Importance of Special Libraries for Adult Learners with Special Needs

[1]Michael Eskay, [1]Bartholomew C. Nwefuru, [3]Linus Okechukwu Nwabuko, [2]Grace Ogechukwu Ugwonna and [2]Chinyere Loveth Chukwu
[1]Department of Educational Foundations,
[2]Department of Social Science Education,
[3]Department of Adult Education and Extra-Mural Studies, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

Abstract: This study discusses the importance of special libraries for adult learners with special needs. Given that this group of students have learning limitations, designing libraries that will address the limitation and cater for their wellbeing is a holistic approach for general productivity among them. For the enhancement of productivity and learning equality, adult learners with special needs should be provided with special libraries where they can access adaptive gadgets for their learning independence.

INTRODUCTION

The moderation of learning environment to suit all learners is a growing trend in education industry. The 18-19th century witnessed low productivity and self-actualization amongst the challenged persons, especially, in the third world countries. According to Lawal-Solarin[1], students with special needs are those learners who are prevented or limited from acting, relating or socializing like their normal counterparts. To La, students with special needs are those restricted by one deformity or the other from attaining equal educational opportunities with their contemporaries. Stressing further, La stated that among these categories are students with speech and language disorder, hearing impairment, cognitive impairment, mobility and visual impairment. According to Bandyopadhyay, students with special needs are those with any history of incapacitation, handicapping among others who may find it difficult to access public library. Accordingly, Adamu[2] reported that over 9 million physically challenged persons live in Nigeria. In the view of Rubin[3], students under the category of special needs include the physically handicapped, mentally retarded, blind and hearing impaired among others. Family Center on Technology and Disability describes students with special needs as those with one limiting factor or the other which makes them deficient in competing with nondisabled ones. BBT[4] noted that eliminating learning difficulties faced by the disabled is building accessible library with technological equipment like screen magnification support and screen reader among others. According to Iyoro[5] accessibility of information is very important to everyone and should be prioritized regardless of individual differences. The study aims to discuss the relevance of special libraries for adult learners with special needs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

It was through Google search and synthesis of information from newspaper reports and journal articles that this study was drafted.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is need for students with special needs to be fully accommodated in the formal learning environment by designing special libraries for them. Reacting, Okoli[6] stressed that hostility of human environment is jeopardizing the adaptability and improved aspiration of the challenged learners. The avoidance of learning incapacitation among students with special needs can draw easy stimulation if the learning environment is properly articulated. Accordingly, Ilayaraja and Manoharan stated that creating learning environment free from discrimination will be advantageous to the learning strength of student with special needs. Corroborating, Cox and Corrall[7] opined that rejection and isolation are the key frustrating factors for improved learning among students with special needs. The 2017-2018 report by National Center for Education Statistics[8] reviewed that over 7 million people in public schools within the age of 3-21 received special education services under Individual with Disabilities Education Acts (IDEA).

According to National Center for Education Statistics[8], the introduction of IDEA is eliminating classroom and library learning barriers amongst people with learning disabilities. Association of Specialized, ASCLA[9] stated that community-based and intellectual reinforcement could reduce the number of special children out of school. ASCLA[9] added that special library gives students with special needs full access to educational information. National Center for Education Statistics[8] describes special library as the type library which gathers comprehensive and relevant information on a concerned subject with best practice or organizing and sharing information to people that it is meant for on anticipation or demand. To Asghar and Shafique[10], special library is an information center for special group of persons with disability, handicap and impairment. SIWG noted that special library is made available to people with specific educational needs. Benoyendra[11] stated that special library is centered on the literature of specific or particular field or subject. In this regard, the information services of special library include; special field, service and clientele. Benoyendra[11] further added that special library offers two services of gathering information from different field for a specific function and giving information to people with special needs.

To ensure learning independent and productivity of individuals living with disabilities, especially, adult learners, there is need for an enabling environment where libraries will be equipped with adaptive features for easy access of information and coping[8]. National Center for Education Statistics[8] restated that one of the fundamental relevance of special libraries is that it provides its users with reference and instruction, assistive technology and web accessibility. Das[12] opined that special library make

learning unique for the disabled, impaired and/or handicapped because it usually equipped adult learners as it provides them with facilities such as cranktop tables, braille printer, JAWS screen reader, screen reader and magnifier, scanner, kurzweil 300, braille display keyboard, natural speaking, talking typing, supernova, special keyboard, readit wand, NVDA and braille embosser, magnifier mouse, BAT, foot mouse with programmable paddle, adjustable high power optical lens among others.

According to America Library Association, special library is any library built, organized and managed by governmental or nongovernmental agency for addressing peculiar issues of a specific group. Roy and Das was of the opinion that special library is essential because those incapacitated hardly access the normal library effectively. Technical solution implementation of special librarians makes her members to acquire and share vital information of their choice. Based on the scholarly postulation, special libraries:

- Tend to meet the information needs of users satisfactorily
- Offer detailed information faster
- Inspire users
- Offer relevant information on anticipation and demand
- It provide them with needed information that would transform them
- It selects and secures important documents for readership
- It makes secured document accessible through cataloguing and classification of material
- It provides users with services of referencing through emailing, posting and telephoning among others
- It allows them to learn independently
- It enhance interaction with peers of equal abilities
- The use of computer with or without teacher's assistance also boasts their hope of self-belief
- It offers them the opportunity of aligning themselves with self-help books at the library and beyond

CONCLUSION

This study discusses the relevance of special libraries for adult learners with special needs. Given that this group of adult learners have learning limitations, designing libraries that will address the limitation and cater for their wellbeing is a holistic approach for general productivity among them.

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