

## **MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY ON SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS AND DISABILITY FOR IMPROVING ACCESS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES TO NIGERIA'S BASIC EDUCATION**

### **EDOREN Summary Brief**

#### **Background**

**EDOREN** (Education Data, Research, and Evaluation in Nigeria), a UK-Aid education project with a mandate to enhance the use of evidence in education decision-making in Nigeria assessed the implementation of the 2016 National Policy on inclusive education in Nigeria for ensuring access of persons with disability to Nigeria's basic education. The assessment was carried out using document analysis, and interviews of responsible stakeholders in Abuja, Kaduna State and Anambra State for the implementation of the policy. This brief is a highlight of the findings from the assessment.

Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) is a conscious and deliberate plan to include people with disabilities (PWDs) and other forms of special needs among those who benefit from education in line with the Sustainable Development Goals' (SDGs) number 4 universal plan to end poverty and hunger by 2030 which pledges to leave no one behind (DFID Framework, 2015). Nigeria is signatory to several international agreements in support of SEND policy and implementation: United Nations (1993) Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, the Salamanca Declaration (1994), the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), but only recently provided the appropriate policy framework for special needs populations in 2015 and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the school system in 2016. EDOREN's study reveals that the policy development and implementation processes of both policies have not been effective in achieving the desired and intended outcomes for SEND populations from pre-school to university levels.

EDOREN carried out a small interview-based scoping study at the federal level in Nigeria which showed that Nigeria's 2015 Special Needs and Disability (SNE) policy was lacking capacity and number of technical personnel to drive implementation; the absence of data on SNE-learners such as proportions and types; the lack of and adapted curriculum; and lack of expertise for coordinating with other relevant organisations, agencies, and the states. The results from the scoping study precipitated a more robust qualitative field study to understand the current policy provision, resource allocation, management, and implementation at all levels from the Federal through the States, Local Government to the School Community.

Using the suggested indicators in the 2016 National Policy on Inclusive Education in Nigeria, the table below presents a high-level illustration of the findings from the EDOREN study.

**Table 1. State systems supporting the implementation of the inclusive education policy**

System Support for the Implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy	Finding
SMoE/SUBEB/NFE/NEMIS has data of all school-age children in the Country, whether enrolled or non-enrolled	<b>No</b>
SMoE/SUBEB/ has (or has a plan to develop) a diverse school staff (women and men with different backgrounds in race, ethnicity, physical ability, religion, language, socioeconomic status, etc.).	<b>No</b>
'National and State Education Budget' has clearly captured planned current expenditures related to improving access of out-of-school children and school drop outs.	<b>No</b>
SMoE/SUBEB/QA have copies of documents or resources at national or state levels that address inclusive education for children with diverse backgrounds and abilities	<b>No</b>
SMD/QA have clear reporting lines for acting to improve enrolment, quality and retention	<b>No</b>
Education Officers at SMoE/SUBEB/ LGEA levels have effective monitoring mechanisms in documenting inclusive practices	<b>No</b>
Education Officers at SMoE/SUBEB/ LGEA levels are utilising these information in making future decisions and plans	<b>No</b>
Education Officers at State and LGEA levels have proper budget allocation that allows them to carry out activities to reach out to learners and promote inclusive education	<b>No</b>
Education Desk Officers have links with the communities, responsive to the needs of the communities and provide opportunities for exchanging ideas to bring about positive changes in inclusive practices	<b>Yes</b>
SUBEB/SS/SMD know which professional organizations, advocacy groups, and community organizations offer resources for inclusive education and improving access	<b>Yes</b>
Head teachers and teachers encourage parents to enrol ALL their children irrespective of their diversities	<b>Yes</b>
School-age children in the community attend school regularly	<b>Yes</b>
Head teachers have processes and procedures in place that help all teachers, staff, parents and children to identify and assist all learners based on their needs	<b>No</b>
Head teachers are aware of and can adapt inclusive school practices into daily schedules	<b>No</b>
Head teachers provides flexibility to teachers to pursue innovative teaching methods for helping all children to learn	<b>No</b>
Head teachers respond to needs of ALL the staff without restrictions	<b>No</b>
Head teachers support/encourage teamwork among teachers and learners	<b>No</b>
Head teachers have links with existing health authorities who provide periodic health examinations for all learners	<b>No</b>
The schools have facilities that meet the needs of all learners, such as separate toilets for girls, ramps (not stairs) for learners with physical disabilities and tactile floor guide	<b>No</b>
The schools have regular supply of clean, safe drinking water	<b>No</b>

Teachers have high expectations for ALL children, believe they all can learn and encourage them to complete school	<b>No</b>
Teachers in collaboration with parents/SBMCs/CBMCs/PTAs/CSOs/FBOs are involved in finding school-age children who are not in school and support enrolment, retention, participation, completion and progress to higher level	<b>Yes</b>
Teachers know about the conditions that cause physical, emotional, and learning disabilities; and can help learners to get proper care	<b>No</b>
Teachers can identify culture and gender bias in teaching environment/materials and are able to correct these biases	<b>No</b>
Teachers adapt curriculum, lessons, and school activities to the needs of learners with diverse backgrounds and abilities	<b>No</b>
Teachers can assess children’s learning in ways that are appropriate to the learner’s abilities and needs	<b>No</b>
Teachers have various assessment tools to measure students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes, rather than depending on examination scores	<b>No</b>
Teachers use a variety of teaching methods and ensure that all learners participate in class and school activities	<b>No</b>
Learners receive regular assessment information to help them monitor their progress	<b>No</b>
Learners are involved to actively participate and develop guidelines/rules in the school to improve inclusion, reduce discrimination, violence and abuse	<b>No</b>
ALL Learners are encouraged and supported by teachers to take part in extracurricular activities	<b>No</b>
The schools show respect for learners of all religions, and children have opportunities to learn about different religious traditions, as appropriate, during the school day	<b>Yes</b>
Boys and girls report feeling safer in school	<b>No</b>
The SBMCs/CBMCs ensure participation of all parents in the community	<b>Yes</b>
The SBMCs/CBMCs make and implement plans to increase access and participation of all learners who are not in school	<b>Yes</b>
The SBMCs/CBMCs teachers and parents implement plans to support learners who would otherwise struggle to get to school safely (girls, children with disabilities, etc.)	<b>No</b>
Learners are followed up by teachers and/or the SBMC if their attendance at school is irregular	<b>n.d.</b>
SBMCs/CBMCs and community groups offer ideas and resources about the implementation of IE activities.	<b>No</b>
Parents request to receive information from the school about their children’s attendance and achievement	<b>n.d.</b>
Parents of children with disabilities receive the necessary school-to-home support	<b>No</b>
CSO have increased their level of engagement and support to schools	<b>Yes</b>

Note: n.d. stands for “no data.” This suggests that there was no data available when the study was undertaken

**Table 2. High-level findings based on the study’s Design Matrix.**

Theme	Findings
Legislative Policy & Regulatory Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal: Most stakeholders were unaware of the 2015 and 2016 SEND policies—even though they existed.</li> <li>State: Most stakeholders were unaware of the 2015 and 2016 SEND policies and there was no state-level complement (i.e. legislation or policy) to the national policy.</li> </ul>
Financial & Human Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal &amp; State: had very vague or no information on the flow of funds for SEND-related projects and programs.</li> <li>Federal &amp; State: showed a shortage of (MDA and school) staff who have been adequately trained to perform their duties as related to the implementation of the SEND policy.</li> </ul>
Current School Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal &amp; State: had no unified practices or guidelines for adaptation with respect to the inclusion of persons with special needs and disabilities.</li> </ul>
Parental Choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Free education policy and proximity were factors that contributed to parental choices, with little to no indication on the quality of education their children are receiving at the school.</li> </ul>
Roles of Other Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although there were contributions, there was a highly uncoordinated level of participation among both government and non-government (e.g. CSO, private foundations or donors, media etc.) stakeholders in relation to the implementation of the SEND policy.</li> </ul>

**Table 3. Commissions and committees to regulate practice**

Domain	Expectation	Prevailing Practice
Policy, legislation and documented guidelines	It is expected that states will adapt the national policy on SEND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State officials are not aware of national policy</li> <li>The state has not adapted the 2015 or 2016 SEND/Inclusive education policy but works with the national policy on education of 2013</li> <li>There is neither legislation nor implementation guidelines for the SEND policy or the national policy on education</li> </ul>
Institutions to regulate practice	State MOE is expected to spearhead the implementation of the SEND policy in collaboration with relevant bodies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State MOE implements activities towards providing access to education for PWDs in collaboration with SUBEB, UBEC, PPSSC, MSWCWD and non-governmental organization</li> </ul>

Application and Implementation	<p>There should be specialised diagnostic centres at state and LGA levels for assessment of PWDs</p> <p>There should be adapted curricula based on various disability needs</p> <p>There should be personnel training and retraining to meet the need of providing quality education for PWD</p> <p>There should be free education for PWDs</p> <p>Some non-inclusive schools for general education normal children should be made inclusive</p> <p>States should focus on inclusive education and much as possible</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State officials are not aware of national policy</li> <li>• The state has not adapted the policy but works with the national policy on education of 2013</li> <li>• There is neither legislation nor implementation guidelines for the SEND policy nor for the national policy on education</li> <li>• State MOE implements activities towards providing access to education for PWDs in collaboration with SUBEB, UBEC, PPSSC, MSWCWD, LGEAs and non-governmental organization</li> <li>• There is no specialised diagnostic centre for the purpose of assessing PWDs but assessment is primarily done by head teachers/support staff based on observation, parental or medical report</li> <li>• There are currently no such adapted curricula</li> <li>• There is gross inadequacy of trained personnel for PWDs</li> <li>• There is free education for PWDs at the primary and secondary school levels</li> <li>• Some schools are designated inclusive though with inadequate facilities</li> <li>• States gives more attention to special schools/education</li> </ul>
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### Common themes

- **Tokenism** – this is the act of giving students with special needs or disabilities gifts that are not necessarily targeted towards positive systemic or structural changes in their lives. These types of gifts are usually given by politicians (or un/organized groups) to the SEND students at events or their schools. These politicians are often criticized as not having the best interest of the SEND students in mind but rather using them as a platform for and popularity electoral benefits.
- **Tokenism Syndrome** – is the pervasive belief within the society that SEND students ought to receive less than the best while failing to recognize that their education is actually more expensive than regular education. This belief and act are also stemmed from a sense of appreciation that comes from the SEND students or their parents who consider that they have right to a basic quality and inclusive education in the least restricted environment.
- **Private Schools' Involvement in SEND Implementation** – states award grants to select private schools to provide services for SEND students. However, their selection process and disbursement of funds or other resource allocation is unclear. It is also not apparent if private schools that receive public funds are held accountable for their implementation practices.
- **Dilapidated Facilities and Lack of Resources** – there are some structural improvements that are expected of the state that has not been done. However, it is also assumed that there are some stipends that schools should receive for running costs (e.g. power generator) that are

not used which compromises the SEND students learning experiences (e.g. visually impaired not having adequate power supply to charge their phones to record their lessons).

- **Segregation** – inclusive schools are not inclusive in practice. SEND students are often segregated by unnecessarily being placed in separate facilities within the school environment.
- **Cacophony about Giving, Silence about the Numbers<sup>1</sup>** – the dearth of data on SEND resource allocation and student population is concerning. Free education is not necessarily free if the state government is not adequately remitting funds to the school. Schools are also very silent about the funds that they have and how it has been used.
- **Cacophony about Tokenism, Silence about Policy, Process, and Procedure<sup>2s</sup>** - there is no clear plan or process for implementing any SEND policy at the school, LGA, or state levels.

### Proposed next steps

- Disseminate the SEND policy to all states and education agencies and conduct sensitization workshops to raise awareness and improve understanding of the policy and its implementation.
- Engage other stakeholder including donor agencies to partners with government to address the gap in comprehensive data on persons with special need in each state, capacity for inclusive education delivery, harmonise practices in both public and private schools, ensure physical accessibility of the school environment, to the needs of persons with SEND by proper landscaping, provide adequate assistive teaching, learning and mobility aids, strengthen the capacity of the SBMCs to improve integration and inclusive practices in schools.

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<sup>1</sup> This sub-title was inspired by Graham's (1984) article titled "Schools: Cacophony about Practice, Silence about Purpose." The full citation is in the References section of this report (Section 11).

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