

# IMPROVISATION OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS IN AN INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENT IN NIGERIA

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## **Abstract**

*Improvisation of instructional materials in an Inclusive setting has become the focus of extension research in education. It has both academic and social benefits for all students. It ensures that the special needs children have equal access to knowledge, skills, and information in the same way as the "normal children. This paper looks at children with hearing impairment in an inclusive classroom, benefit of inclusive education and more clearly the study to a great extend provided information on the importance of instructional materials in an inclusive setting. The paper finally identifies some requirements for inclusive education. Based on these discoveries a conclusion is drawn.*

## **Introduction**

There has been a lot of concern about the academic performance of our children with special needs over the past years. A common goal of teachers everywhere is to make lesson presentations vivid, alive and lasting for their pupils. But most schools pay lip service to these issues and spend more time on mere presentation of information to their pupils than on figuring out how best to communicate more effectively especially in an inclusive environment.

Visual imagery has become the most powerful means of communication in our society (Nigeria) today. The saying that "seeing is believing" is fast changing our society to information oriented that is characterized by intense visual languages, which can be termed as instructional materials.

For centuries, the teacher's main job has been that of presenting information and testing pupils to see whether they can remember. But now, it is clear that the assigning of lists of non-functional facts to be studied and remembered are out of place in schools today. Instead, teachers have come to better understanding that learning is an active process and their main classroom tasks are to serve as diagnosticians and organizers, or manager of functional varied learning experiences. In an inclusive learning environment, attention should be given to creativity, selection and use of audio-visual and other

instructional materials. Some educational technologists feel that in one way or the other, the extent of participation in creating materials for teaching has greatly improved in our society today, but there is still more room for every teacher to be resourceful. We should note that, no lesson is well taught without the use of instructional material Therefore, to be able to teach effectively in our inclusive schools, teachers should have the knowledge of creative arts" or educational technology so as to improvise instructional materials. These should have some artistic and scientific appeal to the students so as to appear real to them

The basic premise of inclusion movement is that principle of anti-discrimination, equity, social justice, and basic human rights make it imperative that students with disabilities and special needs should enjoy the same access as all other student in a regular school environment and to a broad balanced and relevant curriculum. "Though the move toward integration began in a few countries during the late 1960s and early 1970s, it becomes a worldwide movement in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s. A major influence was the promulgation of the Salamanca statement and framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994).

### **Improvisation**

According to Hornby (2010), improvisation means to make or do something by using whatever is available, usually because you do not have what you really need. Improvisation is the provision of alternatives to all things. Though we often hear about improvisation of instructional materials in education, Hodgson, (1978) believes that it is a more difficult word to define than literature. It can be viewed as substituting, replacing or altering creative Arts materials for particular function. According to Ango, (1986), improvisation means a lot of things. Improvisation, as rightly conceived means

- a. Substituting something (paint brush) in place of another to serve a unique function.
- b. Altering the shape, size or outlook of a thing to serve a function other than that originally used for or intended to.
- c. Originating or formulating a totally new tool, instrument, material or device for serving a particular function.

As Ema, Isha, and Ajayi, (2001) rightly put it, local production of materials may also mean improvisation. Local production of instructional materials is the provision of alternatives to actual ones. Local production of educational resources can be viewed as substituting, replacing or altering the material for a particular use in teaching. According to them, instructional materials can be produced by the teacher for his/her pupils/students if and when imported or commercial ready-made ones are not available or within the reach of the school/or teacher. It is believed that local production of materials helps to develop the visual literacy of the learners, as they participate in the production with the teacher. It also develops the pupils imaginative thinking as they participate in the

collection and production of the materials. Local production of instructional materials involves the teacher and learners in realistic problem-solving activities, which stimulate effective learning and produce suitable materials, which may not be available as commercially produced or imported materials.

Going by our operational definition, the teacher and the pupils can improvise dramatic plays in school. This could be done either by adopting an existing play to suit their purpose, or by creating their own plays and acting creatively. Similarly, the teacher and the pupils can create and compose their songs independently of the old fashioned or familiar choruses.

In the creative art milieu, the teacher and pupils can improvise many of the required materials. For example, specimens, charts, magazines, pictures, waste papers collected from the environment, cartoons, paint brushes, branches of trees, plant leaves, flowers and other materials from the environment can be effectively used for classroom work.

Adams (1986) admits that teachers are already over-worked, so it is important for them to locate and make use of only the best resources that are available to them. This is not to say that improvisation should be the sole responsibility of the teachers. As Adams (1986) puts it, if the pupils are involved to some extent in the long-term planning of the course, their contributions to the resources box will not only be physical but also creative. They will produce the ideas and the resources. Furthermore, the term improvisation means an activity embarked upon or initiated by a teacher to address problems of the scarcity of instructional materials for the purpose of teaching and learning either due to logistic or economic reasons.

Abah (2007) also defined improvisation as the act of using alternative materials and resources to facilitate instructions whenever there is lack of shortage of some specific first hand instructional materials. Additionally, Azubike (2004) defined improvisation as a means to make or do hastily without extensive preparation and using those materials that are locally available and do not involve high cost as substitute to the factory made or imported ones. Of course, these definitions imply that improvisation embraces activities invented by a teacher or students with special needs to ensure that a replica of a scarce or costly instructional material is produced or caused to be made purposely to promote effective teaching and learning. Improvisation is a supplement to real made materials. Resourceful special teachers should look around their environments and find alternative ways of providing for the needs of inclusive environment in Nigeria.

### **Rationale for Improvisation of Instructional Materials**

Since we cannot buy all the materials required for example, hardware and software for educational development, we need to improvise. That is, convert all relevant and available indigenous materials for our good. Improvisation can take care of any

curriculum review, weak materials, and even non-availability of necessary instructional materials.

Improvisation conjures the notion of materials for effective teaching and learning. It is basically and mostly around this idea of materials that improvisation finds its use and meaning. Understanding the role of improvisation, requires an imagination of the type of teaching and learning that is likely to take place, should classroom materials for teaching educational technology or creative arts be absent. Since creative arts is a practical subject, how will it be taught in the absence of materials? Creative arts will be reduced to a didactic story telling activity. Under such a condition, pupils will rely on imagination to synthesize the knowledge and information which are being presented.

The reasons for improvisation of instructional materials in Nigeria today are not far fetched. In the first place, the Nigerian economy at present does not warrant the provision of all that the school system needs. Lack of funds has bedeviled all facets of development. Schools therefore find it difficult to stock their educational technological centres with relevant instructional materials and equipment because they are very costly to buy. Special teachers are therefore expected to be inward looking, creative, imperative and ready to produce relevant instructional materials for inclusive education in Nigeria.

Equally, some of the instructional materials in Nigeria are too foreign and sophisticated for our children with special needs, there is the need to produce local instructional materials for the benefits of our special learners (Ogbondahi, 2008).

In addition, some of these instructional materials that are in use in Nigeria today are concept-based on foreign ideas and culture. There is the need to produce instructional materials based on our culture and concepts.

Another reason for improvisation of instructional materials in Nigeria is the inability of instructional materials in Nigeria is the inability of instructional materials to be enough for an inclusive lesson because they are very few. The special teacher is expected to produce similar materials that are indigenous to compliment the few available ones. It also saves money and time and brings about innovations.

The above reasons have given us insight into why and when it becomes necessary for a special teacher to improvise instructional materials in an inclusive environment in Nigeria.

### **Importance of Instructional Materials**

Instructional materials have great and various values in education:

- They contribute to effective, permanent and transferable learning.
- They also help to increase teachers confidence if properly used. Their importance has also been detected even outside the classroom.

Oyeyemi (1991) also pointed out that military leaders who applied visual methods in training people during the Second World War claimed that 40 percent of instructional time is saved while psychologists said that 85 percent of human knowledge is absorbed

through the sense of sight. Oyeyemi (1991) further listed some proven contributions of instructional materials to learning. These include:

- a. They supply a concrete basis for conceptual thinking and reduce verbalism.
- b. Produce high degree of interest.
- c. Contribute to growth and meaningful vocabulary development.
- d. Develop continuity of thoughts
- e. Provide for experiences not easily obtained through other materials.
- f. Stimulate self-activity.
- g. Provide motive for free reading
- h. Increase concentration
- i. Make learning more permanent.

Also, instructional materials tend to reinforce and add effectiveness of the teaching-learning process and provide for extension of experience beyond the physical limitation of the visual instructional materials.

According to Agun (1998), instructional materials if effectively utilized, will accomplish the following:

- Stimulate interest on the part of the students and teachers
- Enhance the viewer's sense of appreciation and understanding of the exercise.
- Provide defined skills and techniques on the part of the users.
- Factual information will be made easily available to the users.
- Upgrade and enrich the experimental background of the students.

The materials must provide the true picture of the objects and concepts to be addressed. The materials must be helped to broaden the intellectual experience of the pupils providing them with values that would otherwise be inaccessible to them. The materials must be appropriate in relation to the age and comprehension level of the pupils. From all indications, instructional materials if properly utilized will enhance academic achievement.

Again, improvisations of instructional materials have some inherent advantages that make them unique in inclusive environment in Nigeria. These advantages are:

They provide the teacher with interesting and compelling platforms for conveying information, as they motivate learners to want to learn more and more. They also assist the teacher in overcoming physical difficulties that could have hindered his effective presentation of a given topic. They generally make teaching and learning easier and less stressful (Olumorin, Yusuf, Ajidagba and Jekayinkfa, 2010). They are equally indispensable catalysts of social and intellectual development of the learners. Instructional materials serve as a channel through which message, information, ideas, and knowledge are disseminated more easily with instructional materials in use in inclusive environment. The teacher talks less while passing an intended message in the class in a more effective and meaningful manner (Ogbondahi, 2008).

## **Types of Instructional Materials in an Inclusive Environment**

Instructional materials fall under various types. They include; Audio, aural, visual or audio visual. Audio instructional materials refer to the devices that make use of the sense of hearing. For example, radio, television, tape recording, telephone projectors and others. on the other hand, visual instructional materials are those devices that appeal to the sense of sight only, such as the chalkboard, charts, slides, filmstrip, flannel board, bulletin board, enrichment cards, pictures, models, posters, spacemen. An audio - visual instructional material is a combination of devices which appeal to the senses of hearing and seeing. Such as a television, motion pictures, and the computer (Olumerin *et al.*, 2010). The visual instructional materials are mostly used by teachers. Due to the high cost of imported instructional materials which has made them unavailable in Nigerian inclusive education, there is therefore the need to produce them locally from our community environment. Natural community resources such as real objects could be used both in the school and inside the classroom. The teacher could visit the stations with the students.

## **How a Special Teacher Can Improvise Instructional Materials**

In order to improvise any instructional materials effectively in an inclusive class, the teacher of children with special needs must be ready to give answers to the following questions during and after the improvisation exercise. These include:

- a. What does the improvised material seek to promote?
- b. Will it further the interest and curiosity of the learners?
- c. Will it provide the desired skills in the learner?
- d. Is it simple, durable and really replicable?
- e. What is the aesthetic rating of the improvised material or equipment?
- f. Is the classroom environment suitable for the use of the improvised instructional materials? (Olumorin *et al.*, 2010).

Further more, the special teacher trying to improvise still needs to acquire some basic skills. In the words of Ogbondahi (2008) these skills include:

- Organizing: The skills of planning. It is the ability of the teacher to put everything been developed in proper order.
- Gathering: Is to scout out relevant materials to be put together to produce improvised materials.
- Alternative resources that are scarce and their suitability
- Mechanical manipulation of drawings, sketch, cut, glaze and paint if need be
- Reflective thinking that allows to think fast and critically.
- Locating information and materials that could be useful
- Observation that could help discovers the need for improvisation.

- Problem solving: The mother of all skills which increases the chances of producing useful and relevant improvised materials
- Planning which concerns ability to recognize the need for improvisation.
- Controlling situation: The skill to managing the crisis of scarce instructional materials.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are made for this work:

- Federal, State and Local Governments should locally produce instructional materials for inclusive education through Public-Private Partnership (PPP).
- Special teachers should be encouraged to improvise instructional materials to facilitate teaching and learning.
- Training and retraining of special teachers should be done in form of workshops, seminars, Sand which and in-services training programmes on how to produce and use instructional materials.
- Special teachers should not teach any lesson without instructional materials.
- Special needs education teachers should collaborate with regular teachers to enable them develop skills for improvisation of instructional materials in an inclusive environment.
- NGOs, donors, stakeholders, individuals, parents, communities, schools and teachers should provide instructional materials for use in an inclusive environment.
- Equally, public and private companies in Nigeria should provide instructional materials both hardware and software required for inclusive environment.

## Conclusion

This paper has made attempts to discuss improvisation of instructional materials in an inclusive environment in Nigeria. Instructional materials are recognized as useful materials in the teaching and learning process and there is the need for collaborative efforts to facilitate the improvisation and use of instructional materials in an inclusive environment in Nigeria.

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