

## **VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMMES FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN NIGERIA: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

**Andrew A. Omede** 

Department of Educational Psychology, Kogi State College of Education, Nigeria

[andrewomede@gmail.com](mailto:andrewomede@gmail.com)

**Joy E. Okpe**

Department of Home Economics, Kogi State College of Education, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

*This paper discusses vocational rehabilitation programmes for disabled people in Nigeria with emphasis on its problems and prospects. The significance of this topic lies on the fact that in most cases problems identified are half solved. The paper advocates the need for government to establish more rehabilitation centres and introduce more programmes to rehabilitate people with disabilities so that they can provide for themselves and contribute their quota to national development. To achieve this, recommendations were put forward in the concluding part of this paper.*

*Keywords: Vocational, Rehabilitation Programmes, Disabled People, Nigeria, Problems, Prospects.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

United Nations (1990) defines disability as limitations in individuals' capacity to perform activities, which are generally accepted as basic components of daily living such as self care, social relations, and economic activities in accordance with his/her age, sex and social role as a result of physical or mental functional limitation. This also includes matter of individual's adjustments to this limitation. In the same vein, Audu (2005) says "it includes assisting the patient to compensate for defect that cannot be reversed medically."

Obviously, any organized activity channeled towards the sustenance and improvement of life of persons with disability during and in some specified cases after their rehabilitation programme may be considered as rehabilitation service. Literally, it means something, usually planned, for, that makes life easier to manage that reduces handicaps imposed by impairment that enables them to lay claim to liberties, right and responsibilities in a democracy. These services are intended to enable clients to achieve their rehabilitation goals. Adelowo and Ajobiewe (1995), looked at management of handicapped children in essentially school based system, very few of known practices attempted to meet the needs of clients out of institutional environments where they will eventually come to live 'normally' in community situations. In this case, rehabilitation services are the ultimate maximum physical and psychological adjustment within the limits of the person's impairments, so that he can live a useful and satisfied life. This paper will be incomplete if types of rehabilitation programmes are not mentioned.

### **Types of Rehabilitation Services**

The word rehabilitation is derived from a Latin word habit as which means "to make able". The concept rehabilitation has been viewed variously by scholars with common agreement on remedial actions.

The international labour organization ILO (1997) defined rehabilitation as a generic term covering the continuing medical, or congenital causes (injury of illness) which can to some extent disintegrate the disabled into achieving his full capacity. This implies that an individual with disability changes from one development to another to achieve a meaningful life whereby his/her status can be recognized in any society he belongs.

Accordingly, Ozoji (2002) views rehabilitation as a planned programme through which selected services are provided by clients in the hope that he/she will attain the highest level of functioning, be it academically, vocationally, psychologically, and economically. To him, the prime goal of rehabilitation is economic independence. In the same manner, Wale (2005), "rehabilitation is the combined and co-ordinated use of medical, social, educational and vocational measures used for training and retraining individuals disabled by disease or injury to the highest possible level of functional ability." In the word of Aboki (2004), rehabilitation means the restoration of, or improvement in employee's health and ability to perform the functions of his or her job. He added that it usually involves programmes of clinical and vocational services with the goal of returning employees to a satisfying occupation, if possible. From literature search, the following types of rehabilitation were identified:

### ***Medical Rehabilitation***

Medical rehabilitation is the restoration of the physical or mental properties of a client that might need treatment or surgery as the case may be. Such a need must have been identified and established during the eligibility tests.

### ***Social Rehabilitation***

Social rehabilitation services can never be over emphasized due to the transformation of various services rendered to the disabled. These services fall within the realm of restoring the social functioning and dignity of man.

### ***Community Based Rehabilitation***

This is a process of rehabilitation taken to individuals in need of it in their communities.

### ***Vocational Rehabilitation***

This is a type of rehabilitation centres with the sole aim of providing useful services to the disabled and their restoration to a normal near life.

Although, from literature search, types of rehabilitation has clearly been stated, however, for the purpose of this paper the writer focuses more attention on vocational rehabilitation programme for the disabled.

## **WHAT IS VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION?**

According to Bitter in Amwe (1991), vocational rehabilitation deals with the restoration of persons with disabilities to the fullest physical, mental, vocational and economic usefulness of which they are capable. Similarly, Roessler (1987) postulated that what the people with disabilities need is vocational training tailored to meet their employment needs in the present day economy. To achieve this, he maintains that vocational rehabilitation preparation of the disabled persons should involve teaching clients, how to complete job application forms, how to respond in job interviews, and learning how to meet the interpersonal and task performances which is an essential and noble venture aimed at restoring the handicapped to be self-employed and at the same time government employees. With this they can be socially and vocationally useful. Bitter (1979) adds further that “vocational rehabilitation of a disabled persons refers to series of activity directed towards providing him with skills and knowledge that will enable him to work and become as self-sufficient as possible.”

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### **Evaluation**

The concepts of this, is to assess the disabled physical, emotional, intellectual and social life. In most cases guidance counselor are assigned to this legibility evaluation.

### **Guidance**

The emphasis is to carryout adequate plans for the rehabilitation services in order to ensure total adjustment of the client.

### **Vocational Training**

This aspect helps the individual to partake in a specific job accordingly to his/her ability and skills for daily living.

### **Placement Services**

This involves having the individual fixed in a job position. After this placement, rehabilitation instructors go around for follow up or supervision periodically to ensure continuity of the workforce.

### **Development and Maintenance of Cooperative**

Thrift and credit schemes. The aim is to ring legitimate relationship and mutual understanding among clients, and by this, their welfare is maintained to certain extent.

Vocational rehabilitation train disabled persons to become typists, telephone operators, chair weavers, carpet makers, tailors and radio repairers, etc. This skill give them self independence, apart from that, it enable them to render services to others that are not disabled.

All these rehabilitation services are still in practice in so many areas in the country today. Despite these practices, there are a lot of problems surrounding rehabilitation programmes.

## PROBLEMS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

Vocational rehabilitation programs for people with disabilities in Nigeria are faced with the following problems amongst others;

- i. Age of those to be rehabilitated. Many of those with disabilities are already adults beyond productive age and had families. Without care for the family their attention at the centre cannot be easily sustainable (Ozoji, 2002).
- ii. Dearth of professionals. One of the major limitations of rehabilitation is professional teams. The qualified personnel to handle the areas such as welfare, health, rehabilitation among other are grossly inadequate and when available are not dully catered for and this deprive even the qualified from such participation.
- iii. Unattractive nature of rehabilitation career. Not many young people want to go for training as rehabilitation officers. This factor partly account for shortage of interdisciplinary professionals who should handle rehabilitation of people with disabilities in Nigeria.
- iv. Inadequate resource materials and equipment. Some rehabilitation centres in Nigeria are grossly under-equipped for proper and effective training of the people with disabilities due to the failure of government to provide enough funds for the procurement of the necessary equipment that re needed for proper and effective training of the disabled persons in Nigeria.
- v. Lack of interest in rehabilitation among some disabled persons in Nigeria. This is equally another problem facing rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria. Some of them after being admitted to the centre absconded from rehabilitation centre. They prefer begging to vocational rehabilitation.

## PROSPECTS

The prospects of vocational rehabilitation programmes for people with disabilities in Nigeria are not that gloomy. Because of the fact that centres were established in some parts of Nigeria such as Kaduna in Kaduna State, Gindiri in Plateau State, Oshodi and Ikeja in Lagos State, Geindan in Bornu State, Akpodim Mbaise in Imo State, Bida in Niger State and few others. These centres through their programmes have been able to a large extent remove the handicapping effects of disability by giving them relevant skills that will make them independent economically.

In support of this view, Ajobiewe and Amwe (1994) observed that such measures would be aimed at the reduction of the impact of disability and handicapping conditions to enable the disabled and handicapped to participate actively in the main stream of community life. Operation of rehabilitation programme for persons with disabilities gives room for service delivery for

providing more equitable opportunities and for promoting and protecting all human rights of disabled people.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is worthy to note that vocational rehabilitation programmes plays a vital role in social, economic, and physiological well being of people with disabilities in that it gives client their source of earning a living if it is successful ended on a gainful employment. However there are a lot of problems affecting the proper and smooth operation of vocational rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria as discussed earlier in this paper coupled with the scarcity in numbers of the centres in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were logically drawn from vigorous analysis of the problems of vocational rehabilitation programmes in Nigeria with their attendant's effects on the country.

- i. Government should provide enough funds for purchase and maintenance of relevant equipment to run vocational rehabilitation programmes effectively and this will help for realization of this purpose.
- ii. Rehabilitation personnel should be recruited to facilitate the programmes efficiently.
- iii. The programmes should be made attractive for both the trainers and the trainees. This will save the vocational rehabilitation centres from collapsing.
- iv. Government should appropriate legislation that will guarantee automatic employment for the trainees on completion of the performance.
- v. Government should establish more centres that could help the beneficiaries irrespective of their State and Local Government Area.

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