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Abstract
The paper examined the incidence of child labour and trafficking in Nigeria with particular reference to exceptional children or children with special needs. It is not uncommon these days to see children, the exceptional ones not in exception, being laboured and trafficked indiscriminately by some heartless and greedy Nigerians who in the pretence of providing educational and material assistance to these categories of children picked them up from their parents, capitalized on their conditions and exploited them unreasonably. The paper x-rayed some of these exploitational acts of these greedy individuals and further discussed the consequences of this practice on the entire nation. The paper proffered some prognosis for action as a recipe for mitigating child labour and trafficking in Nigeria.

Introduction
The role of education as a elixir of all spheres of nation-building is better understood when one takes a careful look at the significance of education in the social, economic, political, cultural, technological, and aesthetic development of a nation (Sule, 2009). It is an undeniable fact that education is an instrument used to impact knowledge, skills, techniques and strategies to children and adults for successful living.

Specifically, special education is used to give exceptional or special needs children the necessary knowledge and information, and helps them develop skills used to overcome their different disabilities, live a normal and satisfactory life, and contribute meaningfully to national development. Their being in school alone helps them to escape being used for child labour and trafficking at least during school hours. The knowledge, information and skills they acquire can help them resist
being used for child labour and trafficking, and this can gradually be eradicated in our society.

Exceptional children are children who have special learning needs either because of significant sensory deficit or unusual high intellectual ability or both (Ozoji, 2005). They are exceptional due to significant deviation in sensory functioning or in intellectual ability.

According to Ozoji (2005), these deviations must be substantial and could be below or above average conditions. Because of below average sensory functioning, normal learning through the regular approach is tampered. Also a child with outstanding achievements ability is not sufficiently challenged in the regular school practice. Hence, exceptional children have special learning needs that are better addressed through special education provision either in special or in regular schools. The presence of these special learning needs demands some modifications of regular school programme, curriculum methods, approaches of teaching, the school environment and infrastructures in order to allow these children develop to their maximum capacity.

Special education is a plan of educating the child with special needs, which takes child’s peculiar learning needs into account. It is a programme created and fashioned to the specific needs of the child which makes use of appropriate materials, methods and modified contents to suit the individual child’s needs (Kanu, 2008:8).

In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN), 2004:27-48) defined Special Education as “a formal special educational training given to people (children and adults) with special needs.” It classified special needs people into three categories, namely:

1. The Disabled: People with impairments (physical, sensory), and because of this impairments or disabilities cannot cope with regular school or class organization and methods without formal special educational training. In this category, we have people who are: (a) Visually impaired (blind and 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 or behaviour disorder); (f) Speech impaired (stammerers, stutters); (g) Learning disable (have psychological/neurological educational phobia or challenges); (h) Multiple handicapped.
ii. The Disadvantaged – The children of nomadic pastorals, migrant fisher folks, migrant farmers, hunters’ etc. who, due to their life styles and means of livelihood, are unable to have access to the conventional educational provision and therefore require special education to cater for their particular or peculiar needs and circumstances.

iii. The Gifted and Talented – People (children and adults) who have or possess very high intelligent quotient and are naturally endowed with special traits (in arts, creativity, music, leadership; intellectual precocity, etc.), and therefore find themselves insufficiently challenged by their regular school or college or university programme.

In a study conducted by United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2001), it was observed that disabilities put children and women in a more vulnerable situation to extreme forms of discrimination and exploitation than they would normally face, particularly in developing countries where social safety nets for the weakest are poorly developed. Accordingly, as a result of disabilities, special needs children are often handicapped in various aspects of social life.

In addition to this, they receive less education, become marginalized in social activities and have less opportunity for gainful employment in later life. In Nigeria, many special needs children resort to street begging on their own for survival or used by parents and guardians as commodities to get money (begging). Sometimes they become victims of child labour, especially in the field of agriculture for boys and prostitution for girls; they also fall into the hands of traffickers who use them for the above purpose (Onwubolu & Ovri, 2008). Such children end up with little or no education or training, they grow up to face difficult future challenges in adulthood and remain in continuous ridicule, social ostracism, exploitation, discrimination and are even regarded as a source of shame to their families. Effective implementation of child’s right and placement in special education programme for appropriate intervention can go a long way to ameliorate the above mentioned problems faced by exceptional children or children with special needs.

Child labour is the work that is exploitative and injurious to the physical, social, cognitive and moral development of the child. It occurs when children, especially young ones, are exposed to long hours of
work in a dangerous, unhealthy environment with too much responsibility for their age and at the expense of their schooling (UNICEF, 2001). Another means of carrying out child labour is by trafficking. Child trafficking in this study implies the illegal movement of children from one place to another for the purpose of child labour and prostitution. In the pretence to help parents educate or train their children, Nigerian commercial traffickers exploit the desperation and ignorance of parents and guardians, especially in rural villages, to procure children for commercial trafficking. These traffickers, explained UNICEF (2001), have assumed alarming proportions channeling huge numbers of children, including children with special needs, to the employment markets of major towns in Nigeria and outside the country. UNICEF (2001) equally reported that there is a growing trade in young girls for the purpose of prostitution, including international traffickers who transport Nigerian girls as far as Europe as sex workers.

Special needs children, especially, boys and girls with hearing impairment, mild mental retardation and those with learning disabilities are more vulnerable victims. The Convention on the Right of the Child focuses on child labour in Article 32 as recorded by UNICEF (2001). This recognizes 'The right of the child to be protected from economic exploitation and from performing any work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with the child’s education, or to be harmful to the child’s health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social developments (UNICEF 2001:267). Although, Nigeria also recognizes this right as inferred in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004), special needs children have the right to receive education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreational opportunities in a manner conducive to the child’s fullest possible social integration and individual development.

The objectives of this paper, therefore, are to discuss child labour and trafficking of children, with emphasis on exceptional children or children with special needs; identify causes of child labour and trafficking of children, highlight the effects of child labour and trafficking on children with special needs and suggest ways by which Special Education can be used to eradicate child labour and trafficking of children, particularly the exceptional children or children with special needs.
Causes of Child Labour and Human Trafficking

1. Poverty faced by Nigerian Citizens: The problem of poverty, that is being faced by many Nigerian citizens for many decades now, is worsening. This situation forced parents and guardians to give out their children to others to care for. Traffickers and perpetuators of child labour collect millions of children, including the special needs, in pretence to help educate or train them but rather engage them in hazardous or exploitative forms of child labour. This labour, according to UNICEF (2001), is mainly in the informal sector and agriculture.

2. Ignorance of child’s right by most citizens and of the educational provisions available from children with special needs: Most parents do not know that their children have rights that must not be violated. Such rights are rights to good shelter, education, special care and so on which are violated due to ignorance. Children with disability are either asked to go begging or are escorted to go begging instead of sending them to school. They face economic exploitation.

3. Misuse of cultural traits: Most cultures in Nigeria allow children to work and contribute to the family economy. However, Okogbe in UNICEF (2001) explained that those who cannot work are seen as liability such as some children with disabilities. These in some cases are neglected, starved, abandoned or even killed. Hence, some parents and guardians cannot draw a line between child labour and child work. They engage children in hazardous or risky work, too much for their age and sometimes deny them of schooling and good healthcare.

4. The search for wealth or high income: Most parents, guardians and others who engage children in child labour and trafficking are in search of money. Traffickers engage in commercial trafficking purposely because they get high income from it.

5. Inadequate awareness of special needs education facilities and services available to meet the needs of children with special needs: The National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) made provision for special need education stating that it was intended to equalize educational opportunity for all children, irrespective of their physical, mental, or emotional disabilities. Most people are not also aware that special education is free.

6. Porous borders between Nigeria and her neighbours: It has been observed that Nigerian children with and without disability are transferred to other countries for the purposes of child labour and prostitution. These children are moved past our borders illegally to
other countries because of either corruption or laxity on the part of those who are supposed to keep watch at the borders.

7. Negative attitudes of parents, guardians and the society towards children with special needs make them to be given out for child labour and trafficking. When the people around the child do not see anything good in the child, they may decide to give him or her out.

8. Poor commitments to the implementation of child’s rights. There are laxities in the implementation of child’s rights and in effecting penalties to offenders. In Nigeria, A lot of laxities occur in implementing policies and in effecting penalties to offenders. As such, the citizens take the government for granted and disobey rules such as child’s right law.

Effects of Child Labour and Trafficking on Exceptional Children.

The effects of this practice on the affected children, the families of the exceptional children involved, and on the entire society and nation as a whole cannot be over-emphasised. There are so many negative effects of child labour and trafficking. Some of these, according to Onwubolu and Ovri (2008), include the following:

1. Child labour and trafficking is a factor that contributes to the negative image of Nigeria. The practice of child labour and trafficking in and out of the country gives a negative image to the nation. It shows that child’s right and protection laws are violated and most offenders go free. It also shows that Nigeria cannot implement the agreement she has with international bodies.

2. Drop out of school: Many children drop out of school mainly because of economic reasons and because they are not challenged by the school system. These children and their parents are attracted by the economic gains of child labour and trafficking, not considering the laws, rights and privileges available to them. They do not consider the negative effects child labour and trafficking has on the children.

3. Less number of children with special needs will be educated because most of them have been engaged in child labour and trafficking. As was pointed out earlier, they are engaged in exploitative and risky work such as prostitution.

4. Inadequate contribution to the national development. When the children with or without disability are not educated and trained to develop themselves self, they will lack the required skills
necessary for and national development. It has been noted that these children are engaged in menial jobs, begging and prostitution. These jobs may not give them all the skills they need for development.

5. Negative psychological effects which could be observed in negative poor self-concept and self-esteem of the victim: The discrimination, exploitation, abuse and sufferings that children with special needs go through when engaging in child labour or when traffickers move them from one place to the other will surely not make them feel good about themselves or what they are doing.

Prognosis for Action.

1. Appropriate placement of special needs children in any of the special needs education programme that can meet their special learning needs. Secondly, special education facilities and services should be brought close to the people, especially in the rural areas. The public primary and secondary schools in the rural areas should become inclusive schools where special education programmes run along side with general education programme.

2. Enforcement of rights of the child. There should be one or more Government institutions or agents who are responsible for enforcing child rights, monitoring children with or without special needs and supervising schools and community to ensure child protection.

3. One of the grievous consequences of child labour and trafficking is the denial of educational opportunity. In Nigeria, even when the policy states that special needs education is free, the question is "how free?" Some parents cannot afford school uniforms, books and other school materials needed for children with special needs to be in school. Sometimes, there are no schools in a community and no money for transportation to another community where a school can be found. So, instead of staying idle they are engaged in child labour or trafficking. Hence, special needs education should be made to be free indeed.

4. Educational planning and programming need to pay special attention to possible mechanisms for diminishing the negative consequences of child labour with respects to educational access and learning achievements. In their suggestions, UNICEF explained that the above could take the form of a special initiative to meet the special
needs of the children, as has been done for nomadic children through
the nomadic education programme.

5. Provision of special needs educational facilities and services by
volunteers (individuals, non-governmental organizations, groups of
individuals, associations): Volunteers are people who freely want to
provide special needs education facilities and services or aids to
children with special needs. They can help to gradually mitigate child
labour and trafficking of these children through the provision of special
teachers, schools, materials and related facilities, and services.
Government alone cannot provide sufficiently for all the children with
special needs. Public support through volunteers is inevitable. In the
developed countries, volunteers assist the government in providing
needed facilities and services for education of children with special
needs. This is very important in Nigeria because government services
are presently inadequate.

6. Government, in conjunction with volunteers and special needs
education professionals, should provide the needed services and
material for the education of children with special needs. These
services include: organize fund raising to buy needed equipment;
organize public awareness programmes about special needs and the
benefit of special education; organize counselling sessions to take care
of their educational, vocational and personal social problems; organize
excursions; teach different hobbies: organize them into clubs, and so
on.

7. Adaptation of the concepts, causes and negative effects of child
labour and trafficking into the curriculum content used in teaching
children with special needs is important. Special education curriculum
involves modifications and adaptations of the normal school curriculum
to suit children with different disabilities. In addition to this, disability
related curriculum have also been developed for those children.
Therefore, child labour and trafficking education can be added to the
contents of subjects such as Social Studies, Physical and Health
Education, English Literature, and even as comprehension passages in
English Language texts at different levels of the Universal Basic
Education and Secondary Education. Child labour and trafficking
education can also be merged perfectly into disability related subjects such as total communication, Braille reading and Daily Living Skills.

Conclusion
A situation where millions of Nigerian children with and without special needs are out of school, not just that, but are involved in harmful and exploitative works which are either due to child labour or trafficking is a serious national problem. It is important to point out that special education is necessary and worthwhile for personal and national development. It provides a means to take care of those children the regular education cannot meet their learning needs. Most dropouts, the disadvantaged, children with disabilities and giftedness who may be diverted to child labour and trafficking can have access to education, rehabilitation and other services provided through special education. However, this paper has tried to highlight some of the causes and effects of child labour and trafficking. Suggestions on ways by which special education can help eradicate child labour and trafficking of children are proffered.

References