social action, and it is collective idea/responsibilities of society at large to make environment and attitudinal changes necessary for their full participation in all areas of life (Osuorji, 2008).

Eligibility Standard

Entrepreneurship training for special needs place a mandate for credible assessment of students with disabilities in order to identify and determine eligibility for such educational arrangement, for students with special needs. The individualized education programme (IEP) team shall document the following standard have been met.

- The child/individual shall demonstration a continual lack of progress when provided shall demonstrate instruction in the suspected area of disability.
- The determining factor for identification of a disability may not be lack of appropriate instructions.
- There shall be a severe discrepancy between educational performance and predicted achievement that is based on the best measure of ability.
- There shall be evidence that the child does not achieved commensurate with his/her age and ability.

Assessment Procedures

The learning strength and weakness as well as the related skills, abilities and deficiencies of all learners' (children, youth and adults) are determined by psychological assessment meant to diagnose for understanding special learning needs as the basis for appropriate and effective teaching. Personality traits, intelligence quotient (IQ), physical ability capacities, Human development task abilities, Visual Acuity, Hearing Acuity, Cognitive Aptitudes, etc are basic psychological and special learning needs which require to be determined in respect of learners so that teachers can professionally apply appropriate methodologies/measure which can make learning

effective. For students with special needs, their attribute in term of specific personality traits, intelligence, aptitude, dexterity skills vision, hearing etc need to be discreetly subjected to vary ability levels (i.e. assessment). Assessment indicators (Personality Pathologies, levels of intelligence, physical fitness indicators, visual acuity, hearing loss etc) are subjected to standard parameters to determine the extent of special need (diagnosis) or extent of strengths and weaknesses to project appropriate interventions (Prognosis). Assessment, diagnosis and prognosis are therefore a core integral part of services in special education. (Shea & Bauer, 1994).

Mallubu (2015) highlighted the following assessment procedures

- An individual standardized multifactored assessment of functional ability
- An individual standard assessment of achievement.
- Supportive data in the indentified deficit areas from sources such as groups or individually administered achievement tests, criterion-referenced assessments, performance-based assessment.
- At least two valid and reliable measures in the area of the suspected disability (may derived from any of the assessment described above).
- At least two documented observations of the students in the general education classroom including.
- An indirect observation by the student general education classroom providing the indirect observations (observations shall address the student's behaviours, performance and relevant work samples.
- Parent input as well as student's input.

- **Assessment Participants**
- For the purpose of assessment for entrepreneurship the case of student's with disabilities, information shall be gathered from the following persons in the specific disability.
- The student (special)
- The parents of the students
- The guardian of the student
- The student's class teachers
- An appropriate licensed school psychologist in examiner
- Other professional personal in the field.

Critical remarks are required at this point in respect of purpose and assumptions in assessment. When a selection is made of assessment techniques for use in educational settings, consideration must be given to certain assumption inherent in the assessment, including the ways in which failure to meet those assumptions will directly affect the validity of obtained result.

Similarly, failure to make into account the assumption inherent in assessment can lead to over generation (Osutorji, 2004). Assessment purpose therefore derived on the above which include: screening, place, programme, planning and programme evaluation (Ozaji, 2018). It must be noted that assessment like diagnosis should provide (students, parents, teacher, school psychologist and other professionals) with information to assist them in making decision that will enhance students' educational development/achievement and life fulfilment. Test maybe administered to identify students who are sufficiently different from their age-mates that may require special attention. Screening is usually accomplished by teacher administration of a test to a group of students. This is because tests are routinely administered of identify students' experiencing academic and other special needs problems for whom further diagnostic assessment may be appropriate. Special Needs Education law (2004) require that students be evaluated by a certified diagnostic specialist before they may enter or leave special needs educational programmes. For placement in most classes for children with special needs, a student must demonstrate a current functioning level (where he/she is capable). While there are many problem apparent in the use of test to make placement decision. Special needs education regulation require that decision should be test based. This requirement exists primarily for the protections of students with special needs. Test is often administered in an effort to assist teachers and administrators in planning education for individuals or groups of students. Test information is used to decide placement or to assign students to specific programmes (innovative or remedial programmes) and also used in deciding on what to teach and how to teach an individual as well as groups. With the increase in the attention given to exceptional children and the effort to develop individual programme for them, there is an expansion of the use of diagnostic profiles planning instructional efforts.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship education is important to the development of effective entrepreneurs. It gives room to other exceptional individuals who have not maximized their potentials to come up and face the challenges. (Kolo, 2005) said that intervention towards meeting the special needs of persons with disabilities demands that appropriate steps to be taken as adequate instrument be put in place. Investigation of disability is a process involving multi-

disciplinary such as teachers, audiologist, psychologist, parents and other professionals in the format study of teaching and learning, which attempt to answer fundamental questions: how well are students learning and how effective are learning experiences and skills transforming the students towards manifesting desirable outcomes. Relevant education starts assessment which involves students and professionals in continuous monitoring of students learning. Assessments are designed to inform specialists and administrators on what students bring to school (their nature), what they are learning and how well they are learning. This is because the approach is child centered, mutually beneficial, context specific, specialists directed, formative ongoing and rooted in good professional practice. Through close observations, the collection of feedback on students learning, and the design of experiments and programmes, specialists can learn more about how students with disabilities learn and more specifically, how they respond to particular teaching approaches and innovative programmes. Authentic assessment of students with special needs for entrepreneurship education to live a fulfilled life is a step too critical in the course of special needs education.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Multiple assessment procedures should be used in the identification and assessment of persons with disabilities.
2. Adequate provision of funds and facilities is required to achieve an effective entrepreneurial skill development.
3. The reliability of assessment should be sustained by using multiple instruments which include student school work, standardized test, teachers' records and students' self-assessment inventories.
4. Use team based approach on cases in which a variety of data are interpreted and analyzed by qualified team.
5. Soft loans should be made available to exceptional persons with no interest charged,
6. The materials produced by persons with special needs should be patronised by all.

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