

The Challenges of Schooling with Disabilities in the University of Jos, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Schooling in Nigerian Universities can be challenging due to lack of enabling environment that allows for effective teaching and learning. It can even be more challenging when schooling is combined with disabilities. The study examined the challenges of schooling with disabilities in the University of Jos, Nigeria and the factors that function to facilitate these challenges. In order to achieve the stated objective, FGD and semi structured/structured respond type of questionnaire were used to illicit responses from a hundred and eighteen physically challenged students drawn from the Department of Special Education. Multi-stage sampling technique and snowball were used to identify respondents. The study found unfavourable architectural design, lack of enabling policy and instructional material as some of the factors that help facilitate low academic performance. On the basis of the findings, the study recommended among others, attitudinal change, total cultural reformation that will see ability in disability, formulation of policies that treat issues that affect the disable as a legal right and not an issue of welfare, provision of instructional material as a way of boasting their self-esteem and enhancing the academic performance of the physically challenged in the University.

Key words: Disabilities and challenges of schooling with disabilities

Les défis de la scolarisation des handicapés à l'Université de Jos, au Nigeria.

Résumé

La scolarisation dans les universités nigérianes peut être difficile en raison du manque d'un environnement favorable qui permet à l'enseignement et à un apprentissage efficace. Cela peut même être plus difficile lorsque la scolarité est combinée avec un handicap. L'étude a examiné les défis de la scolarisation des handicapés dans l'Université de Jos, Nigeria et les facteurs qui fonctionnent pour faciliter ces défis. Afin d'atteindre l'objectif déclaré, des discussions de groupe et le semi structuré type de réponse du questionnaire ont été utilisés pour les réponses illicites de cent dix-huit étudiants handicapés physiques issus du Département de l'éducation spéciale. La technique d'échantillonnage à plusieurs degrés et boule de neige ont été utilisés pour identifier les répondants. L'étude a révélé la conception architecturale défavorable, le manque d'une politique et

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matériel didactique comme certains facteurs qui contribuent à faciliter un faible rendement scolaire. Sur la base des résultats, l'étude a recommandé, entre autres, le changement d'attitude, la réforme culturelle totale qui verra la capacité de l'invalidité, la formulation des politiques qui traitent des questions qui touchent le handicapé comme un droit légal et non pas une question de bien-être, l'approvisionnement du matériel d'enseignement comme un moyen de se vanter de leur estime de soi et d'améliorer le rendement scolaire des handicapés physiques dans l'Université.

Mots clés: les personnes handicapées, l'éducation spéciale, les défis de la scolarisation des handicapés

Introduction

Disabilities and its accompanying challenges have received considerable attention in educational and social science discuss. Various forms of disabilities and its various challenges have been examined for their impact on the disabled. (Ajuwon, 2008; UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2008; & Salend, 2001). According to the country report of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM, 2009) the challenges of disabilities affects an estimated ten per cent of the population of Nigeria. Disability refers to a range of conditions that may stand in the way of a child's ability to perform his/her day-to-day activities. Such conditions may include but not limited to problems with muscles, such as muscular dystrophy; problems involving the central nervous system, like the cerebral palsy; skeletal problems, like spinal bifida or missing limbs; and other health problems, such as cystic fibrosis and heart disorders.

However, for the purpose of this paper, we shall concern ourselves with physically challenged or those nature of disability that affect the physical structure of the individual like the loss of the eyes, the limbs, and other physical sensory organs of the body. Physical disabilities for some children are simply structural or health problems that do not require special educational facilities or services. For other children, however, physical disabilities may interfere with their ability to walk, write, speak, take care of their personal needs and perform their day-to-day activities (Salend, 2001). In other circumstances, others may be able to perform all of these activities but with difficulties that may require additional time or specialized assistance.

Evidences over the year have shown that physical disabilities due to iatrogenesis or inadequate immunization service and injury sustained during conflicts pervades on an increasing level (Aleh, 2013; Togonu 1996; Das & Kattumari, 2008). Of the estimated 162 million population of Nigeria (World Bank, 2012), the Nigerian National Assemblies put the population of People Living With physical disabilities in the country at twenty per cent (20%). This increase in the level of disabilities from ten per cent in 2009 to 20 per cent in 2012, carry with it the burden associated with the various forms including schooling in the Nigerian Universities where facilities necessary for effective teaching and learning even for "able" students are lacking. These have profound educational implications *viz-a-viz* the need for social supportive services and long term care.

For children with disabilities, university education does not just comprise of the acquisition of knowledge, language and communication but other societal and vocational skills that consist of the use of adaptation aids (Encarta, 2009). These aids for adaptation are mostly customized to fit their physique and level/nature of disabilities, and special needs. There include but not limited to aids to enable them to move around such as motorized wheelchairs, braces, or crutches; seats fitted to help them both in movement and posture; communication aids, aids for turning pages of books, amongst others. Many of these are however lacking in most Nigerian universities.

As the disabled strive to overcome these hindrances caused by physical structures that are evidently to their disadvantage, they are further met with discrimination arising from superstitious beliefs. The policy of isolation, separation and inhuman treatments they face in secluded schools coupled with lack of acceptance by peers in inclusive school who are the closest on par have further exacerbated their problem. Twin to the challenges of facilities is the existence of many barriers for educating children with disabilities in regular classrooms due to scarcity of resources or even lack of it, negative attitudes of teachers, non-disabled peers and their parents.

Furthermore, most Nigerian Universities lack teachers who are grounded in special education pedagogy thus making them unfit to pass on knowledge and enhance learning effectively. Under such condition, efforts of the disabled to become the best educationally is often met with very strong challenges due to lack of resources necessary for effective teaching and learning and physical structures that hinders their full integration into the inclusive school policy. These observations provoke questioning: What are the factors that functions to facilitate these challenges in Nigerian Universities? To what extent have these factors affected the educational performance of people living with disabilities? This study is persuaded by these observations.

Objectives of Study

In general term, the aim of this research work is to identify the challenges of schooling with disabilities in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the research will:

- i. Identify the various challenges of schooling with physical disabilities in the Universities of Jos.
- ii. Examine the impact (s) of these challenges on the educational performance of the disabled in the universities Jos.

Methodology

The study adopts a qualitative and quantitative method. The choice was informed by the desire to allow an intensive study within the real-life context of students Schooling with disabilities. It provides a detailed and step-by-step way of understudying social realities. Similarly, it provided a good understanding of causality and gives one a sound base for an all-embracing examination in future research (Bent 2006).

Sample and Sampling Procedure

A multi-stage sampling technique was used. At the first stage, the purposive sampling technique was use to select the Department of Special Education. For the second stage, the researchers snowballed since there was no comprehensive list of the physically challenged in the Department of Special Education University of Jos. In this way, a hundred and twenty physically challenged students schooling in the university were admitted into the study.

Data Collection Method

For quantitative method, a total of 100 questionnaires consisting of structured and semi-structured—response type of questionnaire made up of two sections. Section “A” consisting of personal data – age, sex, course of study, types of disability, etc, and B consisting of questions bordering on the

challenges of schooling with disabilities in Nigerian Universities were printed and distributed to those whose degree of disability did not include the loss of sight.

For qualitative method, a total of two (2) Focus Group Discussions were conducted for the category of students who have problem of sight (one with the female and the other with the male). Eighteen students participated in the FGDs. The FGDs were audio-taped and later transcribed for analysis. This process of audio-recording of interview is favoured as it helps avoid bias (Borg & Gall 1989; Seale & Silverman 1997). Borg and Gall (1989) for example suggested that transcribing after audio-tapping could prevent text selection that supports the unconscious bias of the researcher.

Transcribing after audio-recording was principally supportive in this research because the FGD sessions with the participants lasted for over an hour and the questions related to the research were intermingled with a range of other information sharing. Without this, student would have lost interest should the researcher had started taking note.

The overall socio-demographic information of the participants is presented in table 1. The discussions on the participant's view and their experiences with reference to themselves and their position in Nigerian Universities were also documented. Data collected through the research instrument were presented and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 21 to determine the relationships between and among variables. The general characteristics of the respondents (socio-demographic characteristics) are analyzed and inference drawn from the descriptive statistics.

Conceptual Explanation and Literature Review

Disability

There are several ways of defining disability. The most commonly used is the medical definition demonstrating disability as injury or the inability to carry out regular social roles because of the impairment and incapacitation (Finkelstein, 1991). There is also a societal definition that considers the way the lives of the disabled are affected by the challenges society imposes on them (Oliver, 1983). It has also been defined as impairment in actions of everyday existence or having a hitch in the performance of any Activity of Daily Living (ADL) without assistance or gear for three months or longer (Booth & Ainscow, 1998, p.2)

The disabled therefore is one having an impairment or disability which limits the functioning of the person to the extent that he/she requires rehabilitation services to be able to function as expected. It refers to a broad array of conditions that may possibly interfere with a child's capacity to perform his/her day-to-day activities (Rioux & Carbet, 2003). Such conditions according Munro, (2001) includes troubles with muscles, problem with the central nervous system, problems with the structure of the skeleton, and general health problems, like cystic fibrosis and heart disorders.

Whether we consider the definition of Rioux and Carbet (2003); Munro, (2001) or that of Booth and Ainscow (1998, p.2), what is common is that the disabled has certain impairment that limits their functioning, and that some of these impairments have to do with physical conditions. Thus, disability in this regards has to do with physical impairments that inhibit their performances.

Measurement of Academic Performance

In every country, schools are basically established with the purpose of imparting learning, knowledge and skill necessary for independent living (Hoyle, 1986). Thus those who pass through them are expected to be knowledgeable and contributing members of their societies. One major pointer to the fact that they have skills to impact on their societies is their academic performance

which is measured by the outcome of their results in course work, test and examination (Cambridge University Report, 2003, cited in Kyoshaba, 2009) Academic performance can also be measured by performance in examination as well as accumulation of scores from both test and examinations.

Educating children with disabilities in Nigeria: An appraisal of the journey so far

Nigeria began her first home-grown National policy on Education in 1977. Since then series of activities geared towards improving special education to children with special needs have been launched. These includes the development of more specialized and residential primary schools for children with disabilities, the improved turnout of students with disabilities in both secondary and higher institutions, and the training of special education teachers in selected tertiary institutions in the country. Similarly, the number of advocacy organization in the area of education of PWDs has equally risen. These programs have however been greeted with mixed reactions and outcomes. The policy provides among other things equal access to education for children with special needs in an encouraging and open environment that will help them fulfill and harness their educational potentials. This paved the way for inclusive educational policy in Nigeria perhaps out of the realization that all children irrespective of their ethnicity, race religion sex, gender, real or imagine disabilities and the likes have right to equal educational opportunity (Nigeria National Policy on Education, 2008)

A closer look at facilities in most Nigerian schools however reveals lack of sensitivity to the plight of the disabled. Children with special need education have not been appropriately integrated into the mainstream educational system because of the inadequate provision of teaching aids, materials and facilities as well as teacher who are grounded in the education of children with special needs methodologies and skills. Other challenges include stairs, narrow doorways and other barriers to students with wheelchairs (APRM, 2008).

In response to these challenges in inclusive schools, the Federal Government of Nigeria began the now ill-fated Institutionalized rehabilitation scheme in eight centers across the country in 1970. The possibility of encouraging the segregation and discrimination of Persons Living with Disabilities (PLWDs) in national life was however given little thought. The centers according to Togonu (1996) were ill-equipped by all account and were secluded grounds good enough to turn out graduates who were heavily stigmatized and whose reintegration into their respective societies was met with attitudes of neglect and rejection. These special education programme and scheme lacked adequate support and full community involvement. Disabled persons were therefore plucked from the borders of inclusive isolation or segregation at home into the void of exclusive isolation toward total isolation (Togonu, 1996). Thus the special education schools in Nigeria did not afford them with equal opportunity for teaching and learning (Lindsay, 2007).

Since then, several other policies and programmes like the Nigerians with Disability Decree of 1993, and the inclusive educational programme of the Nigerian National Policy on Education (2004), have been introduced. The inclusive education programme provided a coverage of the rights of People living With Disabilities thus seeking to ensure their full integration into the mainstream of society. In line with the programme a multidisciplinary National Commission for People with Disabilities was set up to monitor its implementation PWDs were to be fully integrated into the national economy, educational, social, political and have equal rights and opportunities before the law. The APRM (2008) however, reported that the right of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) are not adequately protected and promoted at the Federal level and in several States.

Neiker (1997,p.9) has identified “lack of facilities in the Nigerian schools, lack of teachers/lecturer with good special education background and library materials as part of the

challenges of schooling with disabilities in Nigeria schools. The issue therefore is that the fundamental rights of the disabled to life, education and work have not been viewed as a general human rights frame. This explains why Bickersteth (1996) reported that there is a high level of inequity, structural impediment, and lack of library material to care for the special needs of the disabled. Instructional materials, like prosthesis for the deaf, brail for the blind and other similar materials for other forms of disabilities are not adequately provided in the schools. Other challenges identified included, lack of specialized services designed for the disabled like easy access to educational materials in the library and classroom. These constitute hindrances and makes schooling with disabilities challenging in the Nigerian Universities (Bikersteth, 1996).

Correlates and factors that Influence the challenges of schooling with physical disability in Nigerian Universities

Socio - Cultural Determinants

Aristotle (1260 cited in Vehmas, 2004) asserts that historical and cultural contexts, to a great degree, determine the ground for what is normal and what represents an ideal or acceptable person. Thus, Societies formulates their distinctive model of reacting to disability and the plight of the disabled, on the basis of their understanding of disabilities. The practice of rehabilitation of a society could be understood by looking deeply at the cultural and social nuances which disability represents in that society. In most Asian societies, the concept of *karma* decides the basic assumptions of disability, such that disability is perceived as resulting from one's deeds in former life (Ghai 2001, Karna 2001 cited in Ghosh 2005).

A World Bank report (2007:21-29) which inquired into the cultural interpretation of disability that determines societal attitudes towards the disabled identified the association of evil deeds with sufferings and ignorance as the basis for stigma and discrimination of individuals with disabilities and issues related to disability (Das & Kattumari, 2008). These negative attitudes according to Das and Kattumari (2008) have been responsible for societal insensitivity in responding to the plight of the disabled. It has also resulted in their being relegated to the background and lack of equality in dealing with them in social and development arena including the educational setting.

While people with lesser degree of disability may in so many ways socialize freely with community members, marry non-disabled persons, and attend regular schools without hitches, the same cannot be said of people with whose level of disability is high. People With disabilities face discrimination and stigma and are undoubtedly marginalized in many aspect of social life.

Welfare rather than legal/enabling policy framework

Nigeria though signatory to the Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, is yet to demonstrate a positive outlook necessary for their enforcement. Other protocols adopted in principles by Nigeria includes the World Declaration on Education for All (1990), the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disability (1993), the UNESCO Salamanca Statement for Framework for Action (1994), and the World Education Forum in Dakar (2000). Yet in practice, these regulations are not enforced.

Similarly, Nigerian National Assemblies in 2014 passed into law the Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities prohibition Bill. This bill is yet to be assent to by the president and domesticated by Most State in Nigeria. This has impacted on the enjoyment of rights and privileges that goes with them. Thus, their inclusion into the mainstream of the various national

lives is equally underdeveloped. There are not included in political processes or institutions and are few in numbers in every other aspect of our political and social life including education due to lack of enabling policy and regulation that could enhance their participation.

Structural deficiencies

With the absence of enforcement, regulation and accessibility modalities; access to physical infrastructures inhibits their mobility and adversely affect their ability to enforce many of their rights in educational, social, political and economic arenas. There are no basic ramps or elevators, transportation systems and other basic facilities. Other challenges include absence to information due to lack of sign language, Braille and other forms of communication (FGN, 2008).

Theoretical Framework.

For the purpose of this study, we have adopted the medical and the social models in explaining disabilities and the impact of schooling with disabilities in the University of Jos, Nigeria.

The medical model of disability

The medical model has dominated various studies on disability, social work and social services. It originates through the works of Brooks, 1991; Brzuzy, 1997; Hahn, 1983; Mackelprang and Salsgiver, 1996 and Quinn, 1995a. The model view disability as a functional inadequacy, as an individual personal problem, pathology, 'dysfunction, or deviance (Brzuzy, 1997; Finkelstein, 1991). Accordingly, people are disabled as a result of their impairments. This model situates disability and the various problems associated with it including its impact on their academic performance in Nigerian Universities within the individual and views functional constraints or psychological losses as natural deficit arising from this natural deficit (Oliver, 1996).

The medical model, also known as the individual or personal tragedy theory of disability, argued that disability is a natural constraints placed on the individual when put in competitive social situations. Accordingly, the view that disability is inextricably linked to social, cultural and political milieu is rejected by this theory. The model rather assumes that disability is a personal medical tragedy that disabled individuals are plagued with and the challenges accompanying are deficits imposed upon them by the tragedy. The disabled therefore are in need of medical intervention to have them fixed even when such impairment(s) does not represent any bodily pain or ill health (Quinn, 1995b).

By defining disability as a natural tragedy and the challenges accompanying as deficits as a result of that, the model leads to little expectations in the disabled, creates a state of dependency in the disabled, and lead to the disabled losing control and choice of their individual lives.

Similarly, the theory failed to recognize human insensitivity to their plight as a challenge. What is not clear is whether we should accept constructing high rising public building without alternative provisions for the physically challenged as challenges imposed on the disabled by this biological deficit. Or teaching the blind without necessary teaching aids like the brails and other interactive teaching aids as natural constraints. It is our position in this paper that the challenges the disable face in Nigerian Universities are manmade and these challenges can only be resolved through good leadership and good policy formulation.

Social model of disability

This model came into being in the United Kingdom following the 1976 statement by the Union of the Physically Impaired against Segregation (UPIAS, 1976). It was again discussed by Corker

(2000), Finkelstein (1980), and Oliver (1983, 1990, 1996). Instead of maintaining a narrow focus on functional restrictions, disability and other problem associated with it according to the social model, is “ as a result of the failure of the society to provide necessary supportive services and sufficiently guarantee that the needs of disabled people are fully considered in its social organization” (Oliver, 1996, p. 32). To the social model, disability is the totality of all factors that restricts people with disabilities. It ranges from unconstructive social positions to institutional prejudice, from inaccessible public buildings to unfriendly transport systems, from separated education to elimination in work provisions and the list goes on.

While it is well understood that the connections of PLWDs to their bodies entails aspects of hurt and struggle that to an extend might not be removed or alleviated, several barriers placed on them by people and the challenges they faced including schooling in Nigerian Universities and low academic performance are a function of having those physical impairments under existing social and economic arrangements (especially as a result the means of industrial production). These social and economic systems though could but do not incorporate the disabled people’s physical conditions and their struggles into the cultural concept of everyday life (Asch & Fine, 1988).

Findings

Table1. Percentage distribution of respondents by sex

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	68	57.6
Female	50	42.4
Total	118	100

Source: Author’s field work 2016

Table 1 displays the age distribution of respondents. Of the total of one hundred and eighteen respondents that participated in the research, one hundred responded through the questionnaire, while eighteen participated in the Focus Group Discussion (FGD)- regardless of their nature of disability, majority of the respondents were male (68 or 57.6%). 50 (42.4%) were however female.

Table2: Distribution of respondents by year of study

Year of study	Frequency	Percent
100 level	32	32.0
200 level	28	28.0
300 level	21	21.0
400 level	19	19.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Author’s field work 2016

Though the researchers used snowball method in administering questionnaire, respondent were asked to state their academic level in the university. Table 2 above shows the distribution of respondents by their year of studies. Thirty- two per cent of the respondents are in their first year. Other distribution shows that 28 per cent of the respondents are in year two while 21 and 19 per cent were in year three and four respectively.

Table3: Distribution of respondents by nature of disabilities

Nature of disability	Frequency	Percent
Paralysis	5	5.0
Dumb	11	11.0
Loss of the legs	16	16.0
Hearing impairment	29	29.0
Hand amputee	39	39.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Author's field work 2016

The types of challenges that the physically challenge come to the universities with are diverse. It ranges from lack of hands (39%) through hearing impairment (29%), loss of legs (16%), and lack of audio ability (11%) to paralysis (5%). Each of these challenges comes with its own peculiar challenge particularly when it comes to schooling with it.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents by nature of challenges they faced in the university.

Nature of challenges	Frequency	Percent
Lack of instructional material	36	36.0
Unfriendly architectural design	34	34.0
Lack of resources and policies	20	20.0
Others	10	10.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Author's field work 2016

There are a range of hindrances to effective learning and academic performance of people living with physical disabilities in the University of Jos which is evident in the responses of the respondent. From table 4 above, lack of instructional material top the challenges facing the disabled in the Nigerian Universities. This is represented by 36 per cent. Following issues of instructional material is the unfriendly nature of the architectural design of the university buildings (N=34 or 34%). Other challenges are lack of resources for moving around and supportive materials/policies that is not to the advantage of the physically challenge (N=20 or 10%).

Table 5: Distribution of respondents by their perceived level of academic performance.

Performance rating	Frequency	Percent
Not satisfied	69	69.0
Satisfactory	27	27.0
Very satisfactory	4	4.0
Total	100	100.0

Source: Author's field work 2016

Academic performance is considered very important in demonstrating teaching and learning outcome. Many of the student perceived their academic performance as not satisfactory to them (N=69 or 69%). Few of them, however, considered their academic performance as satisfactory (27%) while some considered it as very satisfactory (4%).

Discussion of findings

The Nature of the challenges faced by the physically challenged in the Nigerian university

In this study, we have identified amongst other things, lack of instructional material, unfriendly nature of the architectural design of the university buildings, lack of resources for moving around and supportive materials/policies that are not to the advantage of the physically challenge. Findings from the FGD with the blind also support this result. Of a particular importance in this regards is this statement of the FGD participants:

People make jest of us and treat us like social misfits. Their attitude to our plight is that of welfare and not that be deserve anything as a matter of right...and this is evident in the kind of services they provide us with. We only get a thing after everyone else has been provided for. So everything in this country is a challenge...and we have it replicated in Nigeria Universities. From the work ways to the library, from stair to the class room.. Through teaching aids and even the lecturers that teach us constitute challenges that impact on our academic performance and makes us feel as though we are responsible for our disabilities (FGD participant with the female blind student, 2016).

The African Pear Review Mechanism Country Report for Nigeria (2008) equally supports this view when it reported that children with special need education have not been appropriately integrated into the mainstream educational system because of the inadequate provision of teaching aids, materials and facilities as well as teacher who are grounded in the education of children with special needs methodologies, stairs, narrow doorways and other barriers to students with wheelchairs and skills. As they strive to overcome these challenges, they are again met with psychological demoralization. With these challenges, the physically challenged finds it impossible to put their innate potentials, necessary for effect academic performance, to use.

Impact of Schooling with Disabilities on the Academic Performance of the Physically Challenged.

Measuring their academic performance on the basis of their scores in Continuous Assessment (CA) and semester examination, the physically challenged reported they were not satisfied with their performance and expresses the optimism they would have done better all thing where equal. They reported the nature of their disability greatly affected their academic performance and hindrances created by lack of enabling environment exacerbated it.

This finding lend credence to the earlier work of Das and Kattumari (2008), Bikersteth (1996) and Naiker (1997) when they observed that the lack of structural impediments and lack of sensitivity to the plight of the disabled greatly affects their effort to becoming the best in life particularly in their academic performance in the Nigerian Universities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The very most important outcome of education and its reform is to improve the academic performance of the students so that they can be productive to themselves and the Country as a whole. Meeting these needs implies that effort should be geared towards making our institution of higher learning conducive for effective teaching and learning. Thus, people with special needs (physically challenged) requires addition attention from all stakeholders for them to have their self-esteem built up and their academic performance enhanced. This has leadership, policy and educational implication. It requires attitudinal change, a total cultural reformation that will see ability in disability and treat issues that affect the disable as a legal right and not as issue of welfare.

Similarly, for the inclusive educational programme to be effective, we recommend architectural design of the Nigerian Universities to reflect understanding of the special needs of the disabled. This should go side-by-side the provision of supportive materials and other instructional material that will aid the teaching and learning of people with disabilities.

The domestication of all international treaties signed by the Nigerian government should be embarked upon by the government. This will place the disabled at level where they can begin to see themselves as equal stakeholders in the Nigerian project and the need to advance towards perfection necessary for its achievement.

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