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## **Teachers' Perspection on Curriculum Adaptation for Learners with Learning Disability in Inclusive Classroom**

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### **Abstract**

The study examined teachers' perspection on curriculum adaptation for learners with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State. Two research questions were raised to guide the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study consisted of one thousand, one hundred and fifty two (1152) secondary school teachers from the sixty three (63) public secondary schools. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting three hundred (300) teachers from twelve (12) public secondary schools. The instrument used for the study was the teachers' perspection on curriculum adaptation for learners with learning disability in inclusive classroom questionnaire (TPCALLDICQ). The data collected was analyzed using weighted mean statistic. Findings revealed that teachers perceived the current curriculum as not being effective in meeting the needs of learners with learning disability. The study also revealed that adapting the curriculum by teachers was very challenging for learners with learning disability. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: teachers, no matter the area of specialization should be trained on how to teach learners with special needs; more special education experts should be employed in secondary schools to assist the regular teachers; learning gadgets such as hearing aid and visual aids among others should be provided in schools so as to assist learners with special need to learn; finally, while building a school, government should ensure to make the school environment special need learners friendly especially for the blind and the physically handicapped learners.

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Curriculum adaptation, Learning disability, Inclusive classroom

### **INTRODUCTION**

An inclusive classroom is one that addresses and responds to the diversity of needs of all learners through increased participation in learning. It involves changes and modification in content, approaches, structures and strategies with a common vision which covers all learners of the appropriate age range. An inclusive classroom therefore is one that accepts and accommodates all learners irrespective of their personality be it a child with learning disability or a normal child. By the practice of educating all children together, children with disabilities have the opportunity to prepare for life in the community and the same practice also helps the society to make the conscious decision to operate according to the social value of equality. The child with disability is one who deviates intellectually, physically, socially or emotionally from what is considered to be normal growth and development that he or she cannot receive maximum benefit from a regular school programme and requires a special class or supplementary instructions or service. The different types of available educational programmes for the children with disabilities are segregated (special) education, integrated education and inclusive education. So inclusive classroom is the provision of services to students with disabilities within the classroom with the necessary support services and supplementary aids for children and teachers. It is a system in which all children from a given community learn together within the same classroom including children with learning difficulties, special needs or disabilities. Provision for such a form of classroom inculcates a feeling of confidence in the minds of disabled children and offers them the formal system of education. Hence, inclusive classroom is an effort to make sure that students with disabilities go to school along with their friends and neighbours while also receiving whatever “specially designed instruction and support” they need to achieve high standards and succeed as learners. (Pooja, Snigdhashri and Puja, 2019).

The concept of inclusive education has been spelt out in the Salamanca statement and the framework for action on special needs education in 1994. It states that all governments have been urged to “adopt as a matter of law or policy, the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all learners in regular schools unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise”. The basic promise is that the school should meet the educational needs of all learners irrespective of their disabilities or limitations. As a system, inclusive education should be flexible. Its principle should be education in the regular classroom whenever possible. The need for flexibility must be reflected in the method and materials used to give the children the widest possible access to the regular curriculum. When discussing the type of services needed, the starting point should always be what is best for the particular learner. The category of learners viewed as learners with disabilities include the following: physically handicapped, socially backward, emotionally disturbed, mentally disturbed, communication disordered; learning disabled; sensory disabled, gifted as well as creative children. In view of the above, inclusive classroom should be one that: welcomes all types of learners. No segregation of students regardless of ability; consequently, teachers should have additional teaching skills to teach normal as well as challenged learners of all types; the classroom should have sufficient devices and equipment to teach challenged learners; teachers should decide different types of objectives according to learners abilities;

teachers should give personal attention to learners and finally, though there are many students in the class; all of them should be encouraged to participate in activities or programmes.

The classroom as it were offers a dynamic, productive space where ideas, values, information and knowledge are shared and conveyed. Organization of the class and interaction amongst its fundamental components that is the students, teacher and the curriculum transactions creates a forum for the group to move from a state of not knowing to the one of knowing. In order to make the classroom inclusive so as to cater for the needs of all learners, it is important that provision be made for curriculum adaptation. The curriculum according to Netajisubas Open University (2017) includes the components of a course of study. These consist of the syllabus, textbooks and needed teaching learning materials, teaching strategies/processes and assessment and evaluation process. Hence 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 important feature of adaptation is that it is a goal driven process. That is to say that teachers and their collaborators need to identify the goals of students before adopting the curriculum. According to Rose and Meyer (2012), curriculum adaptation refers to modification to the way in which content is represented or presented or in which students engage in and respond to curriculum. Rose and Meyer further observed that such modifications do not alter the content in any way, but instead, seek to provide multiple means for students to access and respond to the content often achieved through incorporating the principle of universal design for learning.

Adapting or modifying existing general curriculum has been an effective way to create more accessible learning environment to support all students and indeed teachers and their collaborators in various educational context. Imagine how these children feel when they see, hear and feel the excitement and anxiety of their non-special needs peers as they are all being taught in an inclusive classroom. The situation in most of the schools in public and even private arrangement here in Nigeria and other African countries is lamentable. Furthermore, one would not be entirely wrong to say that it is as a result of curriculum modifications that the world today enjoys the academic labour of eminent and prominent personalities with disabilities in diverse areas of human endeavour. They include famous scientists and inventors with disabilities like Alexander Graham Bell, the telephone inventor, Thomas A. Edison, the inventor of electric light and record player as well as Albert Einstein an atomic physicist. In Nigeria, we have some eminent people who have exceled to the highest pinnacle of academic excellence. They include among others, Professor Bitrus Gano, Dr. P. O. Mba and Prof. E. Ojile to mention a few. The above shows that learners with special needs are psychologically, emotionally and cognitively challenged as a result of the adapted curriculum and boost their ego because they feel proud to be part of the inclusive classroom (Patrick, 2022).

However, the general curriculum to suit the diverse needs of children with special needs is not without problems and challenges for the children, their teachers and collaborators. Some of these challenges and problems are due to globalization and its attendants implications on

education. This is because of the movement of people (labour) and knowledge (technology) across international borders. For instance, new innovation in technology devices for persons with special needs have been produced by manufactures in compliance with United Nations expectations. Consequently, there are devices for use in the classroom, offices, homes, hospitals to mention a few. Nonetheless, there are still a number of problems and challenges to contend with in a bit to adapt curriculum for children with special needs especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Onwubolu (2015), laments that poor funding, lack of interest in the education of exceptional children, lack of adequate personnel and equipment are problems differing the growth and development of special needs education in Nigeria. He however was quick to mention efforts being made towards this direction. Ekwama (2023) outlined some challenges encountered in the field of special education to include and up-to-date equipment and facilities. Special teacher training, funding, law and administrative due process, as key problems inhibiting the smooth growth and development of special needs education in Nigeria.

Effective curriculum adaptation according to Sharma and Parveena (2021) is based on;

**Adaption of a Lesson Plan/Content:** Lesson note is a blueprint of teaching and learning process in which the teacher plans how to teach, the material to be used and the process of evaluation. For teaching children with special need, the general reasons made for the class may not serve the purpose. Hence it needs adaptation in instruction, material and evaluation process.

**Adaptation of Instruction:** some instruction strategies are effective for all types of learners and these are among the obvious and easiest opportunities for facilitating inclusive teaching and learning. The inclusive set up instructional strategies includes organizing activities, cooperative learning and peer-mediated instructions, direct instruction and technology enhanced instruction. Few more strategies include graphic organizers, concept mapping, channeling and mnemonics. Adaptation is the way of instructions delivered to the learners using demonstration and examples related to everyday life promoting understanding and emphasizing on relevance.

**Adaptation in Material:** Materials play an important role in the process of teaching. In experimental method, concept will be examined using concrete material to grasp essence and sustain students' attention to comprehend its properties. The material need to be accessible to special needs learners.

**Adaptation in Method:** Method plays an important role in teaching. A teaching method comprises the principles and methods and by teachers to enable students learning. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation with the characteristics of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about. Suggestions are there to design, while selecting the teaching methods, one must take into consideration not only the nature of the subject matter but also how students learn. In today's school, the trend is that it encourages a lot of creativity. It is a known fact that human advancement comes through reasoning. This reasoning and original thought enhances creativity.

**Adaptation in Physical Arrangement:** The physical arrangement and programmatic structure of a classroom are pivotal features in developing an environment that supports learning and promotes positive learner behaviour. Learners learn through active engagement and interaction with the social (e.g peers, adults) and non-social (e.g schedule, materials, activities) components of their environment. These features of the environment must be clearly designed to support teacher directed instruction as well as child-directed activities.

**Adaptation in evaluation/Support Facility:** The term evaluation can cover test question, grading systems, graduation requirements and competency testing. The problem in evaluation is due to poor written or expressive ability, comprehension ability of the learners. The question given in textbook will not serve the purpose.

### **Statement of the Problem**

With the enforcement of the right of education act of 1942, it becomes very important to bring in all types of children in the folds of education for realizing the UNESCO's aim of "Education for All" As a teacher, each day, you enter your classroom and face the challenge of how to best facilitate learning for all the children in your class belonging to various castes, creeds and colours, with specific learning disabilities, talents, personalities, learning styles and skills. Obviously, teachers agree that every class represent an incredibly diverse group of learners, each of whom has a wide range of strengths and needs; nearly every class includes one or more children who have a specific learning disability. Teachers might try to meet the instructional challenge described above by asking themselves, "What kinds of adaptations to the curriculum should I make for the learners who have specific learning disabilities" Viewing the notion of curriculum adaptations through the broader lens of the framework of general education, it allows the possibility of having not "another thing to do", but rather, a different way of doing it". It is therefore on this premise that this study intends to investigate teachers' perspective on curriculum adaptation for learners with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms in secondary schools. The problem of this study put in question form; to what extent does teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities and what challenges do teachers face in adapting the curriculum for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State?

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study sought to investigate teachers' perspective on curriculum adaptation for learners with learning disabilities in inclusive classrooms in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

Specifically, the study sought to;

- (i) Examine how teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.
- (ii) Investigate the challenges teachers face in adapting the curriculum for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State.

### **Research Questions**

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- (i) How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State?
- (ii) What challenges do teachers face in adapting the curriculum for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research design used for the study was a descriptive survey research design. The design involves a data collection strategy based on interrogation or questioning of respondents using such techniques as questionnaire, interviews, standardized test of intelligence, aptitude, achievement or performance (Nkemakolam, 2012). The study was conducted in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom state which has twelve local government areas. The population of the study consisted of all the one thousand one hundred and fifty-two (1152) teachers in the sixty three (63) public secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom. A simple random sampling technique was used in selecting three hundred (300) teachers in twelve (12) selected public secondary schools in the area under study. The instrument used for the study was a structured questionnaire titled Teachers' Perspective on Curriculum Adaptation for Learners with Learning Disability in Inclusive Classrooms Questionnaire (TPCALLDICQ). The instrument was validated by an expert in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Educational Foundations, College of Education, Afaha Nsit. Before the final distribution of the questionnaire, thirty (30) copies of the instruments were administered to teachers in selected secondary schools in Uyo senatorial district. This was done to test the reliability of the instrument. Consequently, a reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained using cronbach alpha reliability test. The result therefore showed that the result of the reliability test was high and the instrument reliable. The researchers administered the questionnaire to three hundred and five (305) teachers with the help of two research assistants. Out of the three hundred and five (305) copies of the questionnaire distributed, three (3) were wrongly filled and so were discarded while two (2) were never returned. However, three (300) were correctly filled and returned and were used for the study. The researchers used weighted mean for the analysis of research questions. Hence, the cut-off mean was 2.50. Consequently, any mean score below 2.50 was not accepted as an agreement while mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as agreement.

**Research Question One**

How do teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 1: Weighted mean analysis on the extent to which teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State

	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	x	Decision
1. The current curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disabilities to participate effectively in the classroom	11	15	157	117	1.73	Disagreed
2. The current curriculum is designed in such a manner that learners with learning disabilities understand the concepts taught	112	162	12	14	3.24	Agreed
3. The current curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disabilities to carry out class activities like their peers who are normal	68	79	77	76	2.46	Disagreed
4. The current curriculum makes the learning process interesting to learners with learning disabilities	15	16	160	109	2.32	Disagreed
Grand Mean					2.43	Agreed

Table 1 above shows the extent to which teachers perceive the effectiveness of the current curriculum in meeting the needs of learners with learning disability as follows; the current curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disability to participate in the classroom had a mean score of 1.73, the current curriculum is designed in such a manner that learners with learning disability understand the concepts taught had a mean score of 3.24, the curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disability to carry out classroom activities like their peers who are normal had a means score of 2.46 and the current curriculum makes the learning process interesting to learners with learning disability had a mean score of 2.32. From the above, it can be observed that item 1, 3 and 4 had a mean score of 1.73, 2.46, and 2.32 respectively which is below the cut-off mean of 2.50. This therefore indicates that teachers perceived the current curriculum as not being effective in meeting the needs of learners with learning disability

### Research Question Two

What challenges do teachers face in adapting the curriculum for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State?

Table 2: Weighted mean analysis on the challenges teachers face in adapting the curriculum for students with learning disabilities in secondary schools in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom State

	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	x	Decision
1. The physical environment in the school does not promote inclusive learning environment	115	125	16	4	3.44	Agreed
2. The teaching method recommended for use does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disabilities	77	68	78	77	2.74	Agreed
3. Instructional materials available in schools does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disabilities	166	128	4	2	3.54	Agreed
4. The evaluation process in school does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disabilities	148	127	18	7	3.38	Agreed
Grand Mean					3.30	Agreed

Table 2 above shows the challenges teachers' face in adapting the curriculum for learners with learning disability as follows; the physical environment in the school does not promote inclusive learning environment had a means score of 3.44, the teaching method recommended for use does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 2.74, instructional materials available in schools does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 3.54 and the evaluation process in

school does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 3.38. From the above, it can be observed that all the items had a mean score of 3.44, 2.74, 3.54 and 3.38 respectively which is above the cut-off mean of 2.50. This therefore indicates that it is very challenging for teachers to adapt the current curriculum for learners with learning disability

## **DISCUSSION**

From the result of the analysis, it can be observed that teachers perceived the current curriculum as not being effective to meet the needs of learners with learning disability. Also, adapting the curriculum was very challenging for learners with learning disability.

Research question one reveals that the current curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disability to participate in the classroom had a mean score of 1.73, the curriculum provides opportunity for learners with learning disability to carry out classroom activity like their peers who are normal had a mean score of 2.46 and the current curriculum makes the learning process interesting to learners with learning disability has a mean score of 2.32. This indicates that the current curriculum does not provide opportunity for learners with learning disability to participate in the classroom. This is as a result of the large number of learners in the classroom which makes it difficult for the teacher to attend to the learning need of each learner. The study also revealed that the current curriculum does not provide opportunity for learners with learning disability to actively participate in the classroom because the curriculum was designed to cater for the learning needs of normal learners, this therefore inhibits learners with hearing or visual impairment from participating effectively in the classroom activities. Again, it was also observed that the current curriculum does not make learning interesting to learners' with visual or hearing impairment as they found it difficult to follow up in classroom discussions. However, the content of the curriculum has been designed in such a manner that all types of learners can easily understand the concepts taught in all subjects if adequate and relevant instructional materials are utilized

Research question two reveals that the physical environment in the school does not promote inclusive learning environment has a mean score of 3.44, teaching methods recommended for use does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 2.74, instructional materials available in school does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 3.54 while the evaluation process in school does not promote effective learning among learners with learning disability had a mean score of 3.38. This indicates that school building are not built to cater for the needs of learners with special need such as the visually impaired and the physically handicapped, the teaching method recommended for use does not also enhance learning among learners with learning disability. Again lack of instructional materials especially materials like hearing aids and visual aids are lacking in schools as well as other special needs learning gadget. Finally, the evaluation process in school does not enhance the learning for learners with special

needs. Hence the need to develop an evaluation process that is suitable for learners within the special needs category.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

- (i) Teachers no matter the area of specialization should be trained on how to teach learners with special needs
- (ii) More special education experts should be employed in secondary schools to assist the regular teachers
- (iii) Learning gadgets such as hearing aid and visual aids among others should be provided in schools so as to assist learners with special need to learn
- (iv) While building a school, government should ensure to make the school environment special need learners friendly especially for the blind and the physically handicapped learners

### **Conclusion**

The study examined teachers' perspective on curriculum adaptation for learners with learning disability in inclusive classroom. Consequently, the study concluded that;

Teachers perceived the current curriculum as not being effective in meeting the needs of learners with learning disability in an inclusive classroom

Also, adapting the curriculum by teachers was challenging for learners with learning disability in inclusive classroom

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