

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION: THEORY AND PRAXIS OF EDUCATING THE DISABLED IN RIVERS STATE OF NIGERIA, 1967-2007**

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### **Abstract**

*Inclusive education is the latest aphorism for an all- embracing education for the disabled and their non-disabled peers in a regular classroom. Nigeria is signatory to most initiatives, especially the Salamanca 1994 initiative under the auspices of UNESCO, which makes it incumbent for each state of the Federation of Nigeria to implement it. Rivers State is not in a position to implement inclusive education given her dismal performance in providing and promoting education for the disabled as this discourse revealed. The philosophy and gains of inclusive education are lofty, ideal and laudable, yet intensive and extensive plans should be made to avert its collapse during implementation in Nigeria, albeit Rivers State. Political will, adequate funding and the people's commitment to achieve the objectives of inclusion education are critical to inclusive education, which is yet to commence in Rivers State.*

### **Introduction**

Inclusive education suggests and implies that every child, youth and adult irrespective of sex, race and any other distinguishing factor is entitled to education. This idea underscores Article 26 (1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit” (IFRA,1994:8). This view is also in agreement with Nigeria’s Philosophy of Education which among others is based on “the provision of equal access to educational opportunities for all citizens of the county at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, both inside and outside the formal school system” (FRN, 2004:2). Laudable as these principles are, their Implementation over the years have not been possible. It is partly because of this lacuna that the World Conference on Education for All, assembled in Jomtien, Thailand, from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1990 and reiterated the provision of “Basic Learning Needs” for every person—child, youth and adult. The significance of this philosophy is the call for an “ expanded vision” which encompasses the following:

- (a) Universalizing access and promoting equity;
- (b) Focusing on learning;
- (c) Broadening the means and scope of basic education;
- (d) Enhancing the environment for learning; and
- (e) Strengthening partnerships ( UNESCO, 2001:2).

Rivers State as part of Nigeria that is an active participant and signatory to these covenants is therefore expected both in theory and practice to educate the ably challenged/disabled. Thus, this paper seeks to examine and ascertain the following:

- (a) The extent to which government has provided access for educating the disabled;
- (b) Non-governmental organizations and private individuals provision of access for educating the disabled;
- (c) the availability and adequacy of equipment and infrastructure for educating the disabled;
- (d) the state of qualified personnel and teachers in the schools for effective learning by the disabled;
- (e) the extent to which inclusive education is practiced in Rivers State;
- (f) the problems and prospects of educating the disabled in the State and to.

### **Analysis of concepts**

Inclusive education and disabled are two key terms in this paper that require some explanation for a proper understanding of the discourse. Inclusive education means that all students in a school, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses in any area become part of the school community. They are included in the feeling of belonging among other students, teachers and support staff (Huston, 2007:1). Precisely, Inclusive Education (I.E.) insists that all children with special needs should be included in the traditional classroom to study with their non-disabled peers ( (Abosi, n.d.:24) 'Inclusion' in education is not a new idea when it is considered that various terms such as integration/mainstreaming had been used to advance the philosophy of Inclusive Education, since the 1970s. Indeed, (EENET, n.d.:52) reported that Inclusive Education could be traced to the work of Elizabeth Burgwin in Britain and other pioneers elsewhere in Europe who championed the cause of children's welfare in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Burgwin was particularly interested in the inclusion of children with disabilities into ordinary schools through adaptations to the physical environment. Integration or mainstreaming as Huston (2007:2) explained refers to the selective placement of special education students in one or more "regular" education classes. This situation does not feature a continuous period of education with non-disabled peers from the beginning in primary one- for instance to primary six. Rather the disabled person's needs and severity of condition determines whether he or she is to be a member of a unit of the class, or a special class or participate in a resource room with others, depending on the knowledge or skill to be acquired. It is therefore clear that this concept is similar to the traditional forms of special education service delivery.

America provides a vivid example of the practice of integration when in 1975 the American Congress enacted the "Education For All Handicapped Children Act" which provided for free and compulsory education for all children with disabilities and who were also to be provided with an individualized education programme and non restrictive environment. Britain in 1978 developed a similar programme following Warnock's Report, which recommended that children with disabilities be integrated in ordinary schools. Again, America and Britain have since the past two decades been the major proponents of Inclusive Education provision. In fact, UNESCO's intervention in this regard is explicit, particularly in the 'inclusive education' framework adopted at the Salamanca, Spain, Conference in 1994. Article 3, stated that " "schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions". (Salamanca Framework For Action, 1994). This statement reinforces the 'inclusion' trend that has become part of educational policies in many African countries such as Nigeria, Botswana, Uganda, Gambia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, Kenya and so on.

The disabled refer to people with impairments (physical, sensory), and who can be categorized as follows:

- (a) Visually impaired ( blind and the partially sighted);
- (b) Hearing impaired ( deaf and the partially hearing);
- (c) Physically and health impaired (deformed limbs, asthmatic);
- (d) Mentally retarded (educable, trainable, bed ridden);
- (e) Emotionally disturbed (hyperactive, hypoactive, the socially maladjusted/behaviour disorder);
- (f) Speech impaired ( stammarers, stutterers);
- (g) Learning disabled (have psychological/neurological educational phobia or challenges), and
- (h) Multiply handicapped (FRN, 2004:41).

Hitherto special education which is a formal special educational training was given to such person with special needs. In this regard, special schools were established to meet their needs. The advocacy for their inclusion in regular/ordinary schools and classrooms raises the question of whether it should be 'Inclusion' or full inclusion.

Huston (2007:2) explains inclusion as a term that expresses commitment to educate each child, to the maximum extent appropriate, in the school and classroom he or she would otherwise attend. This involves bringing the support services to the child (rather than moving the child to the services) and requires only that the child will benefit from being in the class (rather than having to keep up with the other students). Full Inclusion on the other hand, means that all students, regardless of handicapping condition or severity, will be in regular classroom full time. All services must be taken to the child in that setting. Given this explanation, Article 96, c (1) of section 10 of the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004:43) requires some clarification because there is a difference between inclusive education and integration. It states:

*All necessary facilities that would ensure easy access to education shall be provided; e.g. inclusive education ore integration of special classes and units into ordinary/public schools under the UBE scheme.*

As earlier explained, there should be a specific stance that should guide practice. If it is inclusive education as the trend is then, it should be full inclusion. However, as a transverse issue, Inclusive Education cuts across all educational initiatives- from early childhood education to primary, secondary, vocational, adult, teacher education and curriculum development – as well as in spheres related to culture and development.

#### **Educating The Disabled in Rivers State: 1967-1984**

Rivers State was created on 27<sup>th</sup> May, 1967 while some parts were still under the clutches of Biafra as a result of the Nigeria Civil War. Educational activities were virtually grounded. Only few schools were reopened because some served as camps for soldiers and refugees. The disabled had no school. In fact, before the civil war there was no school for the disabled rather, some were taken care of in the Chestire Home along Harold Wilson Drive (former number 6 Owenu Street) in the Town area of Port Harcourt. At the end of the war, this centre was reactivated but relocated to Churchill Street also in Port Harcourt. The physically challenged were taken to regular schools while the mentally retarded, visually, hearing and speech impaired were merely cared for by the Reverend Sisters and other staff/workers in the Home.

In March 1980, the Catholic mission established "The Child Special School" for the physically disabled and mentally retarded. Certainly, and as is replete with literature on the history of education in Nigeria, Christian missions blazed the trail in the establishment of schools for the disabled in Rivers State. This school

caters for both day and boarding students. However, at its inception it was mainly children of the poor who attended this school and this can be partly explained by the negative attitude people express toward such forms of disability and a general lack of awareness of the need to educate the disabled so that they can actively contribute to and benefit from the development of their society. African values, tradition and culture have also negatively affected the education of the disabled. Abosi (n.d.25) noted that the superstitious belief that disability is a curse from the gods, the shame of having a disabled child, the belief that one's social status is lowered by having a disabled child among others are stumbling blocks not only towards appreciating and understanding their plight and how they function but also towards their total acceptance in the society. As the only school for the disabled before the mid eighties, many children, especially the visually and speech impaired remained out of school while the physically disabled could attend regular schools with the non-disabled.

### **Educating The Disabled Since 1985**

1985 is a landmark in the education of the disabled in Rivers State because in September of that year the "Special School For the Handicapped" was established by government along Creek Road, Town area, Port Harcourt. It is the only established school by Government for the disabled in the State. It started as a primary school but has expanded to cater for secondary school education. This is feat because the schools for the disabled established by the Catholic mission do not have the secondary school component. In 1986, Sancta Maria Nursery and Primary School for the disabled was again established by the Catholic Mission, the Diocese of Port Harcourt.

Government's Involvement in providing a school for the disabled though belated can be partly explained by a variety of reasons such as pressure from concerned parents and other individuals, a realization that the disabled should also benefit from the ill-fated universal primary education of 1976, the need to also have government presence in this area, and so on. The late involvement of government in this aspect of education as well as the apparent disinterest that has made government not to establish more of such schools reinforce the general apathy of people, government and the society at large towards the disabled Eleweke and Rodda (2000:2) reported that out of 80 percent of the world's population of people with disabilities who live in the Developing Countries (DCs) of Asia, Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and the Middle East only 2 percent are receiving any form of special needs services. Again, of the 80 percent population of the disabled, 150 million are children. The exact number of children with disabilities in Africa is unknown that is why the United Nations uses 10 percent figure of school-aged children to project an estimated figure of those (children) with disabilities. The situation is deplorable because without accurate figures it is difficult to plan for effective inclusive education.

There are 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Rivers State but there is only one government sponsored school for the disabled. There is no knowledge of the unreached population of the disabled who are not in the three schools for the disabled in the State. This glaring disparity contrasts with the situation where there existed 1040 primary schools with a population of 619,094 pupils, 245 secondary schools with 307,112 student population in government schools as at 2004 (MOE, 2004:15). Out of the 324 registered and approved private schools in the State, there were 189 nursery and primary schools and 135 secondary schools (MOE 2004:23-29). There were also 500 unclassified illegal unregistered sects, and non-governmental organizations that did not deem it necessary and /or profitable or compassionate to establish schools for the disabled in the State. Similarly, no private individual established any school for the disabled. More worrisome is the fact that the disabled, especially the mentally retarded, speech and hearing impaired in the other 22 LGAs are totally

excluded from formal education. Inclusive education therefore would provide an opportunity of those with disabilities in these LGAs.

There are 150 pupils (90 girls and 60boys) in the Child Special School at Nkpogu in Port Harcourt LGA (data was not classified according to classes and sex as requested). Data from the Government owned Special School for the disabled is as follows:

**Table 1**

<b>2007 Enrollment by class and sex of the Disabled (Deaf and Dumb) in the only Government owned Special Schools</b>				
<b>TYPE</b>	<b>PRIMARY</b>		<b>SECONDARY</b>	
<b>SEX</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>
PRIMARY 1	09	05	JS.1 14	04
PRIMARY 2	12	04	JS.2 07	03
PRIMARY 3	07	04	JS.3 20	12
PRIMARY 4	05	04	SS.1 10	07
PRIMARY 5	09	05	SS.2 15	06
PRIMARY 6	12	03	SS.3 18	29
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>61</b>

**SOURCE:** Field work 2007

There are only 10 visually impaired students in the school because of limited space for boarding. Infact, the Principal, Elder Ereba, P. K. (2007) explained that the limited classroom space and other facilities have made it extremely difficult to admit all disabled persons who seek admission into the school, especially the secondary school section. According to him

***“the school population is on the increase but if well equipped there will be an explosion”***

The above statement indicates that many children are still excluded from formal education thereby institutionalizing inequality. Data from Sancta Maria Nursery and Primary School established by the Catholic Diocese of Port Harcourt reflects the following population of pupils:

**Table 2**

<b>2007 Enrollment by class and sex of Pupils in Sancta Maria Nursery/Primary for the Disable as at 2007.</b>				
<b>TYPE</b>	<b>NURSERY</b>		<b>PRIMARY</b>	
<b>SEX</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>	<b>MALE</b>	<b>FEMALE</b>
NURSERY 1	18	20	PRIMARY 1A 19	21
NURSERY 1B	20	16	PRIMARY 1B 23	17
NURSERY 2A	20	18	PRIMARY 2A 25	20
NURSERY 2B	17	21	PRIMARY 2B 24	21
NURSERY 3A	22	18	PRIMARY 3A 16	15
NURSERY 3B	19	21	PRIMARY 3B 14	14
			PRIMARY 4A 12	10
			PRIMARY 4B 07	06
			PRIMARY 5 11	12
			PRIMARY 6 15	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>159</b>

**SOURCE:** Field work 2007

The total number of 899 disabled children in the three schools in one LGA is indicative of unmapped cases in the other LGAs (22 of them) who do not have access to the education that meets their special needs.

### Curriculum

The curriculum in the three schools differ as is reflected below:

**Table 3**

Curriculum in the three Special Schools for the Disabled in Port Harcourt Local Government Area.		
THE CHILD SPECIAL SCHOOL, NKPOGU	SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR THE DISABLED, CREEK ROAD	SANCTA MARIA NURSERY/PRIMARY SCHOOL, D/LINE
Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
English Language	English Language	English Language
Elementary Science	Religious Knowledge	Social studies
Speech (Sounds)	Creative Arts/ Elementary Science	Elementary Science
Creative Arts	Social Studies Computer Education	Health Education
Nature Study	Physical and Health Education	Religious knowledge
Christian Religious Knowledge	Speech training Auditory Training Total Communication Speech (lip) Reading	French
Home Economics		Physical Education
-	Orientation and Mobility Braille Writing and reading Typewriting Abacus Daily living Skills	Music
-	Music Drama Daily living Skills	

**SOURCE:** Field work 2007

The child Special School provides physiotherapy services for pupils who have problems with walking and other of physical disability. Girls are taught how to cook in their kitchen, which is their idea of Home Economics. The boys are excluded which makes for gender disparity in this subject knowledge. This should be redressed because men cook in hotels, restaurants, and so on. Some men own Fast Food outfits where they cook and sell various dishes (both continental and local) from which they generate money for their livelihood. Therefore, from childhood the boy should be given equal opportunity with the girls to acquire skills in Home Economics. Here, boys are trained in the vocation of mending shoes and producing art works. Again, boys and girls should have equal opportunity in this course because any one (boy or girl) might develop his/her talent in this area and chart a career out of it. There is a recreation room where the pupils watch television, sing and play after school.

Facilities at the Government Special School are very inadequate. Four different classes share one hall (which is not spacious for them). Most of the desks and chairs were broken as such some of the children sit on the bare floor, there are no laboratories, no first aid box, and no mini clinic. There are only 5 Braille machines for the 10 visually impaired students whereas each student should have one Braille machine. Guide canes for mobility orientation are in short supply while the shelter (vocational) workshop for the mentally retarded is not adequately equipped with the required tools in the various trade that they are to be taught. This limited exposure to only few trades also limit the development of their talents and skills as they are restricted to few trades. Hearing aids were few and they were not designed specifically for each individual which should have been the appropriate thing. People with conductive hearing loss can use the hearing aid because it propagates sound but it is not useful for those who have congenital hearing problem. Again, the audiometers in the school are obsolete and need replacement with modern ones. It is no wonder that there is a heavy dependence on the use of television and video for teaching the deaf and dumb pupils as well as other students in the school.

The poor state and inadequate of equipment and facilities in this school makes it possible for one to conclude that government has for long neglected the school. The school, despite its expansion to include the secondary school section has not had any new additional building for either classrooms, laboratories or workshops. Boarding facility is limited and so are recreational rooms and equipment. Despite the neglect by government, other bodies such as Intels, some women organizations and the Education Tax Fund (ETF) have assisted the school. For example, in 2005. Intels, an oil servicing company sponsored the deaf and dumb on sign language/lip reading course. Agip Wives Association (AWA) in the year 2006 provided them some desks and chairs while Niger Wives ( an association of non-Nigerian women who are married to Nigerian men) also in 2006, renovated the blind resource room. Education Tax Fund (E.T.F.) provided some carpentry and tailoring equipment, television sets and computers for teaching the deaf and dumb. Sancta Maria was provide computers, a Sick Bay, desks and chairs for their pupils. It is probable that the Catholic Diocese of Port Harcourt, which established it, is conscious of their needs and ensures their availability. The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) and other bodies can be approached for assistance and for the establishment of more Special Schools to meet the needs of the disabled.

Beyond theory, special needs education praxis is far below expectation in its entirety, given the evidence from the three schools in Rivers State. The National Policy on Education (NPE) (FRN. 2004:42) aims and objectives of Special education include giving concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding and providing adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of the nation. How are these possible without adequate facilities and equipment? How can limited exposure to restricted subjects and education at primary level cater for the unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs? Similarly, there were no talking watches, ear mould machines, educational/psychological toys for the educationally mentally retarded, standard library, internet facilities, calipers, prostheses crutches, wheel chairs and artificial limbs for the disabled. If this is the situation in special schools, is there a guarantee that the disabled will fare better and their special needs met in regular schools with the non-disabled as Inclusive Education is to be practiced?

The idea of Inclusive Education (I.E.) also known as Full Inclusion (F.I.) in America has since the mid 1990s influenced the thoughts of other peoples of the world on how to educate every child. The Salamanca statement, on principles, policy and practice in special needs education 1994 makes this idea (Inclusive Education) imperative as nations that participated in the conference endorsed the idea and made their

commitments. As is the practice, there is always a problem with praxis not theory and principles on which the ideal is based. Should we always accede to laudable and lofty educational ideals that are stifled during implementation or should we accept them, work out our modalities and strategies for implementation thereby proceeding at our own pace? Should this philosophy be adopted and implemented without adequate preparation for the programme so that the objectives and aims are not achieved in the end? Several questions therefore must be asked and answered for the practice of Inclusive Education (I.E.). The questions to guide the implementation of Inclusive Education (I.E.) are:

- (a) Is there sufficient awareness of the philosophy of Inclusive Education by the general public?
- (b) Have Nigerians sufficiently developed the positive attitude to accommodate children with disabilities in ordinary schools?
- (c) Are the relevant support services for special needs in all Inclusive Education schools now available?
- (d) Are there adequately trained teachers for Inclusive Education and is their number sufficient for the population of students?
- (e) Is there enough finance to fund and support effective inclusive education?, and
- (f) Is there the political will to implement and sustain Inclusive Education?

These questions demand reasonable answers if frustration among the disabled students, the teachers and the entire educational system is to be avoided.

### **Teachers**

Teacher education for students with disabilities is not widely patronized, as is that of the non-disabled. It is plausible that lack of much awareness, less emphasis on the education of the disabled and few institutions for teacher development in this field of study seriously militate against teacher development for the disabled. In Rivers State, for example, there are two Universities, two Colleges of Education and one Polytechnic but none offers courses/trains teachers for educating the disabled. Paucity of teachers for students with special needs would negatively affect progress in the practice of the Inclusive Education in the State. At present there is a dearth of qualified teachers in the Special Schools in the state.

There are only 18 staff in the Child Special School, minders, drivers and gardeners inclusive. The highest qualified teacher has the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) while others are Grade II teachers (with Grade II teachers Certificate) which is well below the minimum qualification for teaching in Nigeria as stipulated by the NPE. Yet it is a government approved school. This situation raises questions about the quality of school inspection, processes for registering and approval of schools, and so on. The government owned special school has some N.C.E.; B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) and M.Ed (Master of Education) teachers who are trained in Special Education. However, it is regrettable that the teachers are not updated with knowledge in their field because the Principal, Elder Precious Kpobari Ereba complained that government does not sponsor them for seminars and workshops where they would interact with others in the field and improve on their knowledge and practice in the field. He pointed out that many special education teachers are in regular schools because the school is neglected, no expansion and especially for non-implementation of the payment of the 15 percent of their basic salary and other motivational allowances stated in the blue print on Special Education. The fear is that as his batch (himself and his contemporaries) retire, there might not be some replacement. This fear is genuine and germane given the scope of their activities. They not only cater for students with disabilities but also adults who become disabled later in life. There are some graduates and others who became visually handicapped (VHE) and/or lost hearing who they rehabilitate. The visually handicapped are taught Braille

writing, mobility and orientation on how to get acquainted with their environment so that they can move about, manage obstacles along the road and gain confidence in moving without assistance, the deaf and dumb are taught sign language. Non graduates are prepared for the Joint Admissions Matriculation Board (JAMB) Examinations, Senior School Certificate Examination (SSCE) and National Examination Council (NECO) Certificate. The school does not have Physics and Chemistry teachers. There is only one teacher for Mathematics and one again for Biology. This implies that the disabled in this school cannot study courses in science discipline or take a career in science because of a lack in science foundation. Sancta Maria Nursery/Primary School has six graduates, seven N.C.E., nine Grade II Teachers and six Nursing Sisters. With this situation (where there are few specialist teachers) the practice of inclusive education will be a nightmare.

Inclusive education in itself is expensive in terms of the provision of both financial and human resources. All schools where inclusive education takes place are expected to have resource rooms, specialist teachers and other support staff such as psychologists, speech therapists, sign language interpreters, braillists, teacher's aides and very wide doors for wheel chairs, construction of ramps to classrooms and school buildings, construction of adapted toilets for children with physical disabilities, enlargement of classroom windows, rebuilding of all the dilapidated classrooms, leveling of the play grounds to ease mobility and so on.

### **Stakeholder Participation**

Government is unable to undertake all responsibilities involved in providing education for her citizens and does not make any pretence about it. That is why section 4 (L) on primary education and section 5 (26) on secondary education of the (NPE 2004:11 and 17) state that government welcomes the contribution and participation of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals in the establishment and management of primary and secondary schools along side those provided by the State and Local Governments. The same is true of tertiary education, the implementation of Adult and Non-Formal Education and Open and Distance Education. For Special Education in particular collaboration with non-governmental organizations and international agencies (UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, WHO etc) was specified ( NPE 2004:42) in article 96 of section 10. There is no doubt therefore that for Inclusive Education, stakeholder participation is imperative for its success. The following steps should be incorporated or strongly considered before embarking on Inclusive Education in Nigeria:

- (a) Hold a stakeholder forum for Inclusive Education review, awareness creation and implementation;
- (b) establish collaborative funding, maintenance and sustenance of all resources needed;
- (c) explore and establish networks on Inclusive Education for enhancing quality inclusive education;  
and
- (d) establishment of monitoring mechanism for proper implementation of Inclusive Education.

Stakeholders have a responsibility towards ensuring that quality education is provided to all according to their needs so that the students are functional and live a fulfilled life within and outside their society(ies). Stakeholder involvement will empower all involved, especially parents and guardians of the disabled in school management and decision making. There is also opportunity for them to receive training in education and care of the disabled children.

## Conclusion

Inclusive Education is gaining ground through out the world as both disabled and non-disabled study together in the same classroom and environment. Influencing initiatives that drive Inclusive Education, such as the United Nations Standard rules on the Education Equalization of Opportunities for persons with Disabilities (1993) and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement (1994) are significant because many countries have advanced their strategies towards promoting inclusive education in their national legislation since the 1970s. The Inclusive Education philosophy of eliminating discrimination of the disabled and a reduction of the total cost of education among others is ideal and laudable. However, the management of the existing special schools in Port Harcourt, Rivers State and in particular, government's neglect of its only special school does not encourage the proposal for Inclusive Education. Forty years after the creation of Rivers State and out of 23 Local Government Areas only one Special School is in existence with two others established by the Catholic Mission. Other Christian Religious bodies have established both primary and secondary schools for the non-disabled children yet there are unreached persons with disabilities who need education in the state. There are no plans to map them and provide for their special needs. Rivers State situation is likely to mirror what obtains in other states of the Federation. Consequently, adequate plans should be made before legislating on and implementing inclusive education in Nigeria. For Rivers State, Inclusive Education is a theory, the principles of which are yet to be practiced. Inclusive Education especially for the hearing and speech impaired, the visually handicapped, the mentally retarded and those with other forms of disability is yet a mirage.

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