

CURRICULUM ADAPTATION FOR PROMOTING FUNCTIONAL SPECIAL EDUCATION IN AN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION SETTING



BABA, S.J.

*Department Of Special Education,
Federal College Of Education, Yola
sbabajoram9@gmail.com*

BALAMI, I.D.

*Federal University Auwka
danielbalami99@gmail.com*

&

KABIRU, S.

*Department Of Special Education,
Bayero University, Kano*



ABSTRACT

This paper tries to explain the concepts curriculum adaptation, special education, inclusive education, the objectives of special needs education, the benefits of inclusive education, curriculum adaptation and its benefits for special needs children. Challenges of curriculum adaptation and some recommendations were made in order to curb these challenges for effective learning of the special needs children and as well contribute their quota in the society in which they live. The paper also reiterates the need to address the challenges of assistive technology, manpower, funding, and related issues as pre-requisites to the realization of curriculum adaptation to promote functional special education in an inclusive education setting for the special needs children

Keywords: *Curriculum adaptation, special education, special needs children and inclusive education.*

Introduction

In an inclusive education setting, the general curriculum to some extent assumes that all children of almost the same school age and grade learn and assimilate at the same pace or rate. This is not so, due to the individual differences amongst learners. Consequently, they have different learning modalities which are more glaring where children with special needs are concerned. Education often initiates upward movement in the social structure thereby, helping to bridge the gap between the different sections of society (Olugbela and Olawale, 2009). Therefore, the curriculum tries as much as possible to incorporate these learning differences while fashioning out courses to content children with special needs more in terms of curriculum adaptation or adjustment in order to be able meet up.

Olubanke (2011) states that the purpose of adaptation is to assist children with special needs in compensating for intellectual, physical or behavioural changes. The writers further posited that adaptation can make the differences between a child merely being present in the class and a child being actively involved. Therefore, the terms curriculum adaptation, curriculum accommodation and curriculum enhancement are used to define the learning changes and experiences that children with special needs are expected to undergo in an inclusive education setting. This is due to the fact that, this category of children have weakness and deficiencies that are fundamental to the teaching-learning process.

Curriculum: This refers to series of planned learning experiences presented to learners in a structure or organized manner within a school system. Talatu and Milaham (2011) tried to look at the term curriculum as a propose body of knowledge given to students or individuals in an institution of learning. It can also be explained as the sum total of the learning activities that the learners have under the direction of a school. Magbo (2002), opines that curriculum is: “all planned experiences, opportunities and activities provided by a school to assist the learners attain the designed learning outcome and desired change in behavior which is specially designed to address specific learning needs of special needs children”.

Curriculum Adaptation:

Curriculum adaptation is a modification to the delivery of instructional methods and intended goals of students’ performance that does not change the content, but does slightly change the conceptual difficulty of the curriculum. One of the important characteristics or features of curriculum adaptation is that, it is a goal driven process. Since the teachers and their collaborators need to identify the goals of students before adapting any curriculum (Akos, 2011). Curriculum adaptation means the ability of the individual to adjust to a structural content taught by the teacher (Laitu, 2011:179). To Azubike (2011), to adapt a curriculum means to venture and modify the existing curriculum, special equipment, teaching methods meant for regular schools and adapt

from them to suit the learning needs of these special children. The intent is to ensure that the students with special need work round their specific disabilities to achieve more success by participating in many classroom functions as possible. The purpose of the adaptation is to see that children experience as much success as possible in the regular classroom.

Special Education

Special education exists in all facets of the educational system of the world, that is, special education facilitates at local and national levels in all countries of the world to treat cases of children with special educational needs. Emerole (2005) considers special education as an aspect of education that treats people as individuals and makes allowances for the use of special equipment and methods of teaching according to individual needs. Special education is an ideal general education in which differences are pupil's abilities, aptitudes, learning styles and motivation to learn (Garrison and Force, 1959).

According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:36), special education is the education of children and adults who have learning difficulties because of different sorts of handicaps, blindness, deafness, hardness of hearing, mental retardation, social maladjustment, physical handicap etc. there are also specially gifted and talented who may not be challenged by the regular school activities and may develop apathy to it.

Objectives of Special Needs Education

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) the objectives of special needs education to include the following:

- i. Give concrete meaning to the idea of equalizing educational opportunities for all children, their physical, sensory, mental, psychological or emotional disabilities notwithstanding.
- ii. Provide adequate education for all people with special needs in order that they may fully contribute their own quota to the development of nation.
- iii. Provide opportunities for exceptionally gifted and talented children to develop their own pace in the interest of the nations economic and technological development.
- iv. Design a diversified and appropriate curriculum for all the beneficiaries. Consequently, the fourth objective let the need for curriculum adaptation in an inclusive education setting for effective participation of the Special Needs Children.

The Concept of Inclusive Education

The government of Spain in cooperation with UNESCO organized a world conference on special needs education, which held in Salamanka in 1994. During the conference the concept of inclusive education was adopted. The right of every child to education was proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and was forcefully

reaffirmed by the World Declaration in Education for All (EFA). Consequently, education could be for all when it is accessible by all. This should include disabled and gifted children: street and working, children from remote or nomadic population, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and those from other disadvantaged areas or group. Therefore, schools have to find way of successfully educating all children, including those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities. This has led to the concept of inclusive education or school and the need for curriculum adaptation. Therefore, different scholars have given the definitions of inclusive education. Fafunwa (2005) views inclusive education as a system where children of different backgrounds, educational needs are educated together in the same physical school settings. To Stubbs (1998); Mercer (1998) they see inclusion as a concept which views children with special needs as true full-time participants and members of their neighborhood schools and communities. As a result, the National Information Centre for Children Youth with Disabilities (NICHY, 2004) stressed that the policy should be directed at the right of students with special needs so as to be educated in regular schools and be given the opportunity to live their lives in a manner that is as normal as possible. This should be done, since is a process of removing barriers and enabling all students including previously excluded groups, to learn and participate effectively within general school systems (Strully and Strully, 1996).

Also, Daramola and Kaduhur, (2013:120) stated that inclusive education is a process of addressing and responding to diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities and reducing exclusion. This is to ensure that each learner belongs and receive a quality education no matter their ability, disability, language, cultural background, gender or age. Hence, the concept of inclusive education rejects the use of special schools as classroom to separate students with special needs from students without. A premium is place upon full participation by students with special needs and upon respect for their social, civil educational right. Inclusive schools no longer distinguish between “general education” and “special education” programme, instead, the school is restructure through adaptation principle so that all students learn together (Daramola and Kaduhur, 2013; Ainscow and Booth, 2003).

On personal note therefore, inclusive education can be seen as an educational policy in which both the special needs and non-special needs children are educated in the same learning environment at the same time, with the adaptation of curriculum plus and minus where necessary. Their cultural, social, physical, mental, emotional features notwithstanding. This creates mutual relationship among the students as they share ideas during team or cooperative class activities. Hence, the need for curriculum adaptation for the special needs children in regular school settings.

The Objectives of Inclusive Educational System

Oluka and Egbo (2015) Ozoji (2005: 2014) identified the goals of inclusive education as to:

- i. Provide education for children with diverse learning needs within their structured school community.
- ii. Make special needs children active members of the school community and then to help them achieve quality educational outcomes and to achieve social competence.
- iii. Build a supportive school community that is able to identify and minimize barriers to learning and participation.
- iv. Educate more children better.
- v. Empower children who are hitherto excluded or isolated,
- vi. Study the pressures that lead some people in schools to feel excluded and separated.
- vii. Develop exemplary units of planning for diversity and to understand this diversity.
- viii. Dismantle barriers to access and participate and facilitate achievement in schooling and training.

Benefits of Inclusive Education

There are many positive effects of inclusion where both the students with special needs along with the other students in the classroom benefits. Inclusive education recognizes that every learner can learn. In other words, inclusive education is acclaimed world-wide as a better option for children with special needs. The focused-on inclusion looked into the philosophy of acceptance and provision of framework within which all children regardless of their conditions would be treated equally in terms of learning, social activities and their needs.

The main purpose of inclusion is to normalize special needs children to live and learn in lose environment with their counterparts and to interact together in their community (Chukuka, 2013; Linson, 2002).

Similarly, the following are the benefits of inclusive education for students without special needs (disabilities):

Meaningful Friendship: Increased appreciation and acceptance of individuals differences: increased understanding and acceptance of diversity: respect for adult life in an inclusive society: opportunity to master activities by practicing and teaching others; greater academic outcomes and all students' needs are better met (Daramola and Kaduhur, 2013).

Cost Effectiveness: Inclusive education is less cost effect to school owners. In other words, resources which would be distributed to separate special schools are committed in order place. In a study carried out in United States of America (USA) as cited by

Chukuka (2013) reveals that cost of educating students in segregated programme was doubled that of educating learners in an inclusive programme. Parental Participation: Inclusive education allows parents participation in their children's education since their children school in neighbouring schools. This will allow them to understand fully their strength and weaknesses and collaborate effectively with school in their learning.

Strategies in Curriculum Adaptation for Promoting Functional Special Education

Curriculum adaptation is the modification that change the way content is represented or presented to students to promote student's engagement either through pedagogical means such as through the use of technology (digital or talking books). It also refers to the general curriculum which enable students directed learning strategies (Koleoso, 2011). Circular adaptation occur when teachers differentiate instruction, assessment and instructional materials in order to create a flexible learning environment for the affected learners. The strategies of curriculum adaptation can include, but are not limited to:

- i. **Technological Adaptations:** Special needs education has revealed technological advances which have created many products which are advantageous for students with special needs, both for input and output information. Equipment are available that helps students with special needs to read printed materials, providing Braille prints out of what is seen on the computer, monitor and converting Braille. Consequently, choosing appropriate technological adaptations for special needs children entails numerous and complex considerations for both regular and professional special educators.
- ii. **Curriculum Consideration of Cognitive Abilities:** Special needs education revealed that the academic curriculum appropriate for students with special needs is determine by their cognitive abilities. Goals and objectives set for students without special needs do not need to be changed for them, due solely to special problem, though the methods for accomplishing the goals may be different. These students with special needs, however, require instruction in additional areas. This is where the issue of their curriculum plus or minus may come in said Obani (2006). For example, teachers and schools frequently need to emphasis orientation and mobility, total communication, daily living skills, social skills and so on for the concerned students with special needs (Barraga and Erin, 1992; Torres and Com, 1990).
- iii. **Methodological Approach:** To carter effectively for the diverse learning needs of special children, policy must be implemented by all educational mentors, instructors and stakeholders. Koleoso (2011) states that, this will include decision making about the methodological approaches, assessment procedures, how to support the learner and how best to organize classes depending on the context in which someone works.

- iv. As inclusive programmes for students with special needs increase in number, general education teachers will need to understand the effect that disabilities have on students. Such understanding will allow them to make appropriate accommodations and adaptations to design inclusive education for student with special needs (disabilities). For example, visual impairment affect students in a variety of ways. General education teachers who are aware of the implications of visual impairments on students' learning will be able to provide such students with educational opportunities that will lead to successful academic and social experiences.

Benefits of Curriculum Adaptation in Special Needs Education: The benefits of curriculum adaptation for learners with special needs according to Tha (2002); Ryndak and Alper (1996) are as follows:

- i. It create avenue for social interaction: Spending the school day alongside class mates without disabilities provides many opportunities for social interaction that would not be available in segregated settings.
- ii. Through curriculum adaptation, both the general and special educators in inclusive settings expect appropriate conduct from all students.
- iii. Curriculum adaptation offers the opportunities for students without special education need to learn to communicate and deal effectively with a wide range of individuals. This also prepare them to fully participate in a pluralistic society when they are adults. This also prepares them to fully participate in a pluralistic society when they are adults.
- iv. Curriculum adaptation ensures that a school responds to the educational needs of children in the neighbourhood. It brings a school closer to the community (Jha, 2002).
- v. Curriculum adaptation helps children with special education needs have appropriate models of behavior. They can observe and imitate the socially acceptable behavior of the students without special educational needs.
- vi. Through curriculum adaptation, students with special education needs are taught age-appropriate, functional components of academic content, which may never be part of the curriculum in segregated settings (e.g the science, social studies etc) (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).

Challenges against Curriculum Adaptation in Special Needs Education

Despite the benefits of curriculum adaptation stated above, it is clear that there are a lot of challenges facing curriculum adaption especially at the special needs education level. Some of the challenges include:

- i. One of the major challenges facing curriculum adaptation for the special needs children is the death of assistive technology to cater for them. These challenges in death of assistive technology is further aggravated by the cost of these

devices which makes it difficult for the special needs persons, most of these devices which makes it difficult for the special needs persons. Most of whom are from poor economic background to purchase for personal use. These are expensive and hard to come by especially in developing country like Nigeria (Omede, 2009).

- ii. Another challenge related to assistive technology is that of the use and or the application of the devices in order to be properly placed to teach the special needs children. Vexed by this issue, Ntukidem and Ashir (2009); Joram and Asabe (2011) pointed out that many teachers are not computer literate. Then how can they teach what they do not know? Some teachers never had the opportunity of touching or using or applying some of these assistive technologies. How can they teach or talk about it to students?
- iii. According to Jika (2016). There is no gain saying that funds are pivotal to any educational venture, more so with special needs education children, which is equipment driven and expensive. Justifying the importance of funds to adapting a curriculum, Thani (2006) stressed that money is required to employ desired manpower, procure and maintain infrastructural materials and to cope with emergencies arising from modification, expansion or increase. In spite of the urgent need for reform in this aspect, El-Rufai (2011) states that the government appears not to feel same sense of urgency, iv. Manpower Problem: This has to do with the personnel or human resources who are trained in a particular discipline, working to achieve set goals for special needs children in an inclusive education setting. Hence, there is a challenge of availability and that of competence of teachers that can handle adapted curriculum for some of these children. E.g the visually impaired and hearing impaired and the intellectually retarded.

The following suggestion were made:

- i. Because of the diversity and complexity of needs within schools and classes, any curriculum at the national level must be in the form of curriculum guidelines.
- ii. Curriculum should allow for differentiation within a school or class relating to the needs, abilities and aptitudes of the learners.
- iii. The need for Individualized Education Programme (IEP) should be developed for special education needs students with inputs from joint effort of support service from different personnel.
- iv. There is need to conduct seminars, workshops and experience sharing sessions for enhancing teachers' professionalism.

Consequently, curriculum adaptation should be continues process and should be adapted and improved from time to time to meet the rising needs of the students with special needs and society.

Conclusion

Curriculum adaptation no doubt is a vital strategy for effective teaching in special education, especially in an inclusive school setting. Any well adopted curriculum can suffer serious setback if not effectively implemented. This makes it necessary that curriculum adaptation in special education should be taken as a serious business in an inclusive school setting. Hence, the need for curriculum adaptation to promote functional special education cannot be over emphasized since inclusive education policy is to meet the needs of every child. The paper also emphasized on the need to proper curriculum adaptation to promote functional special education in order to achieve its goals and objectives as outlined in the National Policy on Education.

References

- Aisco, M. & Booth, T. (2003). The index of inclusion: Developing learning and participation in schools: Centre for studies in inclusive education.
- Akos, P. M. (2011). Curriculum adaptation for children with special need in an inclusive educational setting. *Globalization and Special Need Education, 2015-2019.*
- Azubike, P. N. (2011). Curriculum adaptation for children with learning disabilities in Nigeria. *Globalization and special needs education, 171-177.*
- Barrage, N. C. and Evin, J. N. (1992). *Visual handicaps and learning.* Austin. Tx: Proed.
- Chukuka. E. U. (2013). Barriers to effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria. *National Journal of Inclusive Education, 1 (1) 186-192.*
- Daramola, I. S. & Kaduhur, D. B. (2013). Role of technical teachers in promoting inclusive education programme in technical Colleges in Nigeria. *National Journal of Inclusive Education 1(1), 119-125*
- El-Rufai, N. (2011). *What Nigerians pay Federal government.* Retrieved: <http://www.thisdavlive.com/article/whatnigerianspav-fg/942277>.
- El-Rufai, N. (2011). *Why education can't wait.* Retrieved: <http://www.thisdavlive.com/article/whatnigerianspav-fg/942277>.
- Emerole, E. N. (2005), Identifying children with special educational needs in primary classes in T. C. Obani (ed) *Classroom management strategies for special need children.* Ibadan: Glory-Land Publishing Company.
- Fafunwa, A. O. (2005). Sustainable inclusion education in Nigeria for the learning disabled. In T. C. Obani (ed). *Classroom management strategies for special needs children.* Ibadan: Glory-Land Publishing Company.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014:36). *The national policy on education.* Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Garrison, K. C. and Force, D. G. (1959). *The psychology of exceptional children.* New York: The Roland Press Coy.

- Tha, M. M. (2002). *School without walls: Inclusive education for all*. Oxford: Heinemann.
- Jika, S. B. (2015). Special education and curriculum adaptation in teacher education. Issues to be considered. *Journal of Applied Educational Thought and Practice (JAETP)*. 1 (3).
- Joram, S. B. and Asabe, M. (2011). The role and challenges of achieving qualitative special teacher education. *SAHEL Journal of Teacher Education*, 1 (4). 158-163.
- Koleoso, B. B. (2010). Pedagogical strategies in curriculum adaptation for enhancing special education needs in Nigeria. *Journal of National Centre for Exceptional Children*.
- Liatu, B. (2011). Curriculum adaptation to meet the educational needs of students with visual impairment in Nigeria. *Journal of National Centre Exceptional Children* 178-183.
- Linson, N. L. (2002). *Inclusion of exceptional learning learners in Canadian School*. Toronto: Prentice Hall.
- Mercer, C. (1998). *Students with learning disabilities (5th ed)*. Columbus Ohio: Merrill.
- Mogbo, I. N. (2002). Restructuring the curriculum for the disabled for self sustenance: Counselling implication. *The Exceptional Children*, 6(4), 76-80.
- National Information Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHY) (2004). Learning disabilities. Publication of national dissemination centre for children and youth with disabilities. Retrieved: www.nichcy.org.
- Ntukidem, E. P. and Ashi, M. M. (2009). Assistive technology: Gateway to Independence of persons with visual impairment. *The Exceptional Children*, 11 (2), 345-353.
- Olubanke, O. A. (2011). Curriculum adaptation for with learning disabilities: general tips. In T. Ajogbiewe and P. I. Osuorji (Eds) *Globalization and Special Needs Education National Centre for Exceptional Children*, 100–104.
- Olugbela, O, I. & Olawale, S. G. (2009). Education sector reform and learners with special needs in Nigeria. *The Exceptional Child*, 11(2) 406-414.
- Oluka, B. N. & Egbo, J. O. (2015). Promoting knowledge and awareness of entrepreneurship for people with special in an inclusive classroom. *Journal of National Council for Exceptional Children*, 248-255.
- Ozaji, E. D. (2005). *Special needs education and rehabilitation for beginners professionals*. Jos: Deka Publication.
- Ozaji, E. D. (2014). *Course material on elements of special needs education (Rvsd)*. Jos: Deka Publication.
- Ryndak, D. L. and Alper, S. K. (1996). *Curriculum content for students with moderate and severe disabilities in inclusive settings*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

- Strully, J. and Strully, C. (1996). Friendship as an educational goal: what we have learned and where we are headed. In W. Stainback and S. Stainback (Eds). *Inclusion: Guide for educators*. Baltimore: Pare H. Brooks Publishing Company.
- Stubbs, S. (1998). *What is inclusive education*. E. E. NET - Publication-Inclusive Technology Website.
- Talatu, G. S. & Milaham, R. S. (2011). Curriculum development intervention strategies for teaching children with special needs. *Globalization and Special Needs Education. National Centre for Exceptional Children, 165- 170*.
- Thani, J. W. (2006). Funding in special needs education. In E. D. Ozoji, I. O. Ezera;; N. E. Ezeani and M. Abednego (Eds). *Contemporary issues in special needs education*. Jos: Deka Publications.
- Torres, I. and Corn, A. L. (1990). *When you have a visually handicapped in your classroom: Suggestions for teachers (2nd ed.)*. New York: American Foundation for the Blind.