

ENHANCING LEARNING THROUGH CURRICULUM ACCOMMODATION, ADAPTATION AND MODIFICATION IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Inclusive education has become a globally recognized approach aimed at ensuring equitable access to quality education for all learners, including those with disabilities and special educational needs. This paper examines curriculum accommodation, adaptation, and modification as essential instructional strategies for enhancing learning in inclusive classrooms in Nigeria. The paper explains the concepts of inclusive education and highlights how curriculum flexibility supports effective teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. It further explores the roles of teachers in implementing accommodation, adaptation, and modification to meet learners' varying needs. The paper also discusses how these strategies enhance learning by improving access to instruction, increasing learner participation, promoting academic achievement, among learners. The implementation of these strategies is hindered by challenges such as inadequate teacher training, insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms and limited funding. The paper concludes by recommending teacher capacity building, provision of assistive technologies, curriculum flexibility, and improved policy implementation as key strategies for strengthening inclusive education practices in Nigeria.

Key Words: Curriculum Accommodation, Curriculum Adaptation, Curriculum Modification, Inclusive Education.

Introduction

Inclusive education promotes equal access, participation, and quality learning for all learners, including those with disabilities and special educational needs. In Nigeria, although policies support inclusive education, implementation remains challenging. Curriculum modification, accommodation, and adaptation help address diverse learner needs by changing learning expectations, improving access to instruction, and adjusting teaching methods and materials. These strategies can improve learners' participation, engagement, achievement, and confidence. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, insufficient assistive technology, overcrowded classrooms, Therefore, strengthening teacher capacity and providing adequate resources are essential for successful and meaningful inclusive education in Nigeria.

Concept of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is an educational approach that allows all learners, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, to learn together in regular classrooms with equal opportunities for participation and achievement. It promotes fairness, equality, and respect for learner diversity. According to UNESCO (2020), inclusive education involves removing barriers that prevent learners from accessing quality education and ensuring active participation for all students. Inclusive education emphasizes learner-centered teaching, curriculum adaptation, accommodation, and supportive learning environments to meet individual learner needs. It also encourages collaboration among teachers, parents, specialists, and school administrators to support learners effectively. In Nigeria, inclusive education is supported by the National Policy on Education, which promotes equal educational opportunities for learners regardless of disability (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2013).

Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum is one of the most important components of the educational process because it guides teaching, learning experiences, instructional activities, and assessment procedures in schools. It serves as a framework that determines what learners should learn, how teaching should take place, and the expected learning outcomes. In inclusive education, the curriculum plays a significant role in ensuring that learners with diverse abilities and educational needs receive meaningful and equitable learning opportunities. Different scholars have defined curriculum in various ways. According to Ralph Tyler (1949), curriculum refers to all learning experiences planned and directed by the school to achieve educational goals. These definitions indicate that curriculum goes beyond subjects taught in schools and includes all planned educational experiences that support learner development.

Curriculum is important in education because it provides direction for teachers and learners. It outlines educational objectives, instructional content, teaching methods, learning activities, and evaluation procedures. Curriculum also helps ensure uniformity and continuity in the teaching and learning process. Teachers are expected to adapt instructional methods, materials, classroom activities, and assessments to ensure that all learners participate meaningfully in classroom instruction. Curriculum implementation in inclusive settings involves the use of learner-centered instructional strategies such as differentiated instruction, curriculum adaptation, accommodation, and modification. These practices help learners with disabilities access learning effectively and improve their academic performance. There are different types of curriculum used in educational settings.

Types of Curriculum

1. **Formal curriculum:** The formal curriculum refers to the officially approved curriculum designed by educational authorities and implemented in schools. It includes subjects, learning objectives, instructional materials, and assessment procedures specified by the government or educational institutions. The formal curriculum is usually documented in syllabi, schemes of work, and textbooks.
2. **Informal curriculum.** Informal curriculum refers to learning experiences that occur outside the formal classroom structure. These experiences may come through interactions with peers,

extracurricular activities, school events, and social experiences. Informal curriculum contributes to learners' social, emotional, and moral development.

3. Hidden curriculum is another important aspect of curriculum. Hidden curriculum refers to the unintended lessons, values, attitudes, and behaviors learners acquire in school through school culture, teacher behavior, classroom interaction, and institutional practices.

4. Flexible curriculum is especially important in inclusive education. Flexible curriculum refers to a curriculum that can be adjusted to meet the individual needs, abilities, and learning styles of learners. It allows teachers to modify teaching methods, instructional materials, classroom activities, and assessment techniques to support learners with special educational needs flexible curriculum practices help remove barriers to learning and promote equitable participation for all learners. Curriculum is central to effective inclusive education because it guides teaching, learning, assessment, and learning experiences. Its flexibility allows teachers to address learners' diverse abilities and needs through curriculum modification, accommodation, and adaptation. Effective curriculum implementation requires teachers to have appropriate knowledge and skills, thereby promoting participation, academic achievement, and social inclusion for all learners.

Curriculum Accommodations in Inclusive Education

Curriculum accommodation is a key strategy in inclusive education that enables learners with disabilities to access the same curriculum and meet the same academic standards as their peers. It removes learning barriers by adjusting teaching methods, learning environments, materials, communication, and assessment procedures without changing learning objectives. By providing appropriate support based on learners' diverse needs, accommodation promotes educational equity, meaningful participation, and fair demonstration of knowledge

Categories of Curriculum Accommodations

1. Response accommodation allows learners to demonstrate their knowledge through alternative methods, such as oral responses, sign language, assistive technology, or adapted communication devices. These supports help students overcome barriers related to writing, speaking, or motor difficulties while enabling them to meet the same learning expectations as their peers (Smith et al., 2020).

2. Timing and scheduling accommodations are also common in inclusive classrooms. Some learners may require additional time to complete assignments, tests, or classroom activities due to processing difficulties, physical disabilities, or communication needs. Others may benefit from scheduled breaks during instruction or assessments. Providing extra time does not change the learning objectives; rather, it ensures that learners have an equitable opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills (Friend & Bursuck, 2019).

3. Setting accommodations involve adjustments to the learning environment to reduce barriers and enhance participation. Examples include preferential seating, reduced-distraction testing environments, improved classroom lighting, accessible furniture, wheelchair-accessible classrooms, and quiet areas for learners who require minimal sensory stimulation. Accommodations remove barriers that may prevent learners with disabilities from accessing and participating in education. For learners with hearing or visual impairments, supports may

include sign language interpreters, captions, assistive technology, Braille, screen readers, tactile materials, and appropriate seating. These adjustments maintain the same curriculum standards while providing flexible ways for learners to access instruction, participate equally, and achieve academic success.

Curriculum Adoption in Inclusive Education

Curriculum adaptation is a systematic process of adjusting instructional methods, learning materials, classroom environments, and assessment procedures to meet the diverse learning needs of students while maintaining the same curriculum goals and learning outcomes. Curriculum adaptation changes how learners' access, engage with, and demonstrate learning. It is a fundamental practice in inclusive education because it ensures that all learners, including those with disabilities and special educational needs, can participate meaningfully in the educational process. Inclusive education seeks to remove barriers to learning and provide equitable opportunities for all learners regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or learning differences.

Types of Curriculum Adaptation

1. **Content Adaptation;** content adaptation refers to modifying the way information is presented to learners without changing the core learning objectives or expected outcomes. The aim is to make subject content more understandable, accessible, and meaningful for learners with different cognitive, linguistic, or sensory abilities. According to UNESCO (2020), inclusive curriculum delivery requires presenting learning content in multiple ways to ensure that all learners can access the same knowledge regardless of ability differences. The key features of content adaptation includes: use of varied teaching strategies (visual, auditory, kinesthetic), differentiated instruction based on learner ability, active learning approaches (group work, demonstrations), step-by-step teaching of complex tasks and increased teacher support and scaffolding.
2. **Instructional adaptation;** this involves modifying teaching methods to match learners' different abilities, learning styles, and pace of understanding. It ensures that all students can participate actively in learning. According to CAST (2018) in the UDL framework, teachers should use multiple means of engagement to motivate and support learners through varied instructional strategies. Common examples include group work, demonstration methods, scaffold instruction, peer tutoring, and role-play or simulations. These approaches help ensure that all learners understand the lesson by simplification of language without reducing meaning, breaking complex ideas into smaller learning units, use of concrete examples to explain abstract concepts, repetition and reinforcement of key ideas, use of familiar vocabulary and culturally relevant examples.
3. **Material Adaptation;** Material adaptation refers to the modification, selection, or development of learning resources to match the diverse abilities, sensory needs, and learning preferences of learners in an inclusive classroom. It ensures that all learners can access instructional content through appropriate and supportive materials without changing the curriculum goals. Learners in any classroom differ in how they receive and process information. Some learn better through visual input, others through listening, while some

require tactile or simplified materials. Teachers must provide multiple formats of learning materials so that every learner can engage meaningfully with the lesson content. Key forms of material adaptation includes: visual teaching aid, audio materials large-print texts, Braille materials, and tactile graphics these enable learners to read and access information independently.

4. Instructional adaptation focuses on changing teaching strategies and methods to match learners' abilities and learning styles. Instead of using a single teaching approach, the teacher provides multiple ways of learning the same content. For example, in a classroom with hearing-impaired learners, a teacher may combine sign language, visual aids, written instructions, and demonstrations.

4. Environmental Adaptation (Learning environment) Environmental adaptation involves modifying the physical or social classroom environment to remove barriers to learning. The classroom setting plays a major role in how well learners concentrate, interact, and understand lessons. Learners with hearing impairment benefit from sitting in the front of the classroom where they can clearly see the teacher's facial expressions and sign language communication. Good lighting is essential for learners who rely on visual cues, while reduced classroom noise helps learners with attention difficulties or sensory sensitivities. In addition, arranging desks in a way that promotes interaction and visibility can improve participation. A well-adapted environment ensures that learners are comfortable, attentive, and fully engaged in learning activities.

5. Assessment Adaptation (How learners are evaluated) Assessment adaptation refers to modifying the way learners are assessed without changing the learning objectives. The goal is to ensure that students can demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that match their abilities. Instead of relying only on written examinations, teachers may use oral assessments, practical demonstrations, projects, or visual presentations. Learners may also be given extra time during tests to accommodate processing difficulties or communication barriers.

Curriculum Modification in Inclusive Education

Curriculum modification is an important inclusive education practice that involves changing learning content, objectives, activities, workload, or assessment standards to meet the individual abilities of learners with disabilities. Modification changes what a learner expected to learn. It promotes realistic learning goals, participation, motivation, and academic success through strategies such as simplifying assignments, reducing workload, using alternative assessments, and adjusting learning objectives. Teachers play a vital role in ensuring the success of inclusive education by providing appropriate accommodations, adaptations, and modifications that enable learners with diverse needs to access and benefit from the curriculum. Their responsibilities extend beyond classroom instruction to planning and undertake certain roles which includes;

1. Identifying Learners' Needs; one of the primary roles of teachers is to identify the strengths, weaknesses, interests, and learning needs of individual learners. Through observation, assessment, and interaction with learners, teachers and determine the type of support required.

Understanding learners' unique characteristics helps teachers decide whether accommodation, adaptation, or modification is necessary to enhance learning and participation.

2. Planning Inclusive Instruction Teachers are responsible for designing lesson plans that accommodate the diverse needs of learners in the classroom. They select appropriate teaching methods, learning activities, and instructional resources that promote participation by all learners. 3. Adapting Teaching Methods and Materials Teachers adapt instructional strategies and learning materials to meet diverse learning needs. This may involve using visual aids, charts, and demonstrations,

4. Modifying Curriculum Content and Assessment For learners who cannot achieve standard curriculum objectives even with accommodations and adaptations, teachers may modify the curriculum. This involves simplifying learning objectives, reducing the complexity of tasks. Adjusting assessment criteria and providing alternative learning activities based on learners' abilities.

5. Creating a Supportive Learning Environment Teachers are responsible for establishing an inclusive classroom climate where all learners feel accepted, respected, and valued. They promote positive attitudes toward diversity, discourage discrimination and bullying, and encourage cooperation among learners. A supportive environment enhances learners' confidence, participation, and academic achievement.

Enhancing Learning through Curriculum Accommodation, Adaptation, and Modification

Curriculum accommodation, adaptation, and modification are essential instructional strategies that enhance learning in inclusive education by ensuring that learners with diverse needs can access, participate in, and benefit from classroom instruction. These strategies can be enhanced though;

1. Improved Access to Learning One of the major ways these strategies enhance learning is by improving learners' access to the curriculum. Curriculum accommodation ensures that learners can engage with the same content as their peers by removing barriers without changing learning objectives.

2. Increased Learner Participation Accommodation and adaptation encourage active participation of all learners in classroom activities. When teaching methods are adjusted to meet learners' needs, students are more likely to engage in discussions, group work, and learning tasks

3. Improved Academic Achievement Curriculum modification plays a significant role in improving academic achievement for learners who cannot meet standard curriculum expectations even with support. By adjusting learning goals, content, and assessment methods.

4. Promotion of Equity and Inclusive Participation These instructional strategies promote fairness by recognizing that learners have different abilities and learning needs. Instead of treating all learners the same, inclusive education ensures that learners receive the specific support they need to succeed.

5. Development of Social Interaction Skills Inclusive classroom practices encourage cooperation among learners through group activities and peer learning. Accommodation and

adaptation allow learners with disabilities to interact meaningfully with their peers, which helps develop communication and social skills. This reduces isolation and promotes acceptance among students.

Challenges of Curriculum Implementation in Inclusive Classrooms

The successful implementation of curriculum accommodation, adaptation, and modification in inclusive classrooms is often hindered by several challenges. These challenges affect teachers' ability to provide equitable learning opportunities for learners with diverse educational needs.

1. Inadequate Teacher Training and Professional Development; lack of adequate teacher preparation and training in special and inclusive education during pre-service and in-service programs is challenging to inclusive and curriculum adaptation, accommodation and modification

2. Insufficient Instructional Materials and Assistive Technologies Effective curriculum implementation in inclusive classrooms requires specialized instructional materials and assistive devices such as Braille books, hearing aids, captioning systems, communication boards, and screen-reading software.

3. Overcrowded Classrooms large class sizes remain a major obstacle to inclusive education. In many public schools, Overcrowded classrooms make it difficult for teachers to provide individualized instruction, monitor learner progress, and implement accommodations and modifications effectively.

4. Limited Funding and Government Support The implementation of inclusive education requires adequate financial investment for teacher training, infrastructure development, procurement of assistive technologies, and provision of specialized support services.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that curriculum accommodation, adaptation, and modification are essential for effective inclusive education in Nigeria. Accommodation provides access without changing learning outcomes, adaptation adjusts teaching methods and materials to meet diverse needs, while modification changes learning expectations according to learners' abilities. These strategies improve academic achievement, participation, motivation, social interaction, and independence. However, challenges such as inadequate teacher training, limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, poor funding, and negative attitudes toward disability hinder effective implementation. Therefore, strengthening inclusive education requires teacher training, adequate resources and assistive technologies, flexible curriculum practices, and effective implementation of inclusive education policies to ensure that all learners have equal opportunities to succeed.

Recommendations

1. Government should provide regular training and professional development programs for teachers on inclusive instructional strategies, curriculum adaptation, and learner assessment.

2. Schools should provide adequate assistive technologies such as hearing aids, Braille devices, screen readers, and communication tools to support learners with disabilities.

3. Curriculum planners should develop flexible curricula that accommodate the diverse learning needs of learners in inclusive classrooms.

4. Educational authorities should improve funding for inclusive education to ensure the provision of instructional materials, accessible facilities, and support services.
5. Teachers should adopt differentiated instructional methods and learner-centered teaching approaches to improve participation and academic achievement among learners with special needs.

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