



Language: A way to Effective Communication for The Inclusive Learning, Through Curriculum Development

Osuigwe Damian Chukwuebuka

Imo State University Owerri, Department of Philosophy

Email: robertdamianfrank@gmail.com

Abstract

Inclusive learning is at the core of equitable education, ensuring that all students regardless of physical sensory or cognitive challenges can access quality education. Sign language has emerged as a vital tool for fostering communication among learners with and without hearing impairments and their peers, educator and the broader school communities. Learner and children with hearing impairment always feel less of themselves because of their inability to communicate with other learners without hearing impairment therefore bridging effective communication among themselves. Implementing Sign language in all level of school, will encourages effective communication among people with or without hearing impairment. This paper explored the integration of sign language into educational curricula as a transformative approach to fostering inclusive learning environment. It also examined the significance of sign language in society, it's challenges and recommendations for integrating sign language into curricula to achieve meaningful inclusivity.

Keywords: Sign language, inclusive education, Curriculum development, Accessibility, Communication and Equity.

Introduction

Inclusive education is an approach to teaching and learning that ensures all students, regardless of their physical, sensory, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic, or other differences, are welcomed and supported to learn together in the same classrooms and schools. United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO 2008) describes inclusive education as a continuous effort to ensure equal access to quality learning for every student. It emphasizes valuing diversity, addressing individual differences in ability and background, and creating environments where discrimination is eliminated and all learners are supported. Inclusive education is a fundamental right that promotes equity and access for all learners, regardless of physical sensory or cognitive challenges. However, students with hearing impairment often face significant barrier to education due to communication challenges. Sign language has emerged as a vital tool for fostering communication among learners with hearing impairment and their peers. Sign language, as a natural and visual mode of communication, plays a central role in bridging those gaps. However, it's integration into mainstream curricula remain limited in many regions. There is a need to integrate into it in education curriculum in other to serve as means for effective communication among people with or without hearing impairment.

Curriculum development is seen as a planned, progressive, purposeful and systemic

process in order to make positive improvement in the education system. For scholar like Swaminatha (2015), views curriculum development as a structured educational plan designed to provide courses and programs that prepare individuals with updated skills to meet the changing needs of society. The need for curriculum development are for both education and societal purposes. Introducing sign language as subjects or into a curricula will not only be use in educational environments but also will be use in society for communication among everyone. This paper explored the potential of curriculum development to enhance the adoption of sign language for inclusive learning, fostering academic, social and emotional growth for all.

Inclusive learning

Inclusive education seeks to provide equal learning opportunities for all learners, including those with disabilities. According to David Mitchel (2009), inclusive education can be understood as an education system that adapts to the learner. Rather than expecting students to adjust to rigid systems, schools and classrooms should be designed to accommodate the variety of learners present in every society. Inclusive education is education for all regardless of any physical sensory or cognitive challenges. It was recently that inclusive education was mainly target on people with special educational needed-arising from learning behaviors and difficulties. According to

UNESCO conference (2008) acknowledge that inclusive education is an ongoing process aimed to offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different need and abilities, characteristics and learning expectation of the student and communities eliminating all form of discrimination. In inclusive learning all learners will gain academically, socially and will improve their self-esteem. Most children with learnings difficulties find it hard, to interact with other church therefore inclusive education will not only benefit learners with special education needs but also provide positive outcome for other learners in communicating among themselves. Inclusive education should be fundamental right, not just for people with physical sensory or cognitive challenges but for all individuals in the society. One critical aspect of inclusivity is ensuring that communication barriers are removed particularly for learners with hearing impairment.

Sign language

Sign language is a natural human language. It involves the systemic use of body part and space in other to communicate or pass information. Scholars like Plaza-Pust (2009) argues that sign language is a fully natural human language expressed and understood visually through gestures. While it relies on a different sensory and expressive channel than spoken language, both forms of communication share core features linked to how the human mind organizes language. The spoken language which makes use of auditory processing and vocal production while sign language involves visual gestures and their articulation involve the systematic use of body part and space. Many parts of the body are involved as articulator sign language such as the head, the hand, the face and upper part of the body.

The Role of the Sign Language in Inclusive learning

Sign language, a visual and linguistic system has proven to be indispensable tool for addressing the problem of inclusive learning especially learners with hearing impairment. The following are role of sign language in inclusive learning.

1. Sign language enhances communication among students with hearing to express themselves.
2. Sign language helps the hearing impairment learners to understand lesson and interact with peers and teacher.
3. Sign language bring collaboration between learners with or without hearing impairment.
4. It fosters mutual respect, empathy and social integration among individual in the society.

5. Sign language reduces feeling of isolation among hearing impairment learner.
6. It helps to improves cognitive abilities, including memory, spatial reasoning, literacy, problems solving and comprehension.
7. It serves as a foundation for accessing context in other language and subjects.

Curriculum Development

The Latin origin of curriculum is “Currus” which means “course” and through 19th century the word curriculum had come to be use in reference to education. According to Nakpodia (2009), the term curriculum mean an organized instruction. Mostly curriculum planning and development are often used interchangeably by writers and educationist, where they have written different view of understanding on curriculum development or planning. Nakpodia (2010) defines curriculum development as the process of designing and producing learning materials that emerge from curriculum planning and are intended for student use. According to Onwuka (1981), curriculum development involves introducing new content and teaching approaches to guarantee that meaningful learning outcomes are achieved. The aim of curriculum development is to introduce a new understandable pattern or reintroduces new subjects which is consider to be relevant in educational system and impactful to the society. The curriculum development should reflect the needs, goals, culture, aspirations, values, political and economic life in the society. Many scholars believe that curriculum development is oriented for child centered, society centered and knowledge centered. Curriculum development is not only beneficial to education system but play a vital role on the societal value. Societal economic life system is an important factor influencing curriculum planning and development.

Curriculum Development for Sign Language Integration

Policy and framework design

Recognizing sign language and also prioritize its inclusion in education system therefore government and educational institutions should mandate the inclusion of sign language in national education policies. Sign language should be included in the curriculum for teachers training and professional development. Legal framework should mandate the teaching of sign language in school to ensure accessibility for hearing impaired learners

Teacher training and professional development

Teacher training program must include modules on sign language proficiency and inclusive

teaching strategies. With the modules, there will be effective instructions and communication. Continuous professional development should be provided to equip educators with skills to meet diverse classroom needs.

Curriculum Adaptation and Resource

Develop bilingual and bicultural curricula that integrate sign language with written and spoken language instructions. Create accessible teaching materials including sign language dictionaries, videos, apps to support instructions. Collaborate with deaf communities and organizations to create culturally relevant resources.

Designing flexible curricula

Curricula should include sign language as a subject for all learners to promote inclusivity and awareness. Introducing sign language as subjects or courses in all levels of education will help students with and without hearing impairment. Therefore, sign language lessons will promote commonwealth and inclusivity.

Challenges to Sign Language Integration in Inclusive Learning

Integrating sign language into curricula faces several challenges. These challenges have made it so difficult to achieve sign language in the education system and society. Therefore, limiting effective communication on learners with or without hearing impairment. Mitchell (2009) identifies several obstacles to implementing inclusive education. These include economic constraints, weak systems for enforcing policies, resistance from teachers and teacher educators, limited parental support, insufficient teacher skills, and rigid curricula with exam-driven approaches. Additional barriers involve fragile democratic structures, poor educational infrastructure, challenges in rural and remote areas, large class sizes, and reliance on the medical model of disability. All these factors mentioned above are challenges facing the integration of sign language in inclusive education environments or societies. Even many schools lack the financial and human resources to implement a sign language program. Limited availability of trained sign language educators and teaching materials.

Recommendations

To achieve a possible integration of sign language into the curriculum that will be both beneficial to education and society, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Advocate for sign language inclusion in education policies at national and local levels.
2. Invest in teacher training programs to build capacity for sign language integration.
3. There should be partnerships with NGOs, deaf associations, and international organizations to develop and implement sign language programs.
4. Engage parents, students, and the deaf community in the planning and implementation of sign language programs.
5. Conduct regular monitoring and evaluation of inclusive education programs to identify areas for improvement.

Conclusion

Integrating sign language into the curriculum is a powerful step towards achieving truly inclusive education. Sign language is more than a communication tool; it is a gateway to inclusive education and equitable learning opportunities. It not only supports learners with hearing impairment but also enriches the learning experience for all students by promoting empathy, cultural awareness, and social cohesion. This requires collaborative effort among educators, policy makers, and communities to overcome challenges and implement sustainable solutions. A commitment to inclusive education through curriculum development will ensure that no child is left behind, fostering a future of shared understanding and mutual respect.

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