

Disability Within the African Culture

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For a long time, children with special needs were educated along with other regular children in schools. The notion of special education was a Western phenomenon and concept in Nigeria. How were children with special needs educated without special education programs? This article will provide cultural perspectives on issues of disability and care for children with exceptional needs in Nigeria.

Keywords: special education, culture, psychology, education, policy

Introduction

The concept of disability has been examined from various cultural perspectives across the continent of Africa and found that in every culture, disability was perceived differently and such perception shaped the kind of services rendered. This article was aimed at briefly examining the different concepts of disability across the African cultures and then mainly focused on educating children with exceptionalities in Nigeria.

Concepts Across African Cultures

As we grow in our knowledge of the dynamics surrounding the concepts of culture and disability, we begin to realize that individual perceptions and languages play a vital role in our understanding of who we are as a people and as a culture. According to Wright (1960), language is not merely an instrument for voicing ideas, but also plays a role in shaping ideas by guiding the experience of those who use it. Scheer and Groce (1988) pointed out that when different cultures used positive language to describe individuals with disabilities, these individuals with disability ended up integrating well into the society.

Characteristics of Culture and Disability Within the African Cultures

Characteristics and interpretation of those characteristics are dramatically influenced by the culture in which the individual with disability resides; the governmental bureaucrats responsible for the oversight of programs for the disabled are affected by both the culture and the disabling condition. Adding labels to people with disability imposes severe limits on them from a cultural, social and economic perspective; this imposed limitation that isolates them from the culture and the workplace.

Culture. Culture can be seen as a “traditional”, a written or an oral method to pass cultural heritage from one generation to another. The development of genetic theory has come to view culture in a traditional sense as a “kind of gene pool” existing at the level of social symbolism and meaning rather than biology and with

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ideation rather than material existence (Banks 2001).

Prior to the 20th century, the term “culture” was used by elite and powerful groups to define existing limitations of others and their related cultures in order to maintain a status quo. People who were knowledgeable in history, literature and fine arts were said to possess culture (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998), while those who did not possess this knowledge were viewed as lacking in culture.

Early in the 1900s, this approach of viewing culture was seen to be narrow, biased and highly suspicious. During this period, culture was defined and viewed differently from previous perspectives. According to J. Banks and M. Banks (2001), “cultivation” became a part of the definition of culture. This implies a distinction between the culture and the nature. For example, cultivating the soil leads to having fewer weeds than leaving the soil in its natural state, one need to know that the distinction between what is considered weed and what is considered plant is cultural.

The works of Bourdieu (1977) and J. Banks and M. Banks (2001) saw culture as a “social process”; their works emphasized the diversity, which emanated from the richness of individual cultural knowledge. Culture as a social process from the perspectives of Bourdieu (1977) and Barth (1989) emphasizes three points, namely: (1) There is a systematic process in the allocation of power; (2) A social conflict uses both tradition and conflict to systematically generate a new order of behavior within and outside of that culture; and (3) Human interactions, agreement and conflict are tools that a culture may use to realize a new order, or restructure an older order.

Culture can be seen as a “construction” of reversible reaction. Culture constructs us, and we in turn construct it. Cultural construction implies that not all thoughts, feelings and human activities are natural; but they are the result of historical experiences that become an integral part of culture. In comparison of a small-scale agrarian society to a large-scale industrialized society, culture is seen to be different across the globe. These differences emphasize the way and manner people with disabilities are, have been perceived and have been treated across the globe.

Cultural artifacts, such as blue jeans, popular music, cowboy boots and popular clothing, are seen and regarded as diverse examples of a large-scale culture. These examples could be valued positively in this society; however, from a small-scale society, these same examples would be regarded as without value to that culture and society.

The concept “culture” has many versions in its contemporary use. If used metaphorically, culture may mean an attitude, a fashion, a behavior or a way of doing things. It is common for a new design of clothing to be marketed in a way that allows the wearer to dress in a trendy style and express cultural pride (Retrieved from http://fashion-era.com/trends_2007a/index.htm). In South Africa, in 1994, the popular government viewed popular trends to be counter to their interpretation of pride; they attempted to ban the Zulus from carrying spears, shields and machetes in political rallies (Yanis, 1994). The Zulus responded that they should be allowed to carry the items, because they were “cultural” tools. Second, in Nigeria, the Ohafia clan of Igbo Hebrews used war dance as an important function of their culture. This exhibition of Igbo cultural heritage during festivities was seen negatively and miss-interpreted to mean that this Igbo clan was using this war dance to prepare unforeseen wars against neighboring culture. It was not until the Igbo’s cultural pride and exhibitions were explained that an understanding between them and the government was reached.

Today, the academic world and the mass media are full of stories with reference to “youth culture”,

“political culture” or “organizational culture”. The term “culture” has become so trendy that it is used as a substitute for more specific words. Most cultural anthropologists would define culture as a total way of life for a society, its traditions, habits and beliefs (LaGuardia & Guth, 2003). Specifically, Goodenough (1987) saw culture as “a way of perceiving, believing, evaluating, and behaving”. His views of “culture” provide a blue print that provides a method of examining how individuals may think, feel and behave within a society. LeVine (1984) saw culture as a shared organization of ideas that included the intellectual, moral and aesthetic standards prevalent in a community and meanings of community actions.

Culture denotes an identifiable pattern of behavior exhibited in response to diverse phenomena in their environment; a specific meaning is often attached to individual and group encounters to that environment. People create meaning from their interactions with their environment; these meanings and interpretations about humanity, nature and life give rise to a philosophy about that society. It is from this philosophy that individuals establish a reference point from which to judge actions, or non-actions of a society. A culture learned varies over time. Language is a key feature differentiating it from other cultures; it varies over time also.

Disability. There are difficulties in determining a definition applicable to all cultures, as a culture varies over time, the definition of disability that culture uses changes over time as well.

The WHO (World Health Organization) (1990, p. 213) defined disability as:

An impairment or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function; a disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being; a handicap is a disadvantage for a given individual, resulting from an impairment or a disability, that prevents the fulfillment of a role that is considered normal (depending on age, sex and social and cultural factors) for that individual.

This definition draws attention to three terms: impairment, disability and handicap. There is often some confusion when these three terms are used interchangeably. Confusion also exists on how the terms are defined.

During the 1970s, there was a strong reaction among representatives of organizations of persons with disabilities and professionals in the field of disability against the terminology of the time (Smith, 2007). The terms “disability” and “handicap” were often used in an unclear and confusing way, which gave poor guidance for policy-making and service provision. The terminology reflected a medical and diagnostic approach, which ignored the imperfections and deficiencies of the surrounding society.

The WHO in both 1990 and 2000 adopted an international classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps; this classification system suggested a more precise approach to define disabilities from an international perspective. The International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps has been used in areas, such as rehabilitation, education, statistics, policy, legislation, demography, sociology, economics and anthropology. These terms that are interchangeably used mean the same thing as disability.

A Collective View of Disability and Culture

One’s disability and culture are central to determine the position or the status that the individual is given in a specific society. Often, one’s disability conforming to social expectations frequently is rewarded for that behavior; the culture tends to accept those who are willing to conform to given values, standards of behavior and ethical concerns. Cultural understanding is also shaped by the meanings attached to various behaviors by the social and economic organization of a given society, or by other internal and external cultural dynamics, a culture imposes standards upon all citizens of that given culture. Murphy (1990) indicated that disability

had been defined by society and was given meaning by a culture; therefore, there were various cultural perspectives of what disability was and how disability in people was perceived and treated in various cultures.

From the cultural perspective, large- and small- scale societies perceive disability differently. In small-scale societies, close interactions between individual members are the norm; each individual may have extended and multi-strand relationships with other members of that society (Scheer & Groce, 1988). Individuals may interact in the course of economic production, during leisure time, or while participating in the arts or ceremonies. The social identity in these small-scale societies is based on family clan and other characteristics but not on the individual's physical characteristics.

Educating Children With Exceptionalities in Nigeria

From the African concept of disability, Nigeria is no exception to the different concepts of disability understood in African cultures. Based on the above educational analysis, the author has critically looked into the different perspectives of educational developments in Nigeria, and has grouped the discussion into five areas, including: (1) educating children with exceptionalities before colonialism; (2) educating children with exceptionalities during colonialism; (3) educating children with exceptionalities after colonialism; (4) future perspectives of special education in Nigeria; and (5) recommendations.

Educating Children With Exceptionalities Before Colonialism

Before the colonial era, Nigeria's system of education was completely different from the Western system. Nigerians believed in traditional education, which means that there were cardinal goals the citizens needed to pursue in order to develop fully and thereby join the societal mainstream in contributing to the smooth running of the society. These goals were, according to Fafunwa and Aisiku (1975, p. 20), to: (1) develop the latent physical skills; (2) inculcate respect for elders and those in a position of authority; (3) develop intellectual skills; (4) acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude toward one's labor; and (5) understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community at large. It is no doubt that before the advent of the Europeans into the country, disability was seen as a "concept". This concept did not have any meaning in the society, because it was believed to be a Western idea. This means that children with varying forms of disabilities, such as learning disabilities and/or behavior disorders were educated together with those considered not to have disabilities and used the same curricular of instruction. These learners with exceptionalities were, however, seen and considered to be "societal defaults", because of their societal stands (Fafunwa & Aisiku, 1975), and thus, were perceived negatively and treated badly in some parts of the country. In spite of their negative perceptions and treatment in the society, the have-nots were still able to take care of the have-nots simply because of the societal beliefs and expectations that every person within the society must contribute to raising the children within that society. Fafunwa and Aisiku (1975) further indicated that one of the goals of a traditional education at that time was to "enhance" the education of the body, mind and soul. On the other hand, these goals were designed to mold the person to suit the society instead of to mold the society to suite the person. Thus, the family could not be separated from this notion of education. The functions of the family, according to Onwuegbu (1977), were reproduction, childcare, socialization, economic support, collective responsibility and status replacement. Onwuegbu (1977) further noted that the education at that time was mainly through oral tradition. The elders

and authority figures commanded respect within the communities. There was a family unity and because of the unity, marriage was more based on compatibility than on beauty or romantic love. There was also a good sense of healthy community due to the farming produce. These farming produce created a sense of capitalism, which led to polygamy. Strong farmers married many wives in good faith, so that their children could replace them in case of death. However, those who were considered societal defaults were perceived negatively within the some societies in Nigeria.

The kind of educational system at that time was more inclusive, which allowed for both students with or without disabilities to be educated in one classroom and used the same curricula of instruction. Some teachers, in spite of their negative perceptions of the children with exceptionalities due to cultural beliefs about them, still taught and challenged them to maximize their academic and social potentials. Their reasons for helping these learners maximize their potentials supported the societal beliefs that every person within the society must be helped in one way or the other to reach those societal expected cardinal goals that were helpful in maintaining economic and social stability within the Nigerian and other African societies. On the other hand, if a learner was identified as being dull in learning, the use of response to intervention via an application of differentiated instructional approach would be used until all approaches were exhausted, then the community would call the elders, who would in turn pronounce such a learner as a societal “non-conformist” or “default”. This kind of practice was common among the Igbo community. The use of both terms means that such a learner could not contribute economically to the society’s viability, and therefore, must be excommunicated (Eskay, 2009).

However, the societal negative perceptions placed upon these learners with exceptionalities were carried to the classroom where different treatments in the classroom were applied by other teachers. For example, some classroom teachers practiced some traditional forms of academic tracking. Students who were considered either learning disabled or behavior disordered were, in spite of being inclusively taught with those students considered “normal”, excommunicated. Their excommunication in the society and in school was in the form of yelling at them and ignoring them when they raised their hands to respond to questions posed by their teachers in the classroom. Such learners and their parents were also excommunicated in matters leading to the welfare of the society (Mukuria & Obiakor, 2004; Eskay, 2009). These researchers nonetheless found that within the Nigerian society, these students were still being taken care of as opposed to totally excommunicating them from the mainstream society. Students with and without disabilities were educated in the same classrooms, used the same curricula of instruction and under the care of loving teachers. However, these authors found that problems, such as miss-education, miss-assessment, miss-placement, and lack or inadequate service delivery might arise from this kind of school structuring where both learners with and without disabilities learn together, instead of separating them based on their IEP (Individualized Educational Plans). Such problems might further lead to the following issues: (1) big classroom size per teacher; (2) lack of accurate identification and appropriate placement; (3) lack of appropriate teacher training; and (4) lack of parental involvement.

Cultural beliefs and attitudes toward children with disabilities. In Nigerian society, children with disabilities have been incorrectly understood, and this misunderstanding has led to their negative perception and treatment. For example, Mehta (1978), Ogbue (1981), Obani and Doherty (1984), Ikpaya (1990), Afolabi (1990) and Ozoji (1990) found that the basic problem affecting children with disabilities was the overcoming

of negative attitudes and misunderstanding about the significance of their handicapping conditions. To overcome these perceptions, a broad program of public education and widespread dissemination of information related to the disabled was initiated. There are several beliefs for the negative attitudes revolving around children with disabilities in Nigeria. These beliefs cut across the Nigerian society and hence have a similar impact on the citizens' attitudes on learners with disabilities. According to Onwuegbu (1977), Abang (1985) and Ozoji (1990) and later supported by Marten (1990) and Eskay (2009), the causes of such negative perceptions on learners with disabilities were related to: (1) a curse from God (due to gross disobedience to God's commandments); (2) ancestral violation of societal norms (e.g., due to stealing); (3) offenses against gods of the land (e.g., fighting within the society); (4) breaking laws and family sins (e.g., stealing and denying); (5) misfortune (e.g., due to marriage incest); (6) witches and wizards (e.g., society saw them as witches and wizards); (7) adultery (a major abomination); (8) a warning from the gods of the land (due to pollution of water and the land); (9) arguing and fighting with the elders (a societal taboo); (10) misdeed in a previous life (such as stealing); (11) illegal or unapproved marriage by the societal elders (arguing and fighting against the elderly advice in marriage); (12) possession by evil spirits (due to gross societal disobedience); and many others.

Educating Children With Exceptionalities During Colonialism

During the colonial era, a different kind of educational system took place. The European colonial "exploiters" came to the country with missionaries, who viewed the practices upheld by the Nigerian society to be against God, and whose intentions were different. First, they mishandled the already instituted educational system for their own benefits. Bude (1983) did not see any useful educational program planning and development given to the Nigerian people by these European colonizers. He stated that colonial education focused on the production of clerks, messengers and partially educated people who were intimidated by the authority figures. The British replacement of the already instituted educational system did not historically encourage productivity, as did the previous system. Rather, the British system of education focused on reading, writing and mathematics. This kind of education acquired from the British colonizers provided "basic" education that would enhance "good" character for the colonial masters and diminished development of vocational skills, which were greatly needed in the society. The cultural heritage, which included an emphasis on the excommunication of the societal defaults such as learners with disabilities and/or behavior disorders who could not contribute to the smooth running of the society, was not appreciated nor promoted.

Some researchers, however, such as Abang (1977), Nwogu (1988) and Raji (1996) found that even though the attribution of the above factors was the cause for such negative societal perception of children with disabilities, this situation may be changed due to the influence of the missionaries and, thus, lead to a growing societal sympathy that aligns with the need for acceptance within the mainstream of the society. However, it has been observed that such sudden sympathy and acceptance within the society has often been theoretically voiced, but in reality it is difficult to implement, especially given the fact that such beliefs may still be deeply ingrained within the society. Nwogu (1988, p. 47) pointed out that because of societal attitudes towards disabilities, it made it difficult to embark on educating them and, at the same time, for them to compete in the job market with non-disability learners. In a study conducted by Abosi and Ozoji (1985) entitled "Attitude and

Attitude Change of Nigerians”, they found that beliefs in the existence and potency of evil spirits were still widespread in Nigeria. Undoubtedly, such societal attitudes have had a devastating effect on the planning and implementation of services in Nigeria for learners with disabilities.

Educating Children With Exceptionalities After Colonialism

As soon as Nigeria got her independence from Britain, the educational system was still flourishing and the learners were still learning together and the same curriculum was still being used. However, it was not long after independence that the genocidal war against Biafra by Nigeria began. It lasted for about three years (from 1966 to 1970) before re-integration of all parties. There is little doubt that the Nigerian educational system was also affected. There was no availability of program of service for students with disabilities in place. The war contributed adversely to enhancing a strong educational foundation in the country, let alone the education of the learners with disabilities. At that time, the issue of educating learners with exceptionalities had some impacts on parents of learners with disabilities. This impact continued until around 1976 to 1977, when the Federal Government of Nigeria declared its intention to educate all its citizens, including learners with disabilities. However, the degree of implementation was affected by funding, legislative policy, enrollment and qualified special educators, then deviations from effective implementation would add to the continuing societal negative perceptions of these learners.

Issues in funding of special education. Funding for special education in Nigeria limits the progress of special education. Funding seems to be either insufficient or not provided for the education and service delivery of learners with disabilities. There are constant debates and policy maneuvering among education policy-makers that end up defeating any funding appropriated for special education. Even the money donated by non-governmental organizations and philanthropists for the education of these learners is not used for that purpose. Eskay (2009) compared Nigeria with other countries and found that funding of special education had been slow and difficult to procure, because Nigeria lacked the legal mandate to enforce special education policies. As a result, services for people with disabilities are not delivered appropriately. Smith (2007) concluded that funding of special education had “always” been a problem in countries that had negative perceptions of learners with disabilities.

Nepotism and corruption still dominate in Nigeria, where the dream of many educated Nigerians is still to push a pen behind an office desk. This kind of attitude has resulted in little venturing in creating private businesses to improve employment and expand wealth. The government is the major source of income for socio-economic and educational advancements. Funds are generated from oil revenue and exportation; and corruption centers on how to be wealthy without regard to socio-educational investments. Contracts are awarded to people not because of their abilities to do quality work, but because of their abilities to bribe their ways through (Braggs & Maltby, 1993).

Qualified general and special education practitioners. There are still not enough qualified special educators to meet the educational needs and care of persons with disabilities in the society. Many unqualified special education teachers are left to teach these individuals. As a result, there is a poor implementation of the National Educational Policy. Akon (1991) examined the status of in-service education for teachers in Nigeria and found that it represented in-service teacher education as an effective means of augmenting inadequacies of pre-service training and updating teachers’ knowledge, skills and interests in their chosen field. In Eskay’s

(2009) research, he found that because of societal perception, few qualified special education teachers gave up their teaching responsibilities to unqualified special education teachers. Sadly, these unqualified teachers do not last long due to their lack of knowledge and methodology coupled with high enrollment in classrooms. Many students (both the disabled and non-disabled) are put together in the same classroom, and poorly prepared teachers find it difficult to identify their individual needs.

There are consistent problems of how teachers and service-providers are prepared in Nigerian. Colleges of education and universities are not preparing their future teachers for the realities that they will confront with. In addition, it is unknown how the teaching practices incorporate experiences of individuals with exceptionalities in their educational processes. Pre-service and in-service teachers are rarely prepared to design individualized educational programs and the individual family support programs for parents and guardians. In fact, teacher preparation has traditionally been on a crash-program sort of mentality. It is unclear if programs incorporate knowledge about: (1) categories of exceptionalities; (2) assessment tools; (3) procedural safeguards; and (4) innovative techniques. Again, the lack of funding affects any form of innovations in quality teacher preparation (Eskay, 2009).

Address to legal mechanism. In any democratic society, no program can be successful without legal enforcement. As it stands, there is no legal mandate from the government to carry out the objectives enumerated in Section 8 of the National Policy on Education with regard to people with exceptionalities. This absence of legal mandate leads to civil right violation and the lack of adequate programming. In addition, it challenges the local, state and federal governments to fund special education programs. There is no doubt that the availability of funds would have helped in providing adequate in-service training for teachers and erecting classroom buildings to accommodate these learners. As Ajuwon (2008) pointed out, the legal absence mandates to enforce special education programs perpetuate, negative societal perceptions of these learners.

It is human knowledge that the lack of legal mechanism affects:

- (1) The knowledge of who should be served, why someone should be served, how a person should be served, and where a person should be served;
- (2) Procedural safeguards and due process rights;
- (3) Non-discriminatory identification and assessment;
- (4) Confidentiality of information;
- (5) Individualized educational programming;
- (6) Parental rights and responsibilities;
- (7) Appropriate categorization, placement and instruction.

Future Perspectives of Special Education in Nigeria

Through the years, special education in Nigeria has made some progresses, whereby both learners with and without disabilities were taught in the same classroom, and used the same curricula. Most educators, following the societal expected cardinal goals applied differentiated instruction to helping these learners maximize their academic potentials. The missionaries who came with the British “colonizers” also helped in pointing out the need to accommodate learners with disabilities in the same classroom with those without and in the society.

Disability was completely a new phenomenon in Nigerian society. This new concept began to gain

attention during the colonial rule. It was short lived, because after the independence, learners with disabilities began to embrace some obstacles. These obstacles include no legal mandates that are put in place to enforce it. The only special education mandate comes from Section 8 of the National Policy on Education. As a result, accountability for special education is affected; services for people with disabilities are not reachable, parental rights to due process are denied; and these people with special needs are left to suffer for a cause they do not know. To look at the future, Nigeria must join other progressive nations to advocate for the rights of learners with disabilities and help them join the mainstream of society (Eskay, 2009; Mukuria & Obiakor, 2004).

Conclusions

Education for people with special needs, which began in an excellent path for providing equal education to all Nigerian citizens have found itself struggling with how best to make it better for learners who are disenfranchised. It is not surprising that the colonization of the country and the subsequent institution of a completely different form of educational system had affected the cultural norms and educational system that Nigerian society had offered to her citizens and was proud of what she could offer to the Western world.

Recommendations

To join other progressive countries in recognizing, protecting and maintaining the rights of learners with exceptionalities, it is imperative that Nigeria and indeed many African governments begin to shift its paradigm in the 21st century by reflecting on the pros of its old educational systems, and begin to embrace them. Clearly, it is important that they look at the future as it includes these learners into the mainstream of society and help them to maximize their fullest potentials. This integration could be accomplished using these suggested recommendations:

An urgent shift in paradigm—Governments and the population must change the way they think about people with disabilities. The legislative arm of these governments must re-establish and create new legislations for implementations and enforcements for equal opportunities. The new law with national outlook and new departments must be enforced even at local levels. Such new departments must have authority to investigate charges of discriminations against corporations and individuals and make concerted findings. They may be empowered to assist the injured party or individual in seeking redress through the law. The new departments also must be pro-active in their service approach to the community, monitoring and preventing discriminations against disabled parties before it occurs through outreach, education and other technical assistance programs.

The new Legislative Act, while protecting the disabled children and adults with a modern blend and utilization of today's 21st century technology, can also be wrapped around the culture and beliefs of the people. For example, African cultures emphasize family lineage, or "global village" approach, which the Western world has recently embraced. In a typical African culture, parents, relatives, neighbors and even strangers collectively see to the welfare of every child, including the disabled. A part of the compensations can be used as inducements to family members to encourage them to look after their disabled brothers or sisters.

Enforcing national policy on special education—currently, there are no laws that enforce the National

Policy on Special Education. Unlike other countries that have special education laws that guide their special education activities, Nigeria still struggles on this issue. Even the Section 8 of the National Policy does not provide the room for due process. The lack of legal enforcement in special education makes it difficult for people with special needs and their parents to fight for their due process rights. However, a subset of the new legislation may address the enforcement process. Such enforcements may be accomplished through litigation implementation. Litigations may be avoided against offending parties through negotiations and settlements out of court. As a deterrent to future offenders, convicted culprits and the penalties may be published on quarterly basis and through public outlets. Aggrieved disabled individuals should be educated on the procedures to file complaints against violators of their civil rights.

Institute advocacy groups—An institution of advocacy groups will be extremely helpful. Individuals must lobby for the rights of person with special needs. Governments should encourage advocacy groups, independent investigative agencies to free from control by any local, state and national authorities. These agencies should be tasked with investigating any disability-related complaints by any of these government agencies, including inadequate funding, abuse of funds meant for disabled programs, and funding neglect and implementation. Compensatory benefits to the independent agencies and the discriminated disabled child or adult should be subset of the new legislation. As a monitoring strategy, status reports may be published on quarterly basis to expose violators.

Recognizing and accommodating various forms of exceptionalities—The Americans with Disability Act of 1999, amended in 2008, defined “disability” with respect to an individual, as a physical or mental impairment that limits the individual from full life expectations and performance. A proof to its qualification and recognition requires that the individual in question present such proof from a health care professional. This definition is more explicit compared with the one by WHO, as previously stated.

In this definition, physical impairment by American Disability Act (1990) includes cosmetic disfigurement, physiological conditions and anatomical defect involving one or more body parts, such as cardiovascular, neurological, respiratory, sense organs, musculoskeletal, and so on. This basic principle can be emulated with modifications to suit ones culture and incorporated as a subset of the new legislation by Nigeria, and indeed other African nations. In general, disability types fall into the following:

- (1) A cognitive impairment, comprising mental retardation and learning disabilities;
- (2) A kinetic impairment, whereby an individual is unable to utilize one or more of their body parts—manifesting in the use of artificial aid, such as crutches, wheelchair and other equipment;
- (3) A speech impairment ranging from inability to articulating one’s voice;
- (4) A hearing impairment from hearing loss or complete deafness;
- (5) A visual impairment that includes inability to see images, and or loss of complete vision.

Quality and equal educational opportunities—all learners deserve quality and equitable treatment, training, and equal access to education. The federal, state and local governments must be involved in these processes. For example, the transportation department should be encouraged to provide non-discriminatory transportation in support of the new act to help straighten the social and economic quality of life for all individuals with disability, such as providing wheel-chair bound buses, proper marked road signs, easy access to housing and others. Proper access to health care facilities should also be encouraged to be provided and protect the fundamental rights of the disabled. It should also protect them from unfair treatment, including their rights of

privacy and information.

Lastly, as already stated, adequate funding and enforcement by the new act must be functional to make the program work. The court system should be readily available to deal with any abuse of the act, including embezzlement of funds.

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