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## Challenges of Accessing and Utilizing Instructional Materials by Primary School Teachers in Ikwuano Local Government Area, Abia State, Nigeria

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**Abstract:** *The study investigated challenges to accessibility and utilization of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process. The study area was Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the selection of the sample sizes of 300 pupils and 120 teachers. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using mean and simple percentage. The findings were that the disposition of the teachers affects the accessibility and utilization of instructional materials, children who were taught with instructional materials performed better than those who were not. The challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of instructional materials include poor power supply, high cost of instructional materials, insufficient lesson duration, late hour of school dismissal, etc. The study recommended, among others, that private organizations should partner in the provision of some vital instructional materials that are cost intensive; and school time table should be planned to suit the inclusion of the use of instructional materials during lessons.*

**Key Words:** *instructional materials, accessibility, utilization, challenges*

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### Introduction

Learning is a gradual process and presenting any learning concept to learners must be done to appeal to students of varied interests and abilities by moving from the known to the unknown and encouraging active class participation. The National Teachers Institute Manual (2006) stated that learning involves the acquisition of new knowledge, ideas, skills, values and experiences which enable the individual to modify and or alter his actions. The teacher cannot be said to have achieved the instructional objectives until the desired change in the pupils' behaviour is effected through certain teacher-behaviours. One crucial way the teacher follows is the use of instructional materials. Isola (2010) defines instructional materials as objects or devices that assist teachers to present their lessons logically and sequentially to the learners. This definition is in tandem with Abiodun-Oyebanji and Adu(2007) who add that instructional materials are all things that are used to support, facilitate, influence or encourage acquisition of knowledge, competency and skills. According to Abdu-Raheem (2016) instructional materials are essential and significant tools needed for teaching and learning of school subjects to promote teachers' efficiency and improve students' performance. It may be deduced from these definitions that instructional materials are those things that a teacher uses in the course of teaching/learning to make learning simple, easy to understand, aid retention and recall whenever it is necessary.

Instructional materials can be categorized into three based on sensory appeal, namely: audio, visual, and audio-visual instructional materials. Audio instructional materials are those that appeal to the auditory senses such as radio, audio tapes, VCDs, DVDs and other high definition electronic devices. Visual instructional materials appeal to the sense of sight and they come in the form of pictures, prints, real objects (models), to mention but a few. Audio-visuals appeal to both the auditory and visual senses of the learner and stimulate interest to learn. Such materials take the form of films, television, audio-visual tapes and CDs. ICT has delivered several packages that can aid teaching and learning to achieve desirable learning objectives. These packages are found in mobile devices like smart phones, personal computers, internet facilities and the likes. ICTs provide a lot of learning experiences to learners with varied interest and capabilities. Pictorial illustrations are valuable assets. Projected visuals are able to convey information and specific experiences that are needed for the development of workable concepts. Films can modify motivations, interest, attitude and opinions. Realia (real objects) or three-dimensional models can be effective in teaching/learning as the learner learns a great deal by examining and manipulating a model.

Eniyewu (2005) asserts that it is very important to use instructional aids for instructional delivery to make students acquire more knowledge and to promote academic standard. Akinleye (2010) stated that effective teaching and learning requires a teacher to teach the students with instructional materials and use practical activities to make learning more vivid, logical, realistic and pragmatic. The efficacy of instructional materials has been supported by some empirical evidence. Iji, Ogbole and Uka (2014) used improvised instructional materials to ascertain students' geometry achievement at the upper basic education one at Makurdi metropolis. The study found that students taught with improvised instructional materials improved on their geometry achievement. In a more recent study, Akpan and Okoli (2017) found a significant difference in the mean achievement scores of pupils taught English, Mathematics and Social Studies using instructional materials and those pupils who were taught the same subjects without instructional materials. In all the three core subjects, pupils taught with instructional materials significantly performed better.

Instructional Materials allow pupils to have relatively uniform attention and opportunities to practice and acquire skills. They make teaching experiences flexible and rich enough to meet individual pupils learning styles. Olumiran, Ajidagba and Jakeyinfra (2010) noted that instructional materials have direct contact with the sense organs. Pupils are able to use a combination of sense (smell, hearing, touch, taste and sight) for easier and better acquisition of concepts and facts they are being taught. Instructional materials enable pupils to see as a whole certain relationships that are difficult to conceptualize in parts. For instance, pupils learn to identify and differentiate the shapes more accurately when they see the real objects. It allows them to compare and contrast the shapes and make a mental note of their similarities and differences. Omojuwa, (2000) noted that by the means of instructional resources, pupils could learn about things too dangerous, too small or not just expedient to bring to the classroom e.g. a lion or a waterfall or a mountain. Any of these can be effectively taught to the pupils in the classroom by the use of appropriate instructional materials.

Onuekwusi (2005) accounts for what audio-visual materials can do as follow: They heighten motivation for learning because of their concreteness, foster continuity of thought when words are coupled with explanations in pictures and sounds, provide freshness and variety, appeal to students of varied interests and abilities. Others include; encouragements of active

participation, give need reinforcement, widen the range of students' experience, assure order and continuity of thought and improve the effectiveness of other materials. Instructional materials are vital to teaching and learning because they generate interest which in turn triggers learning and promotes technology transfer. Ibe-Bassey (1988) confirms that when in the classroom a teacher presents a stimulus, he consciously intends to evoke a positive behaviour, if he uses a model the students will learn. Ibitoye (2001) believes that the improvisation of instructional materials will certainly lead to the utilization of such materials. This implies that accessibility of instructional materials will lead to its utilization. Utilization of materials aids the achievement of the stated objectives which in turn gives the teacher a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment. It is therefore expected that the teacher does all that is within his reach to enrich the instructional environment as it concerns the utilization of instructional materials. This calls for commitment on the part of teachers. He has to improvise where and when there is none available.

In schools across Nigeria, dearth of instructional materials has remained a perennial problem of effective teaching and learning. There is the problem of lack of accessibility and utilization of instructional materials across all levels of the educational system. Ahmed (2003) affirms that in most secondary schools in Nigeria, teaching and learning take place under a most uncondusive environment without access to essential materials. This is why teachers are often encouraged to improvise instructional materials to make up for the gap and utilize same for instructional purposes. Ibitoye (2001) expressed that no matter how generous and rich the educational authorities might be they are generally not always in a position to provide their schools with all they need. Therefore schools and teachers should make instructional materials accessible by improvising them. The challenges faced by primary school teachers in accessing and utilizing instructional materials therefore are the thrust of this study.

### **Statement of Problem**

The need for accessibility and utilization of instructional materials cannot be over emphasized. It is the life wire of the instructional process and has worthwhile outcomes. As good and necessary as instructional materials are, Enaigbe (2009) observed that basic instructional materials such as text books, chalkboard, and essential equipment like computer, projector, television and video are not readily available in schools. Abdu-Raheem (2011) in his submission attributes the ineffectiveness of the school system and poor performance of students in schools to the non-availability and inadequacy of instructional materials. The teacher is expected to improvise as an alternative to bridge the gap. But, from observation, it appears that teachers face problems of accessing and utilizing instructional materials for teaching; and this is a serious issue that needs addressing. The problem of the study put in question form, therefore is: what challenges face teachers in accessing and utilizing of instructional materials?

### **Objectives of the study**

The broad objective of the study was to investigate the challenges of accessing and utilizing instructional materials by primary school teachers in Ikwuano Local Government Area, Abia State. The following specific objectives are stated to address the problem:

- to determine the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents;
- to ascertain teachers' level of accessibility to instructional materials;
- to determine teachers' level of utilization of instructional materials in the teaching process;

- to determine the challenges of accessing and utilizing of instructional materials faced by the teachers.

### Method

The study area was Ikwuano Local Government Area of Abia State, Nigeria. Ikwuano is located approximately 50 25' 60'' degrees North of the equator and about 70 34' 0'' degrees east of the Greenwich meridian. It is bordered by Olokoro and Ibeku communities in the north and north-west, and by Bende in the East, Nkaku in the south-east; Obot Akara in the South and Ohuhu-Nsulu in the south and south-west (Osondu-Iheanyichukwu,2012).There are 57 primary schools in the area.Sample size was 120. Simple random sampling procedure was used in the selection of the sample size. Ten (10) Primary schools were randomly selected and 2 teachers were selected from each of the six class streams thus bringing the sample size to 120(2 × 10 × 6 = 120).

To determine the socio- economic characteristics of the teachers, the responses of the respondents were analysed using simple percentage. To ascertain the accessibility of instructional materials to teachers, a questionnaire bearing a list of 15 instructional materials grouped into three categories of visual materials, audio and audio-visual materials was administered on teachers of the sampled schools. Total frequency for each item was divided by the total number of responding teachers (120) to get the mean (X) and then the sum of the frequencies for each subgroup was divided by the total number of respondents (120) to get the mean for each subgroup. .To determine the level of utilization of instructional materials in the teaching process, a 19-item questionnaire was used to capture objective 3. The options were of 3-scale type of high, medium and low. The data collected were analysed using simple percentage. A dichotomously scored questionnaire was used to elicit response to capture the challenges faced by teachers in the utilization of instructional materials and the data collected were analysed using simple percentage.

### Results and Discussion

Table 1: Socio-Economic characteristics of teachers

Age	Sex		Marital status		Income(N'000)		Household size		Cosmopolitanism								
	F	%	F	%	f	%	F	%	F	%							
25-30	35	29.2	Male	24	20	Ever-married	93	77.5	40-60	18	15	2-4	35	29.2	1-2	35	29.2
35-40	48	40	female	96	80	Single	27	22.5	80-100	34	28.3	6-8	70	58.3	3-4	56	46.7
45-50	32	67	-	-	-	-	-	-	160-180	18	15	10-12	15	12.5	5-6	25	20.8
55-60	5	4.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	200-220	15	12.5	-	-	-	7-8	4	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1 shows that more than 69% of the teachers in the primary schools were within the child bearing age (25 – 40). 78% were ever married and 80% among them are female. Those with income above N100, 000 (one hundred thousand naira) accounts for 58%, while 71% of the teachers had a house hold size of 6 – 12 members. The level of outside orientation was equally very low as only 21% of the

primary school teachers travelled out of their locality to other cities around them for more than 5 times. This implies that family demands, societal expectations and level of exposure can take a toll on the teachers and are likely to prevent improvisation and utilisation of essential learning materials

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Accessibility to Instructional Materials**

Accessible	Visual materials audio		Audio materials			Audio-visual materials		
	frequency	mean	frequency	Mean	Frequency			
	wall chart	82	0.68	Radio sets	32	0.26	Television	36
	Shape board	42	0.36	Radio-cassette player	38	0.32	VCD/DVD player	32
	Pictures	82	0.68	Cassettes/Tapes/ Discs	30	0.25	Projector	4
	Models	56	0.46	–	–	–	Computers	44
	Maps	44	0.25	–	–	–	Satellite receiver	0
	Graphs	30	0.25	–	–	–	Electronic board	0
	Total	338	2.82	–	100	0.83	–	116
Not-Accessible	wall chart	40	0.33	Radio sets	88	0.73	Television	84
	Shape board	76	0.63	Radio-cassette player	82	0.68	VCD/DVD player	88
	Pictures	38	0.32	Cassettes/Tapes/Discs	90	0.75	Projector	116
	Models	64	0.53	–	–	–	Computers	76
	Maps	76	0.63	–	–	–	Satellite receiver	120
	Graphs	90	0.75	–	–	–	Electronic	120

<b>Total</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>board</b>	<b>604</b>
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Table 2 shows distribution by accessibility of instructional materials in primary schools of the study area. The result indicates that a total mean of 2.82 of visual materials were accessible to the primary school teachers, 0.83 for audio and a mean of 0.96 for audio-visual materials. Instructional materials not accessible had a higher mean of 3.2 for visual materials, 2.16 for audio materials, and 5.03 for audio-visual materials. This means that instructional materials were not there for use by the teacher. Enaigbe (2009) had rightly observed that basic materials and essential equipment like computer, projector, television and video are not readily available in schools. The result confirms the submission of Ahmed (2003) that in most schools in Nigeria, teaching and learning take place under a most uncondusive environment without access to essential materials.

**Table 3: Level of utilization of Instructional Materials by Primary school teachers**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
High	21	17.5
Medium	48	40
Low	51	42.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the Level of utilization of Instructional Materials by Primary school teachers in the area of study. The result indicates that teachers in the primary schools indicated a 42.5% level of low utilization of instructional material as against 17.5% indication for high utilization. There is therefore, a low level of utilization of instructional material among the teachers. Pointers from Table 1 of the study highlight the socio-economic characteristics of the teachers as contributory factors to the result on the above table. The study showed that the majority of the teachers are men and women within the child bearing age, with the female folk having the higher population. With fairly large families the tendency to be distracted by other family demands that require attention cannot be overlooked and a seemingly inadequate and irregular salary can be less motivating. Again, The low level of outside orientation of the teachers (table 1.1) inhibits utilization of instructional materials because knowledge and experience increases as one explores his environment. Modern trends in educational technology, the use of the internet to source information and the use of the cell phone for instructional purposes require some level of cosmopolitanism.

**Table 4: Distribution based on the challenges faced by teachers in the utilization of instructional materials**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
1. Poor power supply	110	91.6
2. High cost of IM	102	85
3. Inadequate and irregular salary	88	73.3

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4.	Lack of skill to improvise	82	68.3
5.	Insufficient lesson duration	74	61.6
6.	Late hour of school dismissal	74	61.6
7.	Lack of skill to utilize sophisticated IM	68	56.6
8.	Inaccessibility	69	57.5
9.	Social activities	63	52.5

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Table 4 shows a list of some of the challenges experienced by teachers in the bid to access and utilize instructional materials for their lessons. Poor power supply tops the list with about 91.6%, modern instructional gadgets are yet to be accessed in schools in the rural areas as a result of this factor. High cost of instructional materials had 85%, indeed some of them are too expensive for individual possession and sometimes even schools may not be able to possess them, but the authorities in charge have it as a responsibility to make these materials and gadgets available to schools. 73.3% saw adequate and irregular salary as a challenge. It will not be an over statement to say that if teachers are paid as and when due, it will go a long way to motivate them, give job satisfaction, encourage them to improvise, access and utilise materials needed for teaching. Lack of skill to improvisation had 68.3%, teachers need this skill because there are a lot of resources around our localities that could be accessed for the benefit of classroom instruction. Insufficient time to bring in some instructional materials during lesson delivery was seen as a set back to the tune of 61.6%, a lesson on climatic change would require a video to make the lesson vivid. The teacher could use his initiative to regulate the film or make out an extra time to get this done. It has become a norm today to keep children at school until their parents close from work and while they wait it is expected that their teachers wait with them and also give extra lessons. This keeps the teachers in school almost the whole day thereby not giving them enough time to source for instructional materials for the next day's lesson. 61.6% had late hours of school dismissal as a challenge. Lack of skill to utilize sophisticated instructional materials like web based materials, electronic boards etc posed a challenge to about 56.6% of the respondents, this again can be attributed to their socio-economic status(table 1.1) which indicated poor outside orientation which was induced by large family size and expectations. Exposure adds to experience and experience to knowledge. Inaccessibility or inability to have access to needed instructional materials had 57.5% and social activities had 52.5% respectively as challenges. In the rural areas there are very strong extended family ties and communal activities that are time consuming, the time for accessing instructional materials should not be mortgaged for any of these. The success of the instructional process has a lot to do with the teachers' accessibility and utilization of instructional materials.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the socio-economic characteristics of the teachers in the study area affect their disposition in the accessibility and utilization of instructional materials. The teachers do not really access instructional materials adequately because they are not available in their schools. The level of utilization of instructional materials in the classroom by these teachers is low. There are several challenges facing the accessibility and utilization of instructional materials ranging from poor power supply to late hour of school dismissal and more. The learner is at the centre of every learning process and until he learns the teacher's work is not yet done. The teacher is therefore expected to do all within his/her reach to make the learner learn. This is

where the use of instructional materials comes in. Instructional materials make the teacher's work easy, strategic and result orienting. Sourcing, preparing and utilizing instructional material is a vital aspect in lesson preparation and presentation. This is the teacher's task and no task is without challenges.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings in this study the following recommendations were made:

1. Since the problem of power supply is a national epidemic, schools should seek the help of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO's) and other private bodies to assist in providing alternative power supply. This should also apply in acquiring instructional materials that are cost intensive.
2. Teachers should be adequately and regularly remunerated so that they will not be constrained to use the time that could be used in preparing for their lessons and the instructional materials, to look for supportive business ventures.
3. Teachers should be made to undergo seasonal trainings to acquaint themselves with the modern trends in instructional technology.
4. The teacher and those concerned should plan the time table to suit the inclusion of the use of instructional materials during lessons.
5. Class attendants or school nannies can help keep the children after school for their parents while the teachers go home to prepare materials for the next day's lesson.
6. The case of extra-mural lessons that keep the teachers and pupils in the school far beyond school hours should be looked into by the authorities concerned.
7. There should be an instructional material bank within the reach of the teacher so that he/she could easily access one at any point in time. This can be handled by the local, state or National Education Resource Centres.
8. Suffice it to say that with the increase in the enrolment figure in schools in recent times, there is the need to explore and expand the scope of instructional materials from chart, pictures etc to overhead projectors, slides and web-based instruction which will require satellite receiver, computer, electronic boards etc.

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