

Curriculum Delivery Methods and Inclusive Education in Nigeria

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DOI: [10.56201/ijrcp.vol.10.no1.2025.pg110.120](https://doi.org/10.56201/ijrcp.vol.10.no1.2025.pg110.120)

Abstract

Inclusive education aims to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities or disabilities. In Nigeria, the preparation of teachers to effectively implement inclusive education is critical. This study evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum delivery methods in Nigerian teacher education institutions concerning inclusive education. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 420 participants, including pre-service teachers and teacher educators across six public institutions. Findings indicate a predominance of theoretical, lecture-based teaching methods, with limited practical engagement. Challenges identified include large class sizes, inadequate instructional materials, and insufficient specialized training for educators. Recommendations include diversifying teaching methods, incorporating practicum-based learning, and enhancing capacity-building initiatives for teacher educators.

Keywords: *Inclusive Education, Teacher Preparation, Curriculum Delivery, Nigeria, Teacher Education*

1. Introduction

Inclusive education is a pedagogical approach that seeks to address the learning needs of all students, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable to marginalization and exclusion. In the Nigerian context, the implementation of inclusive education is pivotal to achieving the national educational objectives of equity and quality (Akuuapum, 2022). The effectiveness of inclusive education largely depends on the preparedness of teachers, which is directly influenced by the methods employed in their training. This study examines the curriculum delivery methods used in Nigerian teacher education institutions and their effectiveness in preparing teachers for inclusive classrooms (Abidi, 2021).

Inclusive education simply refers to the methods and strategies adopted by the teacher in which all students, regardless of their abilities or needs, have equal rights and access to quality education and learning opportunities in the same classrooms, and schools fostering a supportive and responsive learning environment (Adelaja, 2022; Adelana, 2024). This means that all children are in the same classrooms and in the same schools regardless of their ability or inability. It also means that real learning opportunities are provided for groups who are traditionally been excluded from quality education.

2. Literature Review

The concept of inclusive education has gained global recognition as a means to provide equitable learning opportunities for all students, irrespective of their abilities or disabilities. In Nigeria, the journey toward inclusive education has been marked by various policy initiatives

aimed at integrating students with special needs into mainstream classrooms. However, the success of these initiatives heavily relies on the preparedness of teachers, which is influenced by the curriculum delivery methods employed in teacher education institutions (Eke, 2017; Adelaja 2024).

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the fundamental role of social interaction in cognitive development. According to Vygotsky, learning is a socially mediated process, and the environment plays a crucial role in the development of higher-order functions. This theory underscores the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods in fostering the skills necessary for inclusive education.

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory

The theory was developed by Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934). It emphasizes the important role of social interactions and cultural context in the cognitive development of human beings. According to him, learning is a collaborative process that is influenced and determined by the interactions of one with more knowledgeable individuals.

The theory is centred on each of the following main principles:

1. **Social Interactions:** He believed that learning is fundamentally a social process. Therefore, when children actively engage with more knowledgeable individuals like parents, teachers or peers, they are more likely to learn.
2. **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPI):** This simply refers to the gap between what a learner can achieve on his/her own and what he/she can do with other's guidance or collaboration.
3. **Scaffolding:** The support provided by more knowledgeable individuals that is capable of helping the learner to bridge the gap known as ZPD and assist him/her to master new things in terms of knowledge or skills.
4. **Cultural Tools:** Notable cultural tools include language, symbols, and artefacts are emphasized as tools that help to shape learner's cognitive development.
5. **Language as a Mediator:** Language serves as an important tool that assist people to communicate, process their thoughts and engage in meaningful learning.

The implications of Sociocultural Theory on Education

1. **Collaborative Learning:** It encourages students to learn from one another and with each other.
2. **Scaffolding Instruction:** It helps to provide the right support and guidance to assist students to learn new concepts.
3. **Considers Cultural Context:** The theory helps educators to recognize the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of the learners.
4. **Focus on Meaningful Activities:** It helps the educators to engage students in activities that are relevant and challenging.

A typical example of sociocultural theory is found in students learning in groups.

2.2. Curriculum Delivery Methods in Teacher Education

Curriculum delivery methods refer to the strategies and techniques employed by educators to impart knowledge and skills to learners. In the context of Nigerian teacher education, traditional lecture-based methods have been predominant. While lectures can effectively convey theoretical knowledge, they often fall short in developing the practical skills and

attitudes required for inclusive teaching. Alternative methods such as collaborative learning, case studies, role-playing, and practicum experiences have been suggested to enhance the preparedness of teachers for inclusive classrooms (Pratt, 2023; Obi & Obumneke, 2020).

Effective Methods of Teaching and Curriculum Delivery in Inclusive Education

In the 21st century classroom interactions of teacher and students in inclusive classes some of these teaching methods are used:

Collaborative Learning (Peer Tutoring and Group Work),

Encourages cooperation among learners of diverse abilities, allows learners with special needs to interact and alongside their peers. Develops social skills, like empathy and team work

Example: peering students with learning disabilities with peers who can support them in group tasks.

Differentiated Instruction

Here, teaching content, process, product, and learning environment are adapted to individual students' diverse needs. This is done to ensure that every learner can assess the curriculum according to their ability. Level. Here, teacher may provide multiple options for assignments, vary the complexity of tasks, or use different instructional materials to cater for the differences in students' abilities (Samuel, 2024).

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

This is a proactive approach to curriculum design that offers multiple means of representation, expression, and engagement. It ensures that instructional materials and teaching strategies are flexible and accessible to all learners. Incorporate visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning materials (Onajide 2024).

Use of Assistive Technology by Forlin (2010) and Nworgu (2015)

Employs devices and software that support learning for students with disabilities. Examples: braille materials, screen readers, speech to text software, and hearing aids. Enhances accessibility and participation in classroom activities. Experiential and Practical Learning provides real life experiences through field trips, simulation, and role-playing. Helps bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Scaffolded Instruction

Offers structured support to learners, gradually reducing assistance as their competence increases. Encourages independence and confidence among learners with diverse learning needs.

Storytelling and Case Study

Uses real-life stories and practical case scenarios to illustrate inclusive practices. Helps teachers and learners understand the challenges and experiences of persons with disabilities.

Reflective Practice and Self-Evaluation

Encourages pre-service teachers to reflect on their teaching practices, attitudes, and beliefs about inclusion. Helps in developing critical thinking and ethical sensitivity towards diversity in the classroom.

Use of Multi-Sensory Approaches

Engages more than one sense organ (sight, sound, touch, movement) in teaching. Enhances learning for students with sensory impairments and learning disabilities. Inclusive Classroom Environment and Positive Behaviour Support. Establishes a classroom culture that respects diversity, promotes belonging, and supports positive behaviour Nwosu & Ugwoke (2020).

Lecture Based Learning

Here, the teacher explains information, while the students patiently listen and observe, take notes and copy teacher's demonstrations. This can be made more meaningful and yield more positive results if the teacher keeps the lesson brief, then allows the students the opportunity of asking questions, creates instructional videos, use visual clues and of course promotes hand written notes (Bechman, 2021).

Technology-based Learning

The teacher can involve today's technology in the classroom to enhance students' learning and makes it more efficient. Students can be actively involved in the classroom teaching and learning through the use of the computers, and tablets, to read materials, conduct research or play educational games (Ibitoye 2020).

Group Learning

Students can be divided into groups for effective learning. This helps to teach them the social skills of collaboration, and cooperation. In their different teams, they can discuss different themes in their subjects, and so learn about the perspectives of others. The teacher can assign group presentations to give students the opportunity to convey their information to the rest of the class, ask and answer questions, and interact freely with one another (Ibitoye, 2020).

Individualized Instruction

This helps to promote individual learning, so that they can work by themselves. This can be helpful before class discussions so that every member of the class can have enough points and be fully prepared for such discussions (Omede & Momoh 2016).

Inquiry-based Learning

This promotes the idea of learning by investigation, where students can complete their projects, ask questions and find answers by themselves. Students are therefore assisted to discover information on their own (Heiss, 2022).

Game-based Learning

The use of educational games or challenges, whether in person or online is a common feature of classroom teacher student interactions today. They help students to participate more fully in the learning process as they inspire them to learn. It can also afford them the opportunity of solving problems and reach meaningful goals (Abadi, 2021). Teachers are trained to implement classroom management strategies that accommodate every learner's needs.

2.3 Advantages of Inclusive Education

Inclusive education offers numerous prospects and advantages. Notable among which include improved academic and social outcomes for all students, enhanced social skills, and development of positive attitude towards diversity (Obi & Obumneke, 2020).

In a more precise term, inclusive education offers each of the following advantages:

1. **Enhanced Students' Academic Performance:** This occurs as inclusive classrooms provide access to the same curriculum and learning opportunities as their peers, encouraging better academic outcomes.
2. **Improved Social Skills:** Proper interactions created by inclusiveness involving a diverse group of students encourages positive social skills, communication, and the ability to adapt to different social situations.
3. **Increased Self-Esteem and Confidence:** Students with disabilities in a regular class feel valued and accepted. Therefore, it helps to boost their self-esteem and confidence.

4.Preparation for the Real World: Inclusive education prepares students for a diverse and inclusive society that is the reality of the real world.

5.Professional Development of Teachers and Educators: This occurs as inclusive teachers are requiring to develop new skills and strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students.

6.Increased Collaboration: Team work and collaboration are encouraged among teachers in inclusive classrooms thereby encouraging collaboration among teachers for positive academic achievement in students.

7.It helps to promote Critical Thinking: Interacting with diverse peers' challenges students to think critically, question assumptions, and develop empathy.

8.Improving Problem-Solving: Diverse teams are more likely to be more innovative and effective in problem solving.

9.It helps to strengthen social cohesion: It helps to contribute to a more cohesive and harmonious society by promoting understanding, acceptance and unity among the diverse groups represented in the classroom.

Creating a Positive School Culture: Schools that have as their priority, diversity and inclusion tend to have more positive and inclusive school cultures that are beneficial to students, staff, and the community at large.

2.4. Challenges in Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education

Several challenges hinder the effective preparation of teachers for inclusive education in Nigeria. Large class sizes limit the feasibility of interactive teaching methods, leading to a reliance on lectures. Inadequate instructional materials and resources further impede the implementation of diverse teaching strategies. Moreover, many teacher educators lack specialized training in inclusive education, which affects their ability to model and impart inclusive teaching practices (Omode & Momoh 2016).

The major challenges identified include but not limited to each of the following:

Despite the global support for inclusive education as a modern teaching method, the implementation faces a lot of difficulties and challenges that make the achievement of the lofty objectives very hard to achieve. Among these are:

1.Attitudinal Barriers and appropriate curriculum: Majority of educators believe that special needs children need to be educated in isolated schools instead of joining traditional learning. This thinking and believe block the opportunities to include all students in learning. Moreover, most school curriculum remain fixed and so, fail to serve different types of students at the same time.

2.Attitude of Regular Teachers: Most regular teachers' mindset determine how well inclusive education will work. When teachers are apprehensive about teaching special needs students as they often overlook them, or inadequately help them, causing great problem for proper inclusive education.

3.Developing Inclusive Classrooms: This is a problem as building inclusive classrooms require more than placing students in different needs into standard education settings. All of them need to experience and live in a supportive environment that shows them acceptance and appreciation.

4.Inadequate Teacher Training: A sizeable number of teachers receive insufficient training before they start teaching diverse student groups. This training gap makes it hard for them to solve common inclusive challenges like behavioural management and accessibility adaptation.

5. Insufficient Resources: Shortage of necessary funds and resources especially for schools with low income blocks the way to effective inclusive education. Students with disabilities need extra resources to learn, which most schools cannot find easy to provide.

6. Social Stigma and Bullying: Most society's negative views about disabilities negatively affects inclusive education from working well.

6. Buildings and Related Infrastructure: Many schools today still need to build facilities that will help students with disabilities have good access to education.

7. Community Engagement: The best educational environment is found when all parents, local groups and community leaders unite with schools. But when the community do not effectively participate in inclusive education, it is bound to fail woefully.

8. Enrolment of Disable Students: Many parents avoid signing up their children to inclusive education as they often think that such schools will not give sufficient help or protect their children from bullying or fulfil their children's requirements.

9. Lack of Collaboration among Staff: For a successful inclusive education, all school personnel must work together. But when school staff resist inclusive efforts, teachers with special needs students may feel unsupported in their work.

10. Lack of Require Inclusive Teaching Methods: Teachers need to use different interactive methods tools to help all students thrive in their classrooms. Therefore, effective inclusive education suffers because teachers need more knowledge and instruction on how to teach all students.

These challenges highlight the need for a comprehensive review and enhancement of curriculum delivery methods in Nigerian teacher education institutions.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of curriculum delivery methods in Nigerian teacher education institutions. The quantitative component involved the administration of structured questionnaires, while the qualitative aspect comprised semi-structured interviews. This triangulation of methods enhanced the validity and reliability of the findings.

The target population included pre-service teachers and teacher educators from six public teacher education institutions across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure representation from each institution. The final sample consisted of 420 participants, comprising 360 pre-service teachers and 60 teacher educators.

Two primary instruments were used for data collection:

- **Curriculum Delivery Evaluation Questionnaire (CDEQ):** This structured questionnaire assessed participants' perceptions of the curriculum delivery methods employed in their institutions and their effectiveness in preparing teachers for inclusive education.
- **Interview Guide:** The semi-structured interview guide facilitated in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and insights regarding curriculum delivery methods and the challenges encountered in implementing inclusive education.

Quantitative data from the CDEQ were analysed using descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, to summarize the central tendencies of responses. Inferential statistics,

such as independent samples t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were employed to examine differences in perceptions based on demographic variables. Qualitative data from interviews were subjected to thematic analysis, involving the identification and interpretation of recurring themes and patterns related to curriculum delivery methods and challenges in preparing teachers for inclusive education.

4. Results and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study involved 420 respondents, with 360 pre-service teachers and 60 teacher educators. The gender distribution among pre-service teachers was 52% female and 48% male, while among teacher educators, 60% were male and 40% female. Most pre-service teachers were in their final year, indicating imminent entry into the teaching profession. Teacher educators had a minimum of five years of teaching experience, suggesting a seasoned perspective on curriculum delivery methods.

Curriculum Delivery Methods Used in Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education

Table 4.1.1a: Distribution of the respondents according to Institution

Institution	Frequency	Percentage %
PRESERVICE TEACHERS		
Federal University Otuoke (FUO)	135	37.5
Niger Delta University (NDU)	125	34.7
University of Ibadan (UI)	100	27.8
Total	360	100.0

Table 4.1.1b: Distribution of the respondents according to Institution

Institution	Frequency	Percentage %
TEACHER EDUCATORS		
Federal University Otuoke (FUO)	22	36.7
Niger Delta University (NDU)	20	33.3
University of Ibadan (UI)	18	30.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 4.1.1a & b; show the distribution of the respondents according to their institution. It revealed that 135 (37.5%) preservice teachers were drawn from Federal University Otuoke (FUO), while 125 (34.7 %) were from Niger Delta University (NDU) and only 100 (27.8%) were from the University of Ibadan (UI). On teacher educators, 22 (36.7%) were drawn from Federal University Otuoke (FUO), 20 (33.3%) FROM Niger Delta University (NDU) and 18 (30.0%) from the university of Ibadan.

Table 4.1.2: Distribution of the respondents according to gender

Table 4.1.2a: Distribution of the respondents according to Gender

	Frequency	Percentage %
Preservice Teachers		
Male	173	48.0
Female	187	52.0
Total	360	100.0

Table 4.1.2b: Distribution of the respondents according to Gender

	Frequency	Percentage %
TEACHER EDUCATORS		
Male	36	60.0
Female	24	40.0
Total	60	100.0

Table 4.1.2 a & b: shows that the female respondents were the major respondents, with a frequency of 187 (52.0%), and the male respondents were 173(48.0%). which Means that there were more female respondents than the male. But there were male majority of teacher educators with 36 (60.0%) male and 24 (40.0%) female respondents respectively.

4.2. Curriculum Delivery Methods Used in Preparing Teachers for Inclusive Education

	Teaching Methods	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
1	Lecture Method	280 (77.8%)	60 (16.1%)	15 (4.2%)	5 (1.4%)	3.72
2	Group Discussion	180 (50.0%)	55 (15.2%)	80 (22.2%)	45 (12.5%)	3.04
3	Case Studies	140 (38.9%)	110 (30.5%)	50 (13.9%)	70 (19.4%)	2.91
4	Practicum/Practice Teaching	100 (27.8%)	120 (33.3%)	50 (13.9%)	140 (38.9%)	2.76
5	Role Play	120 (33.3%)	80 (22.2%)	50 (13.9%)	110 (30.5%)	2.45
6.	Simulation	100 (27.7%)	60 (16.7%)	80 (22.2%)	120 (33.3%)	2.30
	Weighted Mean	2.86		Threshold	2.50	

Analysis of the CDEQ responses revealed that the lecture method was the most commonly employed instructional strategy (Mean = 3.72). Group discussions (Mean = 3.04) and case studies (Mean = 2.91) were occasionally utilized, while practicum/teaching practice (Mean =

2.76), role-playing (Mean = 2.45) and simulation exercises (Mean = 2.30) were the least used instructional strategies. This pattern indicates a strong reliance on traditional, teacher-centered methods, with limited use of interactive and practical approaches essential for preparing teachers to handle diverse classroom situations effectively.

Qualitative findings from interviews corroborated these results. Many pre-service teachers expressed concerns that their learning experiences were mostly theoretical, lacking real-life classroom exposure. One respondent noted, "We are often taught about inclusive education in theory, but we rarely have the opportunity to practice or interact with learners who have special needs."

Teacher educators, on the other hand, admitted to the overuse of lecture methods, citing factors such as large class sizes, inadequate facilities, and time constraints as reasons for not adopting more interactive teaching strategies.

4.3. Challenges in the Delivery of Curriculum for Inclusive Education

The study identified several systemic and institutional challenges affecting the delivery of the teacher education curriculum for inclusive education. These challenges were highlighted in both quantitative and qualitative data.

The major challenges identified include:

1. **Large Class Sizes:** Most institutions had student populations far exceeding the optimal teacher-student ratio, making it difficult to adopt participatory and practical teaching methods.
2. **Inadequate Instructional Materials:** Respondents reported the lack of relevant teaching aids, assistive devices, and inclusive education resource materials
3. **Lack of Specialized Training:** Many teacher educators lacked formal training in inclusive education, limiting their ability to effectively model inclusive teaching strategies.
4. **Limited Practicum Opportunities:** Pre-service teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the brevity and quality of teaching practice placements, especially in inclusive settings.
5. **Time Constraints:** The structure of the curriculum and academic calendar often left little time for practical sessions and in-depth discussions on inclusive education.

These challenges are consistent with findings from previous studies (Eke, 2017; Obi & Obumneke, 2020) that highlighted systemic barriers to the effective implementation of inclusive education in Nigeria.

4.4. Effectiveness of Curriculum Delivery Methods

Overall, the study found that while the curriculum content on inclusive education is available in Nigerian teacher education programs, the methods used to deliver this content are insufficient to equip pre-service teachers with the necessary skills and competencies. The predominance of lecture-based teaching results in superficial understanding without the experiential learning needed to handle diverse learners in inclusive classrooms.

Teacher educators agreed that the current curriculum delivery methods did not adequately prepare pre-service teachers for the realities of inclusive teaching. Pre-service teachers reported feeling unprepared and lacking confidence to manage classrooms with learners who have special needs.

These findings are in line with Forlin (2010), who emphasized that effective preparation for inclusive education requires interactive, reflective, and practicum-based learning approaches that go beyond the transmission of theoretical knowledge.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study has provided empirical evidence on the inadequacies of curriculum delivery methods used in preparing teachers for inclusive education in Nigeria. While there is a general awareness of inclusive education concepts among pre-service teachers and teacher educators, the study revealed that delivery methods remain largely theoretical, limiting the acquisition of practical skills and positive attitudes toward inclusive practices.

The challenges identified—large class sizes, insufficient instructional materials, lack of specialized training, and inadequate practicum opportunities—pose significant barriers to effective curriculum delivery. Unless these challenges are addressed, the goals of inclusive education in Nigeria will remain largely unattainable.

Recommendations

In light of the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Diversification of Teaching Methods:** Teacher education institutions should diversify their instructional strategies by incorporating more interactive and learner-centred approaches such as group work, case studies, simulation exercises, and project-based learning to encourage engagement and practical skill development.
2. **Enhanced Practicum Experiences:** Pre-service teachers should be given ample opportunities to undertake teaching practice in inclusive classroom settings. Institutions should collaborate with inclusive schools to facilitate extended and meaningful practicum experiences.
3. **Capacity Building for Teacher Educators:** Regular professional development programs should be organized for teacher educators to update their knowledge and teaching skills in inclusive education.
4. **Reduction of Class Sizes:** Efforts should be made to reduce student-teacher ratios in teacher education institutions to create conducive environments for participatory learning.
5. **Provision of Resources:** Government and institutional management should invest in the provision of relevant instructional materials, assistive technology, and teaching aids that support inclusive education.
6. **Curriculum Review:** The teacher education curriculum should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it aligns with best practices in inclusive education and that adequate emphasis is placed on practical training.
7. **Policy Implementation:** Stakeholders at all levels of education should ensure effective implementation of policies related to inclusive education, with a clear focus on teacher preparation.
8. **Further Research:** More studies should be conducted to explore innovative curriculum delivery models that can improve the preparedness of teachers for inclusive education across different contexts in Nigeria.

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