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## An Assessment of the Attitudes, Beliefs Philosophy of Education for Exceptional Children

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BY

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### ABSTRACT

*Any behavior or performance outside the “normal” range is exceptional. If exceptionality interferes with normal functioning across various situations, educators consider “labeling” a student as exceptional in order to provide services. For all disabilities, the process of screening, identification, and labeling includes numerous evaluations and observations. While current initiatives toward inclusive education internationally have been implemented, such as the Education for All programme, some countries in the Global South are still challenged by lack of ability to provide children with disabilities access to education due to issues such as lack of resources and schools being overcrowded. The process of “assessing” a child’s learning needs include evaluation and screening by psychologists and therapists, and determining the child’s day-to-day specific needs in academic, social, and creative realms. Deciding whether a student needs special education services rests on the degree to which a disability interferes with normal functioning. We all mix up left and right now and then, but that does not mean we have a learning disability or dyslexia. Students with exceptionalities could be on any sort of placement, from the regular classroom to a special school or residential setting.*

**KEYWORDS: Education, Exceptional Children, Giftedness, Attitudes and Beliefs**

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### Introduction

According to the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), 6.6 million U.S. children received some sort of special education services in the 2003-04 school years. In the 2003-2004 school year, fourteen percent of all students enrolled in public schools received services in federally supported programmes for children with disabilities, up from 8 percent in 1977 (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). These students have a range of differences, from specific learning disabilities to severe restrictions of movement or communication. Everyone has strength in some areas and weaknesses in others. A student may have severe problems in mathematics and the sciences but be a gifted public speaker with a talent for learning foreign languages. A student may be an intelligent, creative learner in all academic areas, but may be hampered by a wheelchair that makes many locations and activities inaccessible.

The same holds true for exceptionalities in other areas, such as emotional development, amount of leg movement, white blood cell count, and so forth. Given the poverty levels in a variety of developing countries, the education of children with disabilities does not become a priority. Children with physical disabilities are less likely to attend school

in comparison with students who do not have a disability and children with an intellectual ability are even less likely than children with physical disabilities. In the Global South, 90% of children with some form of disability do not receive any form of structured education

### **Statement of the problem**

There are several contributing risk factors why over 200,000 children with disabilities in Akwa Ibom State are out of school. The obvious cause will be the very exclusive and inaccessible regular primary and secondary schools. This makes it impossible for children with disabilities to attend schools within their locality as other nondisabled children. It imposes the avoidable hardship of having to travel long distances to special schools; the agony of early childhood separation from parents and loved ones and the pain of confinement into segregation.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### **Concept of Exceptionality**

A child who has exceptionality has some area of functioning in which he or she is significantly different from an established norm. This definition includes both students with disabilities and those with special gifts or talents. For example, an average score on a standardized intelligence test such as the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children–III (WISC-III) is 100, with a standard deviation of 10 points. If a child's IQ score is between 80 and 120, he/she is considered as having "normal" intelligence. If the IQ score is above 120, he/she may be identified as "gifted," and if less than 80, may be labeled "developmentally disabled" or "mentally retarded." Of course, intelligence tests are not always accurate, and educators consider further measures of ability and achievement before placing a child in a special category.

#### **Types of Exceptionalities**

Educators at all levels refer to special needs students as those with exceptionalities. A child with an exceptionality means a child evaluated as having: Intellectual, Communicative, Sensory, Behavioral, Multiple and/or Physical disability. Types of exceptionalities include Autism, Deafness-Blindness, Developmental disability, Giftedness, Hearing impairment including deafness, Intellectual disability, Mental retardation, Down syndrome, Orthopedic impairment, Other health impairments, Serious emotional disturbance, Specific learning disabilities, Speech or language impairment, Traumatic brain injury, and/or Visual impairment including blindness. Most educators prefer not to use the term handicapped because of its negative implications but refer to special needs students as those with exceptionality and/or challenged - both of which have more positive implications. In general, exceptionalities fall in six broad categories:

- **Intellectual:** This includes students who have superior intelligence as well as those who are slow to learn. The group could be expanded to include (giftedness, Mental retardation, Down syndrome, intellectual disability and developmental disability).
- **Communicative:** These students have special learning disabilities or speech or language impairments. The expanded group includes: autism, language impairment, speech impairment and specific learning disability.
- **Sensory:** Sensory-grouped students have auditory or visual disabilities (deaf or hard-of-hearing, deaf-blindness, blind and low vision).

- **Behavioural:** These students are emotionally disturbed or socially maladjusted with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
- **Physical:** This includes students with orthopedic, or mobility disabilities.
- **Multiple:** These students have a combination of conditions, such as orthopedically challenged and visually impaired.

Although statistics are difficult to obtain, it has been estimated that between 10 and 13 percent of the school-age population has exceptionalities. Thus, in an average-size classroom of 25 students, it is conceivable that 3 or 4 individuals will exhibit one or more exceptionalities.

### **Giftedness**

Giftedness is a special kind of exceptionality that attracts the attention of all. Averred by Cicerchia and Freeman (2020), giftedness is defined as an intellectual ability linked to an IQ score of 130 or over. However, not all gifted children excel in an academic area. Some may display high creative, artistic, musical and/or leadership abilities relative to their peers. Giftedness can be focused in one skill, or it may be more general. It's also important for parents and educators to understand that it can sometimes come with specific learning differences that impact on performance at school. In these situations it's important to help a child develop their talents while also overcoming any challenges posed by the specific Learning Difficulty (SpLDs) (Aniefiok 2008).

In theory, there are three ways of educating children who are intellectually and academically more advanced than their peers: (1) acceleration, whereby the gifted child is allowed to learn material at a more rapid pace or is promoted more rapidly through grades; (2) enrichment, whereby the gifted child works through the usual grades at the usual pace but with a curriculum supplemented by a variety of cultural activities; and (3) differentiation, whereby gifted children are accelerated or enriched within the regular classroom (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020). In some cases, it may be appropriate for the child to attend a special program or a school specifically for gifted children, so they have ample opportunities for advancement in a classroom environment that is sensitive to their needs and provides adequate stimulation. With access to the right resources and emotional and academic support, every gifted child can achieve their full potential at school. There are a number of ways to determine giftedness and often a combination of ability and achievement tests are used, including observation and/or a review of the student's portfolio of work (Cicerchia & Freeman, 2020). A child's activities both in and outside of school may be considered, along with cognitive abilities, creativity, and affective and behavioural habits.

According to Cicerchia & Freeman (2020), there are also cases in which gifted children stand out because of poor academic achievement. This is often surprising for parents to learn as many people assume that giftedness is always associated with high performance. Yet it is possible for a learning disability to overshadow giftedness. This is especially true when a child has ADD/ADHD or dyslexia. There can be giftedness in one subject, such as Math, but a learning disability that affects performance in other areas of the curriculum. Lastly, it can be the case that kids who are gifted become easily bored when they don't find schoolwork challenging and are misdiagnosed as having ADD/ADHD because they stop paying attention in class. Learn more about ADD and ADHD in these posts.

### **Attitudes and Beliefs, Philosophy of Education for Exceptional Children**

The philosophy of education examines the goals, forms, methods, and meaning of education. The term is used to describe both fundamental philosophical analysis of these themes, and the description/analysis of particular pedagogical approaches. Considerations of how the profession relates to broader philosophical or socio-cultural contexts may be included (Frankena, William, Raybeck, Nathan; Burbules, Nicholas, 2002; Phillips, Trevor, 2017). The philosophy of education thus overlaps with the field of education and applied philosophy. For instance, philosophers of education study what constitutes upbringing and education, the values and norms revealed through upbringing and educational practices, the limits and legitimization of education as an academic discipline, and the relation between educational theory and practice.

The overall philosophy of the Nation's educational belief is that education is an instrument for national development and social change; it is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria; it maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individuals for self-fulfillment and general development of the society; education is a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges, and finally Nigeria upholds that education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society (NPE, 2007).

The attitudes, beliefs and Philosophy of education for exceptional children follows the general belief that all people have the ability to learn, regardless of their particular disabilities. The trend in public education has shifted from isolating special education students in separate classrooms to mainstreaming them in the regular classroom for at least part of the day. This is in keeping with the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) mission to achieve full integration and participation in society of people with disabilities by ensuring equal opportunity and access to, and excellence in, education, employment, and community living. Participation of students with exceptional needs in inclusive settings is based on the philosophy of equality, sharing, participation and the worth and dignity of individuals. This philosophy is based on the belief that all children can learn and reach their full potential given opportunity, effective teaching and appropriate resources.

This support for inclusive education is also reflected in Palliser Administrative Procedure 213, which agrees that students with exceptional needs must be full participants in school and society. The regular classroom is viewed as the most enabling environment for the student with exceptional needs because of the increased opportunity to participate with same-aged peers without exceptional needs. Inclusion, by definition, refers not merely to setting, but to specially designed instruction and support for students with special supports and service needs in regular classrooms and community schools. Often, meeting the learning needs on either end of the spectrum improves the quality of education for everyone in the classroom, as well as promoting the awareness and acceptance of diversity. Determination of the most enabling environment and individual programme planning is a consultative, collaborative process involving the student (when appropriate), parents, principal, teachers, learning assistants, specialized support service professionals and community members, as appropriate.

It could be stated convincingly that children with disabilities require access to services that can support them throughout their time in school, such as more individual attention from instructors. According to the United Nations Centre for Human Rights, about 2% of children with disabilities have access to these services. Those without access to these services are excluded from education and unable to attend school. Due to the need of certain services and

facilities, the estimated cost of providing education for a child with disabilities is 2.3 times higher than a child without disabilities (*Eleweke, Rodda, Michael 2010*).

Given the poverty levels in a variety of developing countries, the education of children with disabilities does not become a priority. Children with physical disabilities are less likely to attend school in comparison with students who do not have a disability and children with an intellectual ability are even less likely than children with physical disabilities. In the Global South, 90% of children with some form of disability do not receive any form of structured education, While current initiatives toward inclusive education internationally have been implemented, such as the Education for All programme, some countries in the Global South are still challenged by lack of ability to provide children with disabilities access to education due to issues such as lack of resources and schools being overcrowded.

### **Conclusion**

The study therefore concluded that there are enormous challenges inflicting the aspect of special education attainment in the state such as lack of basic amenities, adequate infrastructure and lack of adequate special education personnel. This is as a result of government not looking into this very sector to provide the needs and wants of the institution in order to motivate and spur up the administrative arm of the institution.

### **Recommendation**

1. It could be stated convincingly that children with disabilities require access to services that can support them throughout their time in school, such as more individual attention from instructors.
2. The state government and local government should look for other alternatives to ease the challenges of the special education institutions in the state by researching on the abnormalities confronting the sector.

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