



CHAPTER 22

CURRICULUM ADAPTATION FOR CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES IN AN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS

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Introduction

Children with learning disabilities in a school setting may look like normal children except those with multiple disabilities. You can only notice them only when it comes to academic tasks. Children with learning disabilities are learners who have learning difficulties. These children may present problems such as reading slowly or incorrectly, skipping mistakes, and untidy/illegible handwriting with poor sequencing, and inability to perform simple mathematics. Children with these conditions therefore have problem performing specific types of skills or completing tasks if left to figure things out things themselves or if taught in conventional ways. When a child is struggling with learning disability, even the simplest task can be difficult and discouraging and so such children will require some adaptations in the school curriculum in order to enable them cope with learning situation in the classroom. A modified curriculum therefore can be the key to unlocking the child's love for learning and self-confidence.

On the other hand, Curriculum adaption is a modification to the delivery of instructional methods and intended goals of student performance that does not change the content, but does slightly change the conceptual difficulty of the curriculum (Baba, Balami & Kabiru, 2021). In a like manner, Azubike (2011), to adapt a curriculum means to venture and modify the existing curriculum, special equipment, teaching method meant for regular schools and adapt from them to suit the learning needs of these special children. The intent is to ensure that students with special needs work round their specific disabilities to achieves more success by participating in classroom function as possible.

Learning disability on the other hand can be define as a heterogeneous group of disorders manifested by significant difficulties in the acquisition and the use of listening, Reading, Writing, Reasoning or Mathematical abilities. These disorders are intrinsic to the individual and presumed to be due to central nervous system dysfunction. Even though Learning Disability may occur concomitantly with other handicapping conditions (e.g. sensory impairment, intellectual disability, social



and emotional disturbance) or environmental influences (e.g. cultural differences, insufficiencies, inappropriate instruction, and psychogenic factors). It is not the direct result of those conditions or influences.

Similarly, Singh and Anshu, (2013) .Defined Learning disabilities as a number of disorders which may affect the acquisition, organization, retention, understanding or use of non-verbal Information. These disorders affect learning in individuals who otherwise demonstrated at least average abilities essential for thinking and or reasoning. Learning disabilities is a problem that affects a child's ability to receive, process, analyze, or store information, thus making it difficult for the child to read, write , spell or mathematical problems.(Ugo,2022). Learning Disabilities is generally life long, however the effects of the disorder may be expressed differently over time depending on the match between the demands of the environment and the individual characteristics (Learning Disabilities Association of Antorio, 2001). However, in 2022 Ugo opined that the effects of Learning Disabilities are not limited to educational outcomes alone. The individuals with learning disabilities may experience social problems also, some of them have the problem staying organized, some misinterpret body language and some tone of voice, some talk too much or at a wrong time or say things that are inappropriate. Some are stffl in conversation, some have trouble expressing themselves. Hence experiencing negative effects as a result of Learning Disabilities. Children with learning disabilities are those with various forms of learning problems in a school which have various implication that make their learning difficult

The thesis statement of this chapter hinged on the fact that children with learning disabilities are not taught effectively under the general school curriculum in an inclusive setting and therefore, there is need for paradigm shift from the use of general curriculum to the curriculum that will be adaptive in nature. To achieve this discussion it will be based on the following: curriculum adaptation for children with learning disabilities, benefit of the curriculum adaptation, how curriculum adaptation promotes functional education of children with learning disabilities, roles of stake holders in curriculum adaptation and challenges of curriculum adaptation

Curriculum Adaptation for Children with Learning Disabilities

Adaptation simply means to make adjustment or modification of something parts that makes it fit for existence under the conditions of its current environment. Curriculum adaptation refers to changing how the content is presented or represented to learner with Learning Disabilities to promote their engagement either through pedagogical means such as using technology (digital or talking books. (Sambo & Sunday, 2021). Curriculum adaptation is a modification to the delivery of instructional methods and intended goal of student's performance that does not change the content but does slightly change the conceptual difficulty of



the curriculum. One of the most important characteristics or feature of curriculum adaptation is that, it is a goal driven process.

Adaptation take place when teachers differentiate instruction, assessment and instructional materials in order to create a flexible learning environment for learner with Learning Disabilities. Sambo, Ibrahim & Kabiru (2021) posited that, to adapt a curriculum for learner with Learning Disabilities for an effective inclusion means to venture the existing curriculum, special equipment, facilities, teaching methods meant for regular schools and adapt them to suit the learning needs of such individuals. The intent is to ensure that this category of learners work round their specific needs to achieve more success by participating in an inclusive classroom. The purpose of the adaptation is to see that children experience in learning as much as possible in regular classroom setting.

Benefits of Curriculum Adaptation

The benefits of curriculum adaptation for learners with special needs according to Thani (2002). Ryndak and Alper (1996) as sighted in Baba, Balami & Kabiru (2021) were as follows:

1. It create avenue for social interaction in the school among classmates without disabilities and also provides many opportunities that would not be available in segregated settings.
2. Through curriculum adaptation, both the general and special educators in inclusive settings expect appropriate conduct for all students.
3. Curriculum adaptation offers the opportunities for students with special education needs to learn to communicate effectively. This also prepares them to fully participate in pluralistic society when they are adults.
4. Curriculum adaptation ensures that schools respond to educational needs of children in neighborhood. It brings a school closer to the community (Thani, 2002).
5. Curriculum adaptation helps children with special learning needs have appropriate models of behaviors. They can observe and imitate the socially acceptable behavior of the students without special educational needs.
6. Through curriculum adaptation, students with learning disabilities are taught age-appropriate, functional components of academic content, which may never be part of curriculum in segregated settings (e.g. the science, social studies etc. (Ryndak and Alper, 1996).

Curriculum Adaptation that Promote Functional Education of Children with Learning Disabilities

The curriculum used for persons with Learning Disabilities and regular learners are the same because we have general educational goals, aims and objectives for all learners. The difference is that the general education curriculum is modified and adapted for learner with disabilities based on their conditions. (Ugo, 2022). The curriculum adaptation that promote functional education for



children with Learning Disabilities is modified which can include, but are not limited to as stated by Baba, Balami & Kabiru(2021). Include the following:

1. **Technology Adaptation:** special needs education has revealed technological advances for children with learning Disabilities which have created many products which are advantageous to all categories of special needs, both for input and output information. Equipment are now available that help children with reading, spellings, writing, reasoning, and mathematical problems. Consequently, choosing appropriate technological adaptations entails numerous and complex considerations for both regular and professional special educators.
2. **Curriculum Adaptation of Cognitive Abilities:** Special education revealed that academic curriculum appropriate for children with L.D is determined by their cognitive abilities. Goals and objectives set for children without special needs do not need to be changed for them, due solely to special problem, though the methods for accomplishing the goal may be different. These children with learning disabilities, however, require instruction in additional areas. This is where the issue of their curriculum plus or minus may come in as said by Obani (2006). For example, teachers and schools frequently need to adapt curriculum that will be suitable for children with learning disabilities.
3. **Methodological Adaptation:** To cater effectively for diverse learning needs of children with Learning Disabilities, policy must be implemented by all educational mentors, instructors and stakeholders. Koleaso (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 someone works.
4. **Inclusive Programme for Children with Learning Disabilities:** As children with Learning Disabilities increase in number, general education teachers will need to understand the effect that this disabilities have on children, such understanding will allow them to make appropriate accommodation and adaptations to design inclusive education for children with Learning Disabilities in a variety of ways, learning will be able to provide such children with learning opportunities that lead to successful academic and social experiences.

Roles of Stakeholders in Curriculum Adaptation

Stakeholders are those individuals who helps in developing the curriculum for children with learning disabilities that can tailor intervention and accommodate such children in an inclusive settings e.g. teachers, schools, parents, ministry of education, universal basic education board and other multi-disciplinary team which includes: School Psychologists, Special educators, speech therapist, psychiatrist, etc. they help in developing, restructuring, and adapting coordinating the execution of intervention that can help children with Learning Disabilities.



Stakeholders are important in adaptation of curriculum for children with learning disabilities, this enhances progress in schools academically and socially. Stakeholders are equally responsible for the achievement of learning outcomes through their active participation in school activities. In addition each stakeholder has a role to play in the adaptation of curriculum in an inclusive setting. Professionals and stakeholders can participate through taking care of the curriculum content, methodology and evaluation.

The following are ways teachers can adapt and modify the curriculum for children with learning disabilities:

- i. Adapt the number of items that the learners is expected to learn or complete.
- ii. Reduce the number of items for assigned tasks
- iii. Reduce number of copying and number of problems.
- iv. Reduce the numbers of concept and expectation introduced at any given time.
- v. Reduce the number of items the learner must learn at onetime, coordinate assignment with other teachers to avoid overloading the children.
- vi. Reduce length of assignments when students get stressed up.
- vii. Adapt the time allotted for learning task completion or testing.
- viii. Individualize a time line for complete a task.
- ix. Allow learners to take assignment home.
- x. Allow extra-time in class or outside class for work completion.
- xi. Allow additional time for preparation by given pre-test one or two days.
- xii. Allow extra-time to complete projects.
- xiii. Allow the learner to take short break.

Challenges of Curriculum Adaptation

Despite the benefits of curriculum adaptation for children with learning disabilities as stated above, it is clear there are a lot of challenges facing curriculum adaptation in inclusive settings some of the challenges includes:

- ❖ Information: one of the major challenges of curriculum adaptation in Nigeria is that little or no information on instructional guides on how to handle and instruct children with learning disabilities in their schools or classrooms.
- ❖ Death of assistive technology to cater for the children with L.D. these challenges in death of assistive technology is further aggravated by the cost of these devices which make it difficult for the children with L.D. Most of whom are from poor economic background to purchase for personal use. They are expensive and hard to come by especially in developing country like Nigeria (Baba, Balami & Kabiru 2021).
- ❖ Another challenges of children with learning disabilities is that their teachers are not aware of their disabilities and do not have adequate skills to adapt their curriculum contents.
- ❖ There is no gain saying that funds are pivotal to any educational venture, more so with children with L.D which is equipment driven are expensive. Justifying the importance of funds to adapting curriculum, Joram and Asabe (2011)



stressed that money is required to employ derived manpower, procedures and maintain infrastructural materials and to cope with emergencies arising from modification, expansion or increase.

- ❖ Another challenge related to assistive technology used in adaptive curriculum is that of the use and application of the devices in order to be properly placed to teach children with L.D.
- ❖ Manpower problem: This has to do with the personnel or human resources who are trained in a particular discipline, working to achieve set goal for children with learning disabilities in an inclusive setting: However, there is a challenge of availability and that of competence of teachers that can handle adapted curriculum for some of these children.

Implication of Curriculum Adaptation for Children with Learning Disabilities:

Children with learning disabilities have problems with basic academic skills which are necessary for academic achievement. These problems negatively affect the general wellbeing that have serious implication in their daily living which consequently lead to frustration, anxiety and fear as a result of their inability to cope with the general school curriculum.

Hence, there is need to adapt the curriculum for learners with L.D which will involve the teaching methodologies, structures, instructional material and learning activities, thus the contents, (fact and ideas) and the learning environment are all factors that have positive implication for children with special needs. Another implication for making curriculum adaptation useful for learners with special needs according to Azanor, Isola & Ajobiewe (2015) stated the implication of curriculum adaptation is important for teachers to be aware of different methods that may be used to create lesson plans that will allow teachers to adapt curriculum and instructional strategies because heaving guidelines and examples we have teachers who may be unfamiliar with how to adapt curriculum in an inclusive setting.

Conclusion

Learning Disabilities can be managed depending on how early it is detected in a classroom hence, teachers must be observant when the teachers are trained in special needs education. Curriculum on the other hands is the life wire of educational practice for all children in the inclusive setting and so far any programme development to succeed, teachers/parents and all stakeholders need to be involved in the curriculum planning, adaptation and structure so that quality education can be delivered successfully in an inclusive settings.

Suggestions

Based on the discussions the following suggestions on were made:

- ❖ There should be adequate training for all teachers involved in curriculum adaptation



- ❖ Specialized teachers on curriculum adaption has to be in place in all inclusive schools to serve as a guide to newly employed teachers
- ❖ Necessary equipment/facilities should be made available in school for effective learning for children with learning disability

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