

CURRICULUM ADAPTATIONS IN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS IN NIGERIA



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ABSTRACT

The place of curriculum as a major ingredient in any educational activity is stressed at the beginning of the paper. The concept of curriculum particularly as it relates to learners with special needs is thoroughly examined. Other topical issues that featured are who are the people with Special Needs as well as inclusive education. For the special needs person to be educated successfully, the curriculum has to be adapted particularly in an inclusive classroom. For its success, therefore steps to consider are discussed. These apart, the paper finally suggests that there is the need for adequate training of teachers involved and specialized teachers have to be on ground among others.

Keywords: *Curriculum, Inclusive, Education, Learners with Special Needs*

Introduction

In every meaningful academic activity at whatever level, curriculum served as a major ingredient towards the success of such activity. Curriculum therefore, is a pillar that cannot be neglected. Curricular are of different types and modes, but they all aim at enhancement of academic activities. Curricular are all about planned learning experiences carried out under the supervision of a school towards positively changing the behaviour of the learners. Therefore, people with Special Needs whether adults or non – adults their participation in academic activity is a right not a privilege. The curriculum must consider their different levels for success to be achieved. In a related development the Special Needs Persons are those who deviate from the norms when it comes to academic or other social activities. While Inclusive Education is an attempt to educate all under the same roof disability notwithstanding. It is for this that the curriculum has to be adapted, where some improvements or amendments are carried out on what is to be taught or how (methodology).

The Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum has many definitions as there are many authorities in the field. According to Tyler (1949) in Omoniyi (2009) curriculum refers to as all the learning of students which is planned and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. While Olaitan and Ali in Joseph (2013) said “curriculum is all experiences that individual learners have in a programme of education whose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives, which is planned in terms of a framework of theory. In a more precise form, Mogbo (2002) sees it as encompassing the content, structure and processes of teaching and learning, which the school provides in accordance with its educational objectives and values. He continued to note that it is the planned experiences, opportunities and activities provided by a school to assist the learners attain the designed learning outcomes and desired change in behaviour.

Based on the above definitions it can be said that curriculum is all about planned learning experiences carried out under the supervision of a school towards bringing some positive behaviours of the learner(s) so as to become useful in the community. The planned experiences can be inside or outside the school that is, academic activities and extra – curricular activities. Oliver (1965), Emeruwa (1981) and Omoniyi (2009) all concurred that these planned learning experiences being referred to must include the following:

- a. Programme of studies
- b. Programme of activities and
- c. Programme of guidance.
- d.

Accordingly, programme of studies include school subjects such as Mathematics, English and Social studies; while programme of activities are non – academic in nature but enhance academic activities/experiences. Such programmes include daily assemblies, clubs and societies, boy scouts, tours, visits, excursions and social activities. School games and sports form major part of activity programmes. Lastly programme of guidance, is a service rendered by matured professional teachers towards guiding individuals to realise the educational objectives and leading a fulfilled life. Guidance in this respect can be vocational, educational, social and personal.

From the foregoing therefore, curriculum does not only limit itself to the learner, teacher and the material or resources alone but also the setting/environment and the community as they also influence classroom activities.

Who are Learners with Special Needs

Learners with special needs are the major concern of this paper, because the curriculum has to adapt to their needs and interest. Okuoyibo and Dada (2004) view Special Needs learner as one who deviates from the ordinary child, such that he/she requires special attention, special services and other areas that could make life meaningful and worth living. While Azanor, Isola and Ajobiwe (2015) said Special

Needs learners are children with special learning needs either because of significant sensory deficit or unusually high intellectual ability that is not properly addressed in the regular school programme. Based on the above submission, it implies that this category of people in the society (Special Needs Learners) are those that require additional services or Special Education services in order to benefit from the regular curriculum. Azanor et al (2015) further stated that:

As a result of the uniqueness of these learners, general education curriculum should be modified since the aim, goals and objectives of education are applicable, all learners' disability notwithstanding. Therefore, special education curriculum should be planned in a way that would provide opportunities, activities and experiences for educating the Special Needs Children.

Without doubt learners with Special Needs stands to benefit from the curriculum just like the Non – Special Needs Children. Hence in the National Policy on Education (2013), one of the aims and objectives of Special Education categorically stated that to design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for the different target groups. The policy further stated the following as the categories of Special Needs Persons who stand to benefit from the curriculum adaptation:

- a. Visual impairment (Blind and the partially sighted);
- b. Hearing impairment (Deaf and partially hearing);
- c. Physical and health impairment;
- d. Intellectual disability (mild, moderate, severe and profound);
- e. Emotional and behavioural disorders (hyperactive, hypoactive/socially maladjusted);
- f. Speech and language impairment;
- g. Learning disabilities (have psychological/neurological phobia or challenges),
- h. Multiple disabilities;
- i. The gifted and talented and
- j. Albinos

Inclusive Education and Learners with Special Needs

Inclusive education as an aspect of Special Education has since been accepted both nationally and worldwide. Hence many tend to define it in various ways. According to Ladipo (2002) and Kalu (2014) inclusive education means the education of those children with special needs and the regular children, learning together in ordinary pre – school provisions, schools, colleges and universities with appropriate networks of support.

Kalu (2014) also notes that inclusive education implies sustainable capacity in reducing fear; improved synergy, respect, creativity, intellectual stimulation, diligence as well as partnering in inclusive setting through learning irrespective of their health status''. In a more refined way Adewumi, Rembe, Shumba, and Akinyemi (2017) looked at it as an act of educating learners who were previously educated in special schools, as a result of their Special Needs, in regular schools that provide the necessary support to ensure access to quality education. Based on the above definitions, inclusive

education is an attempt to educate all categories of children (Special and Non – Special) together under one roof. Education is a basic human right, no one shall therefore be denied it. To make it more profitable it must be inclusive.

Special Needs Persons or Children or Learners are categories who has special learning needs who are either below or above the norms. They are the major beneficiaries of Special Education as a branch of regular or general education. Reynold and Birch (1977) in Ozoji (2016) opined that the special needs persons/children are “all those pupils who need some form, of Special Education part time or full time for short or long periods at some stage in their sequence of schooling.

“Curriculum adaptation is an on going dynamic process that modifies and adapts the prescribed programme of studies to meet the learning requirements of a student with special needs. It enables the teaching team to welcome learners of all abilities and ensures that every student is challenge to learn. (www.researchgate.net/publication, retrieved on 2nd June , 2021) ”.

In a related development Chataika et al (2012) in Adewumi, Rembe, Shumba and Akinyemi (2017) sees curriculum adaptation as ‘improvements and amendments in what is taught, methods of teaching and structures of education with the aim of accommodation all learners. Curriculum adaptation can simply be seen as modification of the existing general curriculum so that everybody can be carried along. The modification or changes may be in methods of teaching and learning or structure of the education or programme. For methods of teaching for instance individualize instruction plan should be encouraged base on the interest and need of the child/children. Communication between the teacher and the child/children should be straight to the point simple and aim at achieving a particular objective. In the case of the deaf, seeing is believing, therefore, what they can see is more important than what they are supposed to hear. Therefore, concrete and relevant materials such as pictures, diagrams etc should always be at hand during lesson delivering. The use of interpreters, scribes, readers and note takers, seating arrangement extended time during exams should also be considered. Another method of making curriculum adaptation successful is the curriculum to be flexible. Here there is what is called curriculum plus and minus as at certain places in the curriculum the Special Needs Persons other things are added. For instance some mathematical problems are not necessary for the blind while the normal students need to learn braille and sign language along side other Special Needs Pupils/Students. When this is done, then the curriculum is now pupils centred not curriculum centred.

However, since curriculum concerns itself with learning experience both within and outside the classroom, physical accessibility of the environment has to be considered as it also ramps, traffic lights, zebra crossing, pavements our walk road, availability of other learning materials such as braille machines, talking books, hearing aids, wheel chairs, tripod walker etc. The provision of these facilities will enable pupils

or students to participate in the range of learning activities as well as promote inclusive education.

However, teachers being the main issue when it comes to implementing and adapting the curriculum should be aware of the various methods and strategies that can be used for everyone in an inclusive setting. According to Azanor et al (2015), It is important for teachers to be aware of different methods that they may use to create lesson plans that allow them to adapt curricular and instructional strategies because having guidelines and examples will help teachers who may be unfamiliar with how to adapt programmes in inclusion settings”.

According to the Council for Exceptional Children (2011), there are nine steps that teachers in inclusion classrooms should consider when adapting their curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners. They include the following:

Step I: Create a plan for adapting materials: Effective adaptation needs support and must be within the framework of a larger plan that include; (a) basic and strategies skills instruction and (b) the roles of people involved in the adaptation process.

Step II: Identify and evaluate the demands that students are not meeting:The problem to be addressed is to identified here. Observe students’ performance when they use typical instructional materials and evaluate areas they need help.

Step III: Develop goals for teaching strategies and making adaptations:Some problems can be solved by adaptations, others problems may signal the need for intensive instructions in skills. Teachers here may need to provide adaptation while simultaneously teaching the students the learning strategies he or she needs in order to perform the work individually.

Step IV: Determine whether content or format adaptations are needed:When the students individualized educational programme (IEP) notes that the general curriculum is inappropriate for the student, then content adaptation can be made. But, where the curriculum is appropriate format adaptations is considered.

Step V: Identify the features of the need to be adapted: Materials adapted should be examined for features that might cause learning problems. The content may be abstract, complex or poor organized.

Step VI: Determine the type of adaptation that will enable the student to meet the demand: When materials have been evaluated and possible problem areas identified, the type of format adaptation must be selected. The adaptation can be made by either altering or mediating or selecting existing materials.

Step VII: Inform students and parents about the adaptation: Students and parents be taught about explicit strategies to use any adaptation effectively and how to process the information received through the adaptation.

Step VIII: Implement, evaluate and adjust the adaptation: As the adaptation is implemented, the teacher should evaluate its effects to determine whether the desired outcomes are being achieved and modify accordingly, if it is not the case.

Step IX: Fade the adaptation when possible: Once the students has learned the necessary skills and strategies, the adaptation should be faded. According to Lohrenscheit (2020) in Adewumi, said education must be flexible and adaptable as there are constant changes in the challenges and needs of societies. All education systems, education programmes and campaigns must take the diversity of learners and their needs into consideration’.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the paper discussed the concepts of curriculum, Inclusive education, special needs learners/persons, curriculum adaptations. Different methods of curriculum adaptations in inclusive settings were discussed, such as individualized education plan, the use of concrete materials and interpreters among others. Steps involve for successful curriculum adaptation which among others are: creating a plan for adapting materials, develop goals for teaching strategies and making adaptations.

Suggestions

Based on the aforementioned discussions the following suggestions on curriculum adaptations in inclusion classrooms should be considered:

- a. There is need for adequate training for all teachers involved in inclusive education.
- b. Specialize teachers on curriculum adaptations has to be in place in all inclusive schools, so as to serve as mentors to newly recruited teachers.
- c. Necessary facilities for successful inclusive education to be in place.

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