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ECE 225



Meeting Special Needs in
Early Childhood Education
Module 5

ECE 225 (Meeting Special Educational Needs in Early Childhood) Module 1

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Module 5 Contemporary Issues of Special Education Needs in Early Childhood

Introduction

The concept of meeting special education needs both in the developed and developing nations dated back to the early times of writings of the Scriptures. Among early philosophers and empires also, various views were held which resulted in either total rejection or partial commitment to the care of persons with special needs. Events took a new turn in the 14th and 16th centuries when the need for heritage based on development became an issue in the Roman Empire.

Further developments were recorded in France and Europe in general with the individual efforts of Pedro Ponce De Leon, Jean Itard, Edward Seguin, Juan Martin Pablo Bonet and other. International competition between the growing powers; Russia, the United States, Germany, France, Britain, Spain added a new wave resulting in rapid development of institutions from the middle of 16th century. The missionaries, on the other hand provided a stable ground for whatever sacrifices the disciplined will require.

The idea of early childhood started cropping into special education with the emphasis paid on justification for early childhood education as a basis for long lasting development and quality life as against early childhood abuses.

In Nigeria, it was not until the middle of the '70s before the wave of education got its hold on persons with special need. Even at that, the basic age of most children ranges from 8 – 14 years due to traditional attitude of sending children with special needs to grandmother in the country side for custody. The attitude has changed tremendously now. However, there are several strategies for both prevention and intervention in early childhood years which are still alien to our system.

In this module therefore, efforts has been made to build up relevant issues covering prenatal intervention; the vital role of parents in the process of advocacy; institutionalization of service delivery for children with special needs; the vogue of information and communication Technology (ICT) and the supportive index of research and development. It is expected that these content could spur interest into future exploration of special education content within the framework of whatever chosen endeavour of the learners at this level.

Unit 1 Prenatal Development, Intervention and Habilitation

Unit 2 Institutionalizing Special Education Service Delivery in Nigeria

Unit 3 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Special Education in Early Childhood

Unit 4 Special Education Research and Development in Perspective

Unit I Prenatal Developments, Intervention and Habilitation

1.0 Introduction

Factors affecting eventful pregnancy and early childhood years in Nigeria varies, it includes a case of inadequate enlightenment on the importance of the period; unwanted pregnancy; harmful traditional practices; poverty; social insecurity; drug abuse and low patronage of quality health care facilities. As a result, Nigeria is rated as one of the highest sets of nations in the world with high maternal death and infant mortality (Fred – Adegbulugbe, 2005)

The prenatal period is very vital to the survival of the newborn. If the period termed early childhood would have to be comprehensively attended to, then focus should also be placed adequately on the prenatal period. The amount of information available to society matters both at the formal and informal levels. This is the crux of the issues discussed in this unit. It empowers the teacher and caregivers in early childhood with adequate knowledge with which to sensitize everyone that has to do with the business of conception, delivery and management of the newborn.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- identify stages of child development during the prenatal stage to birth
- state factors affecting the period
- develop relevant content that could help educate parents and the community at large
- constitute a panel of discussant on the issue of prenatal care in the geo-political zones of the nation.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Stages of Child Development

There are four periods that can be identified:

- The period of ovum (fertilization to about two weeks)

This is the time when the egg produced in the ovary moves down the oviduct (fallopian tube) towards the uterus. Several stages of cell merger and new formations occur at this state.

- Period of embryo (third week to eight weeks). At this stage the placenta and umbilical cord develop, helping the ovum to obtain supplies from the mother.
- The period of fetus (Third month after conception to birth). The fetus increases in size and capacity growth until age of independent existence in the womb. The amniotic fluid protects at this stage. The fetus can be viable if delivered twenty-eight weeks after conception.

The period leading to birth/delivery, termed **Prenatal** period is also very important since factors abound that can determine the health of the child subsequently.

3.2 Factors Contributing to Evolution of Special Needs during Prenatal Development

Age of mother: Teenager (below 14 years) and women above forty-five years of age.

Result: Down's Syndrome

Nutritional status of mother: inadequate nutrition.

Genetic influence emanating from the contribution of the father and the mother

Drugs and radioactive rays: Exposure of mother to X-Rays during pregnancy, especially the first trimester.

Psychological state of mother: This affects the fetus as well.

They may be in form of personality and emotional issues that are prevalent in the mother. The state of the mind can have a direct influence on the fetus.

3.3 Habilitation

This has to do with appropriate re-education process for society on issues having direct and indirect influences on the prenatal and early childhood period. The factors and contents of the re-education discussion are:

- careful handling of pregnant women
- special diets
- avoidance of use of unquantified traditional herbs.
- reduce work load on farm
- debunk superstitious practices
- women empowerment
- popularization of immunization schedules
- hospital records should be regularized
- record and follow-up of newborn under difficult circumstances. e.g. premature birth
- provision of early childhood history and event for community nurses and primary health service providers
- eventful pregnancy e.g. pre-eclampsia (pregnancy – induced – hypertension should be addressed appropriately).

3.4 Focused Group Discussion

This can serve as an avenue for habilitation. Organize mothers selected according to their geo-political origin-six-from Nigeria and discuss relevant arrangement of pregnant women in their area of origin. Collate contributions to assist you in identifying practices prevalent in

the area represented. This can be broken down to local government level and lastly, community level discussions.

4.0 Conclusion

The unit has exposed you to factors influencing prenatal period and the stages of the development. You have also been sensitized with relevant information that could assist in maintaining healthy early childhood development. The activities involving women from the six geo-political zones in Nigeria has enriched your understanding of what obtains across the Federation.

5.0 Summary

In this unit you have learnt that:

- There are four specific stages in the prenatal period
- There are factors which could be inherent in the mother, environment and the delivery period which can affect the state of the newborn.
- Appropriate education is lacking and that adequate provision of the content can help to reduce the eventful incidence in early childhood. You have a lot to learn from women across the nation and that your re-education process can start with them.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

“Eradication of Special needs in children below 9 by the year 2015 -. Strategies for policy and social awareness”. Discuss

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Shonibare, D.O. (2001, October). *The Nigeria Woman in Education and Special Education Needs in the 21st Century*. JOWICE Vol 5, 8 – 21.

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Unit 2 Institutionalizing Special Education Service Delivery in Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Special Education Service Delivery awareness in Nigeria reached the peak in 1979 with the United Nations declaration of International Year for Disable Persons and the period spanning 1980 and 1990 as the decade for the disabled. Many unreached categories of the group were reached. The declaration touched on institutional growth, policy formulations, manpower development and talent showcase took place.

With the period elapsing, it has been observed by myriad of professionals that there is a missing gap in the service delivery across all the levels of care. The gap observed is lack of a Commission for this vital aspect of our personnel resources. If established, it would take care of issues from early childhood years until the stage of employment and even retirement.

This unit is therefore aimed at sensitizing mature learners at this level to issues having bearing along the need for a commission. Examples abound in our system: the Nomadic Education Commission; Women Commission; Universal Basic Education Commission; Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) etc. are good indicators to what a commission can achieve.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- put forward reasons for sustainable institution of special education service delivery in Nigeria
- identify components of special education institutions highlighted in the unit
- develop a strategy for institutionalizing special education service delivery in Nigeria
- justify approach to institutionalization of special education service delivery as proposed.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Contemporary Special Education Coordination in other Settings

Dunn (1973) identified two basic points for identification of settings:

1. Regular School and Home: using them as a point of referral and feedback channels
2. These flows into special education evaluation and prescriptive work-up-service
3. Related to the child are:
 - Psychological assessment and treatment
 - Hearing and speech assessment and treatment

- Medical/neurological assessment and treatment
- Environmental study (home and community environment and its modification).

4. Directly related to the home factor are:

- The school environment and its modification.

The details of above include:

- Initial screening
- Referral
- Intensive special education assessment and effective intervention determination
- Conference including – parents, agents of special education and general education to critically examine placement and institutional programme
- Implementation of placement and intervention

5. For all these to be done; alternatives could be found in:

- Boarding facilities
- Learning centers instructions
- Resource Room
- Preschool Institution
- Hospital Instruction
- Special day class instruction
- Teacher support programmes.

This format establishes very precise connection between the home, schools and service center with necessary impact of professionals. However, the dimension of prenatal/very early childhood does not seem to have received detailed attention. The model presented by Onwuegbu (1980) has the National Bureau of Special Education covering the segment with distinct functions e.g.

Teaching

- Curriculum and materials
- Staff employment and development
- Practicing
- Research findings
- Recommendation.

Research

- Organization
- Statistics
- Methodology

- Workshop/Seminar
- Area of Needs.

Supportive Services

- Screening
- Resource and Itinerant Services
- Audiology Service
- Psychological Services
- Rehabilitation
- Therapeutic Services
- Speech
- Placement.

Scholarship

- Personnel
- Handicapped
- Handicapped/non-handicapped
- Gifted

Facilities

- Determine
- Manufacture
- Purchase
- Distribute
- Commission, equip and books etc.

This model has a wider consideration, however as it was in Dunn, a very detail concentration was not put in place for prenatal and very early childhood period.

3.2 Scope of Proposal for Nigeria

It is therefore proposed that if special education service delivery in Nigeria would have to be effective, the gaps observed in the models discussed above would have to be provided for:

- Provide for early childhood stage, including prenatal
- Inter-ministerial in outlook – Health, Education, Welfare,
- Employment, Legal and Planning
- Establishment of a Commission with far-reaching resource and personnel base overview should be put in place.

- Parental involvement should be considered with all other stakeholders.

3.3 The Starting Point

National Stakeholders Conference

This should involve:

- Parents and all those interested.
- Conference Working Adult with Special Needs
- Parents of persons with special needs
- Professionals
- Government bureaucrats.

The outcome of the conference should pave way for the establishment of a commission. The commission among other things should oversee issues of persons with special education needs from pregnancy etc.

The goal of the conference should include:

Contributions in the area of:

- vision
- expectations
- plans.

4.0 Conclusion

This unit has presented detailed overview of what is a required procedure that could result in the institutionalization of service delivery in special education. It has covered issues of empowerment, teacher training and identification in early childhood. You should therefore be able to develop a critical position on the issue as it affects persons with special needs including early childhood stage.

5.0 Summary

You have been able to gain insight into:

- Justification for a Commission for special needs education to cater for all the aspects of service delivery
- Cases of other institution as presented in this unit
- Plausible options available for Nigeria in institutionalizing special education service delivery
- The starting point which can culminate in the establishment of a Commission.
- The role parents, persons with special needs, professionals, government officials and the community can play in moving special education service delivery forward.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

Present an address you will read as the Chairman of a Federal Initiative on Institutionalizing Special Education Service Delivery in Nigeria by 2015. Not less than three page address.

7.0 References/Further Reading

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Unit 3 Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Special Education in Early Childhood

1.0 Introduction

The emergence of use of computers has affected all facets of human endeavour. In education it has greatly affected learning rate, process and content. It is important that even though mass special education was introduced into Nigeria in the '70s, the performance of persons with special needs in public examinations is still very poor, notwithstanding individual achievements.

For instance Senior Secondary Schools in Kano in 1993/94, 1994/1995 recorded very poor performance in the record of more than fifty students with special needs who registered for the examinations.

The use of Computers with the visually challenged, the deaf and all the other categories of persons with special needs can affect achievement. The exposure to computers can affect the world of information; expose users to various hitherto latent skills can enhance their competencies. Jaws for windows, is popular software for the blind which is still not popular all over the federation. Games and learning packages are basically popularized but to what extent are they being utilized for instructional purposes in our schools?

This unit is therefore to encourage caregivers and teachers to further explore the use of computers and internet services to improve on the competencies of children in early childhood so as to bridge the hidden consequences of needs from early childhood challenges.

This unit essentially is a sensitization material meant to motivate you to interact with available materials on the theoretical framework for early childhood and the teaching methods on the internet for children in all the categories covered so far in this course. In other words, you will be requested to generate more sources of information leading to your further empowerment through the internet. Such websites bearing on Early Childhood Education, Children-at-Risk, Child Development, Specific Learning Disabilities and the Physically Challenged are other possible enriching website areas that could be of help.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- list the importance of use of computers with children with challenges in early childhood
- obtain lists of websites on which special education software can be obtained with different categories of children in need
- initiate moves in your area of operation to use computer with persons with special needs.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 The Place of Technology in Special Education Service Delivery

The use of appropriate technology for persons with special needs can go a long way to:

- Stimulate learning in early childhood
- Accelerate the inclusion of education development and growth of increase access to education
- Increase information flow and social integration.

There is no doubt that the advantages accruing from internet access is virtually unlimited. Software issues are however a limiting issue sometimes. Therefore, efforts are put in place here to review the software available for use with children.

3.2 Internet Special Education Resources

Web page – www.iser.com/special-needs-software for children/people with learning disabilities such as Autism, Downs Syndrome, Dyslexia, vision impaired, hearing etc, examples of this software include:

ABA Materials – A software designed specifically to teach children with learning delays and difficulties such as Autism, PDD and Down's Syndrome

Canvastic Desktop Publishing – A student focused graphics/text publishing tool for schools. Perfect for special needs Students because its capabilities “Grow with the User's” abilities.

Docu Trac Software - Clinical documentation software and Practise Management Software for Behavioural Health Professionals

Equidel computhera - Compu Thera offers a seven-step gradual discrete approach for reading for children with Autism, ADHD, Down Syndrome and others who are visual learners.

Intellitools - IntelliTools inc. is a pioneer in learning solutions for classrooms and homes, producing software and adaptive hardware products for kids with learning challenges.

Laureate Systems – Specially designed for individuals with Autism, Language Learning Disabilities, Development Disabilities, Physical Impairments, Traumatic Head Injury ...

Self-Assessment Exercise

Visit internet to search children-at-risk and the website address provided in this unit. Make further enquiries for additional web information.

4.0 Conclusion

It is expected that at the end of this unit, you have been sensitized to explore the website on children-at-risk and access information on software for children with special needs

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you have been exposed to the importance of technology as a channel to increasing skills, information and stimulate general learning in children. In addition, you have searched the web and update knowledge on the education of persons with special education needs in early childhood especially with specific learning challenges – Autism, dyslexia and so on.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

Discuss the impact of technology in the field of special education. Search the web and explain the concept of children – at - Risk.

7.0 Reference/Further Reading

ETF (2006, March). Technologically Based Education and use of ICTs by Learners with Special Needs. *A paper presented at the workshop organized by ETF at Le Meridian Hotel Abuja.*

Unit 4 Special Education Research and Development in Perspective

1.0 Introduction

Just like in every facet of Nigeria society, the process of educational research in special education is evolving. An apt insight is visible in the fact that most practices adopted here are foreign grown, nurtured and developed, only for us to imbibe them. Sometimes, there are no relevant, organized and accessible information on incidence and other characteristics of the sample population in Nigeria. These are carryover of lack of systematic incursion into research and development.

This unit is essentially introduced to enable teachers and caregivers of children in early childhood capsule on the issues that were highlighted and possibly be able to identify a learning area, an issue or a behaviour which has drawn their greatest attention in the course of the study for further investigation. The effort is to evaluate what is presently on ground and stimulate ideas for the future development of special education needs in early childhood.

2.0 Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss curriculum related-issues in special needs education in early childhood
- identify areas of research available for consideration in early childhood
- state factors that could lead to more social integration in Nigeria for parents, community and persons with special needs.

3.0 Main Content

3.1 Curriculum and Instruction Related Studies

In recent times, the content of curriculum and delivery strategies both within the regular system and with children with special needs is being questioned. The issue of skills not being matched with content and the amount of pre-vocational and vocational orientation not being infused into the education is a major limitation in the curriculum process.

For instance, what are the preparatory skills put in place to stimulate maximum development for a congenitally visually challenged child in the area of mobility and orientation, reading and writing? What are the institutional provisions available to cater for the low vision child in the school setting? What are the sustainable provisions made for the production of Braille text, its orthography, library consumption and the legalization of its production and support by all stakeholders?

In the same light, how much of the residual hearing in a hard-of-hearing child is being utilized through intensive speech and voice training. These vital ingredients are not properly enhanced in the curriculum delivery as they are presently constituted. If available, they are

accidental discharges in a few states, and not a policy matter, enforced with vigorous commitment and determination. It is sometimes even perceived as a favour being expressed to persons with special needs rather than being a process of fundamental development and right of the child. The question of status can be determined through need assessment and absolute commitment to research processes.

3.2 Psycho-Social Dimension

Recreation

Even though one should recognize that the level of participation in general sports by persons with special needs has improved with the Paralympics and even the inclusion strategies adopted recently, it is important to examine the process responsible for producing participation. The essence of recreation is to develop a child's physical endowment, create leisure and all-round development. One's interaction with children with special needs reveals very limited options are available to them e.g. the blind, deaf, and even the physically challenged. The options can be researched into even from early childhood period. The developments for stimulation should be a product of research.

Counseling

The questions are focused on:

- How available and responsive are counseling services for parents of children with special needs from the moment they are identified as being at-risk (pregnancy)?
- How available are counseling services on options available at their disposal immediately after identifying their child as being challenged?
- How integrated is the service delivery into community needs?
- The answers to these questions are matters of research on need assessment of parents and community.

Career Orientation

We need to identify and relate factors that can consummate the development of the child into choosing a career. These are a function of development of skills from early childhood periods. These skills can be adequately factorized from outcome of research findings.

Social Participation

What is the mobilization procedure in place for parents, community and society at large in the politics and self-development initiatives in society?

3.3 How Many Nigerians are physically challenged?

These are questions which require answers across the board.

- By Age
- Types
- Sex

- Education
- Status
- Profession
- Social awareness
- Geopolitical zones etc.

We have not been able to absolutely delineate our population on the basis of these characteristics. This can be a further inroad into research initiative, options and interest.

3.4 Diagnostic Tests

1. How early can we detect challenges in early childhood?
2. How comprehensively are the services provided, for instance
 - Early – Prenatal, at birth or pre-lingually
 - Are they legally supported?
 - Are they individualized? (to meet individual needs)
 - Are they technologically based?
 - Are they responsive to health-related findings?
 - Are they sustainability over time, regime (politically)? etc.

In other words are the diagnoses procedures supportive enough for programme initiative, intervention and management? Are they accessible?

These are areas of researches that can draw our attention for consideration.

4.0 Conclusion

In this unit, you have been exposed to a general overview on areas, where research can be initiated and the development that can result from them in general especially in early childhood.

5.0 Summary

In this unit, you learnt that:

- This unit is to create a stimulating environment in you for further studies in early childhood education
- There are many areas of instruction that are not yet adapted for persons with special needs in early childhood.
- Recreational opportunities for children with special needs in early childhood are limited and so should be explored for further development.
- Parents require more opportunities for counseling and societal response during pregnancy and when a newborn is suspected to be challenged.

- There are skills yet unplanned for in children that could assist them in later life.
- Toy development should be based on research findings
- Social participation of both parents of persons with special needs and those in needs will lead to improvement in perception.

6.0 Self-Assessment Exercise

- I. Assess the role of persons with special needs in the Community/school/society/association you belong to identify an adult with Special Need, e.g. visual, psychomotor, hearing, gifted, talented etc. and produce a write up on his challenges, strategies and vision/personal aspiration.

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