INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCES AND EDUCATION JOURNAL (ISSEJ)
ISSN: 3005-3463 (Online)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61424/issej.v4i2.806
Journal Homepage: https://bluemarkpublishers.com/index.php/ISSEJ

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Effects of Instructional Materials on Pupils' Participation, Literacy and Numeracy Development, and the Formation of Scientific and Reflective Thinking in Primary Schools

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: February 15th, 2026
Accepted: April 11th 2026
Published*:* April, 29th 2026
Volume: 4
Issue: 2
DOI: https://doi.org/10.61424/issej.v4i2.806

KEYWORDS

Pupils' participation, Reflective thinking, Literacy and numeracy development

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effects of instructional materials on pupils' participation, literacy and numeracy development, and the formation of scientific and reflective thinking in primary schools. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Primary data were collected from one hundred (100) public primary school teachers in Nkanu East Local Government Area of Enugu State using a 35-item structured questionnaire. The instrument was validated, and data were analyzed using mean scores, with a criterion mean of 2.50 for decision-making. Mean scores equal to or above 2.50 were regarded as acceptance of an item, while mean scores below 2.50 indicated rejection. Findings of the study revealed that the effective use of instructional materials significantly enhances pupils' active participation in classroom activities, facilitates the development of permanent literacy and numeracy skills, and contributes meaningfully to the development of scientific and reflective thinking among primary school pupils. The study further established that instructional materials improve the overall teaching-learning process at the primary school level. The study concluded that the consistent use of relevant instructional materials is indispensable for achieving the objectives of primary education. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government and providers of education at the primary school level should sponsor primary school teachers for periodic in-service training to improve the skills of the teachers at this level of education. The study also suggested further research on the availability and utilization of instructional materials in rural primary schools.

1. Introduction

The National Policy on Education (FRN-2004) defined primary education as education given to children in institutions between the ages of 6 and 11 plus.

According to Mkpa (2005) Primary education is the formal type of education to which children between 6 and about 12 years are exposed to the purpose of offering the basic general education. The objectives of primary education, according to the NPE (FRN-2004), are the following:

a. The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.

b. The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking
c. Citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
d. Character and moral training and the development of sound attitude
e. Development in the child's ability to adapt to his changing environment.
f. Giving the child the opportunity for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capacity.
g. Providing basic tools for further educational advancement including preparations for trades and crafts of the locality.

These objectives of primary education were carefully formulated in order to provide firm, sound, strong educational foundation for the child.

According to the NPE, in order to meaningfully realize those objectives, teaching in primary schools shall be by practical, exploratory, and experimental method. Practical knowledge seeks empirical verifications of educational claims. It is the type of knowledge that is in tune with the practical realities of the society. The emphasis on exploratory and experimental approaches to teaching at this level of education implies that the teaching –learning process should be activity based. In other words, the pupils should be co-opted into the teaching-learning process such that they can use their five senses to participate actively in the acquisition of knowledge.

According to Jeremiah, no any other level of education can be established or consolidated in isolation from primary education. Continuing, the author noted that the experience to which secondary school students are exposed to depends on the background at the primary school level.

According to Jeremiah, to a large extent, the quality of primary school programme determines the prospect of learners at the secondary and other levels. In the view of Joseph (2006), the commitment made at the primary level is likely to be carried over to the secondary level. The author cited this example to substantiate the importance of primary education: If at the primary level, ill formed teachers fail to impart the fundamentals of mathematics, English Language and Science to pupils, this will have a carryover effect on the performance of such pupils in such subjects at the secondary level. This submission justifies Jeremiah's (2004) observation that the difficulty student's encounter in the study of science and technology as well as in mathematics, is the direct fallout of their poor exposure to the rudiments of reading, writing, and Arithmetic at the primary school level.

In summary, Jeremiah (2007) described primary education as that mode of education which brings to the door step of the recipient the fundamental opportunities for the cultivation of political awareness, healthy physical and social adjustment, vocational skills and competence, good citizenship, sound attitude and all round development of the child.

In this study, the meaning of primary school as defined in the National Policy of Education is adopted here. It is the system of education given to children from 6 to 12 years old plus. The main objective of this study is to ascertain the effects of instructional materials in the teaching –learning process at this level of education.

2. Literature Review

Igwe (2007) sited the findings of the research study in River State to determine the availability of instructional materials at the public schools. The result of the survey carried out in 1033 public primary schools showed that the majority of the schools lacked basic school infrastructure and teaching materials. The study concluded that the unavailability of relevant instructional materials at the public primary schools severely undermines effective teaching and learning at that level.

Igwe (2007) also found out that part of the reason why private schools are flourishing in River state is the decay of infrastructure at the public primary schools, which are now provided by private school proprietors. Consequently,

these private schools lure parents to register their wards in those private primary schools. Most parents who can afford their tuition fees patronize them in order to secure the educational future of their children.

Educationists who have carried out studies on primary education have pointed out the critical role that the use of instructional materials plays in creating the enabling environment at the primary schools, which would facilitate the achievement of the primary education objective as written in the NPE 2004.

The objective is to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy. To achieve this objective, Obiefuna (2005) found out that Teaching and learning at the primary school level requires variety of instructional materials. According to him, the nature of the primary school pupils and their learning characteristics call for more effective and efficient utilization of the variety of resource materials.

Amadi and Obiefuna (2005) opined that the children at this level are said to be in the concrete operational stage of Piaget's cognitive development theory. At this stage, learning retention is facilitated by involving as many of the child's sense organs in the learning process. The findings of these authors revealed the efficiency of audio-visual instructional materials in the teaching-learning process at the primary school level.

In this study, instructional materials refer to those items that the teacher makes use of in the process of teaching in order to help the learner to understand what he or she is teaching.

Aguokogbo (200) used the term curriculum materials because of the pivotal role they play in the realization of curriculum objectives. Instructional materials or aids are means to an end. The end here refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, competence, values, attitudes, etc., by the learner. In other words, the teacher makes use of instructional materials (teaching/learning resources) to ensure that the goal of teaching, which is to help the learner acquire the relevant skills, knowledge, and competence needed to function productively and to adapt to a given environment are achieved meaningfully.

Ughamadu (2010) classified instructional or curriculum materials into printed material such as textbooks, journals, non- projected materials, for example chalkboard, flannel board, projector, etc. He also classified them as audio materials or aid example radio, audio tape, record player, visual materials or aids example picture charts, maps real, things, models, mock-ups, and audio visual materials or aids example instruction or educational television. Okafor (2001) listed most of the instructional materials or curriculum materials or aids to include the following:

a. Real objects and life situations
b. Specimen and models
c. Picture, charts, graphs
d. Puppets and mock-up
e. Maps and globes
f. Display boards, black boards, bulletin boards, flannel and magnetic boards, elastic graph board
g. Field trips
h. Dramatic expression: games, simulation and role playing
i. Exhibitions and experiments
j. Slides, film strips and transparences
k. Motion pictures and related project equipment
l. Tapes and tape recorders
m. Records and records players
n. Radio lessons
o. Television and video tape recordings
p. Programmed instructions and teaching machine
q. Learning kits or packages
r. Computer assisted instruction
s. Textbooks

Teachers make use of these materials or instructional aids at a point or the other in the course of their teaching to help the learners to understand or grasp the instructional contents. This means that instructional materials play pivotal role in the teaching/learning process. To further appreciate the pivotal role of instructional materials in the teaching/learning process, Ike (2004) classified them as follows:

1. Visual materials such as pictures, diagrams buildings, projectors etc. these materials appeal to the sense of sight only.
2. Audio materials: tape recording, cassette, cartridges, the radio disc, language laboratories. These materials appeal to the sense of hearing.
3. Audio –visual materials, this includes television, video recordings, motion pictures with sound, slides and filmstrips, projector with sound etc Materials in this category appeal to both the sense of hearing and sight.
4. Materials software, this includes graphic materials, printed materials, slides, filmstrips, overhead transparencies, tapes, motion pictures etc
5. Equipment hardware. Examples include black boards, tape recorders, projectors, video recording. Materials in this category are used in projecting materials.
6. Non projected media examples books and other printed materials, objects, specimen, models, mock-ups, graphic materials, bulletin boards and exhibits, simulation and games etc
7. True pictures, graphs, charts, diagram, posters, cartoons, slides, filmstrips. Explaining this category further, Ike (2004) also described them as non projected materials with characteristics of being flat and light and may either be in opaque or transparent form. They have length and breadth but no height. Hence they are two dimensional aids.
8. Three dimensional instructional aid: This include models, mock ups, objects, specimen, dioramas, laboratories, simulation and games. These are non-projected materials. Characteristically, they have length, breath, height. This is why they are referred to as three dimensional.

The analysis so far shows that instructional materials are an integral part of the teaching –learning process. It is doubtful if the curriculum objectives could be meaningfully achieved without the effective utilization of instructional materials.

Perhaps it is this pivotal role that instructional materials play towards the realization of educational or instructional objectives that educational technology emerged as a branch of education that trains people on how to produce manage and utilize teaching/learning resources (instructional materials) as instruments for the realization of curriculum or instructional objectives.

In summary, the concept instructional materials in this study is used interchangeably with teaching aids, teaching/learning resources, curriculum materials , instructional aids. These are materials which the teacher (instructor) makes use of to convey the curriculum or instructional content to the learner. In this study the researcher is seeking to find out if there is any correlation between the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process at the primary school level and thw raising of academic performance or achievement among primary school pupils.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and sampling technique

The sample size for this study is 100 teachers at the primary school level in Nkanu East local government area. The researcher got this sample size using the random sampling technique. Through this technique, the researcher initially resolved to select 5 primary school teachers from 25 public primary schools in Nkanu East LGA giving a total of 125 teachers. All the selected teachers were listed as respondents for this study. In selecting the sample size, the researcher ensured that they have homogenous characteristics. In other words, all the teachers are teaching at the primary school level in public primary schools in Nkanu East LGA. They were either male or female gender.

3.2 Research Design

The survey research design was used to execute this study. A survey research design is one in which a group of people or items is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people or items considered to be representative of the entire group. (Akuezilo, 2007). The researcher adopted this design because it is most appropriate for this study in view of its large population.

3.3 Population for the study

The population of this study is 350 teachers teaching at the public primary school level in Nkanu East Local Government Area. This comprised the male and female teachers. Teachers teaching in private schools were not part of this study group.

3.4 Instrument for data collection

The instrument used in collecting data for this study is the questionnaire. This is a structured questionnaire. It is formulated in line with the 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA)_4, Agree (A)_3, Disagree (D)_2, Strongly Disagree (SD)_1

This instrument was formulated by the researcher. It is made up of two sections, A and B. Section A is the letter of introduction requesting the respondent to help in filling the questionnaire form. Section B is the main questionnaire items. It is made up of 35 items for the research questions, five items for each research question. The respondents were requested to tick (√) on any of the statements that represent their opinion.

3.5 Validation of the instrument

To validate or determine the content validity of the items, the researcher sent the instrument to 3experts for vetting. Two lecturers came from the Educational Foundation Department, Enugu State College of Education and Technical. The other validator came from the department of Measurement and Evaluation, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, ESUT. To enable the validators to have clear understanding of the instrument, the researcher also made available to them the topic, research problem, purpose of the study and research questions. When the researcher took delivery of the validated instrument, only those items accepted by the validators were used for this study.

3.6 Method of data collection

A total of 25 public primary schools were used for this study. The opinion of 5 teachers in each of the schools were sampled. A total of 125 copies of the questionnaires were sent out to the teachers. The researcher employed two research attendants to cover selected schools. The researcher received 100 copies of the questionnaire. this means that 25 teachers that initially collected the questionnaires forms failed to return their copies. It is these 100 teachers that served as the sample size of the study.

3.7 Method of data analysis

The mean scores of the respondents were computed and used to answer the research questions. A mean of 2.50 was taken as a criterion in line with the 4-piont scale. This means that any mean up to and above 2.50 was accepted to mean that respondents accepted the statement. On the contrary, a mean less than 2.50 was not accepted. This means that respondents did not accept the statement. A cumulative mean of the 5 items were computed to determine the respondents opinion on a research question. A cumulative (grand) mean of 2.50 and above was interpreted that majority of the respondents acceptance less than 2.50 was interpreted that majority of the respondents rejection of the statement.

4. Findings

4.1 What effect will the effective use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process have in promoting children's participation in their studies?

Table 1 - Effects of instructional materials on pupils active participation in their studies

N-100

Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	X	R
21. Children easily learn something that captures their interest and imagination than one that is boring to them.	20	60	10	10	2.90	A
22. The use of instructional materials in teaching-learning process is an activity based instruction that promotes learner active participation.	30	50	10	10	3.00	A
23. The use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process makes the lesson real and captivating to children than teaching the lesson theoretically.	40	20	20	20	2.80	A
24. Children exposed to instructional media mode of instruction like the use of computer participate more actively in their studies than their colleagues taught through the traditional mode of teaching.	20	30	30	20	2.50	A
25. The use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process in the primary school level does not have any positive impact in learner active participation in the studies.	0	0	60	40	1.60	A
X					2.56	A

As recorded on table 1, a mean of 2.90 was computed for item number 21. This means that most of the respondents accepted that statement to be true. In the same vein, a mean of 3.00 was computed for item number 22. This also means that most of the respondents accepted item number 22 as true statement.

However, a mean of 1.60 was computed for item number 25. This means that majority of the respondents believed that the use of instructional materials in teaching-learning process has the capacity to increase learner's participation in the lesson. A cumulative mean of 2.56 was computed for items 21-25 on second research objective.

This result shows that in the opinion of majority of the respondents, the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process has the tendency to raise learner's active participation in the teaching-learning process.

4.2 To what extent can instructional materials assist pupils to inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively?

Table 2- Effects of instructional materials on the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively among pupils.

Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	X	R
26. Concrete instructional materials help pupils to grasp information permanently.	20	30	30	20	2.50	A
27. The use of counting sticks, for example, is a valuable means of teaching quantitative reasoning subjects to pupils.	20	50	10	20	2.70	A
28. Primary school pupils develop oratorical skills easily if their teachers inculcate in them the culture of text reading in class.	40	30	20	10	3.00	A
29. Primary school pupils have the tendency to read and understand texts with good and colorful picture illustrations.	30	50	10	10	3.00	
30. The use of instructional materials in the teaching and learning process does not have any positive effect on learners inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.	0	0	30	70	1.30	
X					2.50	

As recorded in Table 2, a mean of 2.50 was computed for item number 26. This means that majority of the respondents accepted that statement to be true. In the same vein, a mean of 2.70 was computed for item no 27. This also means that majority of the respondents accepted that statement to be true. However, a mean of 1.30 was computed for item 30.

This means that majority of the respondents did not accept that statement to be true. A grand mean of 2.50 was computed for item 26-30 in research question 6. This result shows that majority of the respondents believe that the use of instructional materials facilitate the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively among primary school pupils.

4.3 What is the effect of instructional materials in laying sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking among primary school pupils.

Table 3. Effects of instructional materials on learners ability to imbibe scientific and reflective thinking. N-100

Questionnaire items	SA	A	D	SD	X	R
31. The use of instructional materials help pupils to imbibe creative and inquiring spirit.	30	30	20	20	2.70	A
32. The use of instructional materials impresses upon pupils to repeat the experiments their teachers made use of to teach them on their own.	20	40	20	20	2.60	A
33. The use of instructional materials in teaching and learning process exposes the pupils to the rudiments of practical learning.	30	40	10	20	2.80	A
34. The use of instructional materials helps pupils to imbibe questioning and exploratory skills.	50	30	10	10	3.20	A
35. The use of instructional materials does not have any significant positive impact on primary school pupil's ability to develop sound and reflective thinking.	0	0	60	40	1.60	
X					2.58	A

As recorded on table 3, a mean of 2.70 was recorded for item number 31. This means that majority of the respondents accepted that statement to be true. In the same vein, a mean of 2.60 was recorded for item 32. This also means that majority of the respondents accepted that statement to be true.

However, a mean of 1.60 was computed for item 35. This means that most of the respondents rejected that statement. A cumulative mean of 2.58 was computed for item 31-35 on research objective.

This result shows that in the opinion of most of the respondents the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process at the primary school level has the capacity to influence primary school pupil's ability to imbibe scientific and reflective thinking.

At the end of data analysis, the following findings were made.

- Effective use of instructional materials in teaching-learning process influences learner active participation in studies.
- Effective use of instructional materials in teaching-learning process enhances primary school pupil's inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively.
- Effective use of instructional materials in teaching-learning process has positive effect on learner ability to imbibe scientific and reflective thinking.

5. Discussion

A cumulative mean of 2.56 was computed for items 21-25 on research. The study sought to find out the impact of the use of instructional materials in the teaching –learning process on learner active participation in lesson at the primary school level. The computed mean value shows that most of the respondents believed that the use of instructional materials has the tendency to raise primary school pupil's active participation in the teaching-learning process.

This finding has been corroborated by Agu (2008) and Nzewi (2001). According to Agu, the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process not only facilitates learning but most importantly, stimulates them to participate actively in what they were taught. Primary school pupils according to the author, comply religiously to their teachers instructions. They sing, dance, take part in group discussion, they participate individually and collectively in teacher's experiments, demonstrations and drawings.

According to Agu, children take active part in the lesson that is interesting and enjoyable to them. The level or extent of their interest or enjoyment of the lesson determines their level of self involvement and participation. She pointed out that effective use of instructional materials is the key that opens their mind and activates their senses.

On the part of Nzewi (2001), the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process offers a reality of experiences which stimulates self activity on the part of the learner. Use of instructional materials keep the pupils active and busy thereby increasing their level of participation in the teaching-learning process.

A cumulative mean of 2.50 was computed for items 26-30 on the study. The study also sought to ascertain the opinion of respondents on whether the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process can pre-dispose primary school pupils to inculcate permanent literacy, numeracy and ability to communicate effectively. This finding was corroborated by Jeremiah (2004) though indirectly.

The author raised serious concern that majority of the pupils that graduate from the primary schools in Nigeria, the days find it difficult to read, write and to communicate effectively which is one of the objective of primary education according to the National Policy on Education (2004). He blamed this worrisome situation on the poor, unstimulating school environment, that majority of the pupils studied and the incompetence and poor morale of their teachers. According to Jeremiah if this poor teaching and learning environment at the primary school level did not improve, primary education will be in serious stress.

In his own word, teaching and learning at the primary school level require variety of instructional materials. The nature of primary school pupil and his learning characteristics call for more effective and efficient utilization of the variety of resource materials.

Amadi and Obiefuna (2006) noted that children at the primary school level are said to be at the concrete operational state and as such, learning and retention are facilitated by involving many of the child's sense organs. According to them, the use of audio-visual media makes a lot of positive impression toward enhancing their learning capacity. Consequently, they noted that the use of audio-visual teaching learning programmes greatly raises children's ability to comprehend and prove the extent that they have learned.

A grand mean of 2.58 was computed for items 31-35 on research third objective. The study also sought to establish if there is any positive correlation between the use of instructional materials in the teaching-learning process at the primary school level and pupils ability to develop scientific and reflective thinking. This mean value show that majority of the respondents believed that the use of instructional materials in the teaching learning process lays sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking among primary school pupils.

This finding has been corroborated by Joseph (2002). According to him, in order to achieve the objective of inculcating scientific and reflective thinking among primary school pupils, they should be exposed to sequence of

scientific inquiry through the application of practical skills. He drew attention to the fact that the National Policy on Education (2004) policy specified that the approved teaching method for primary education should be exploratory, experimental and scientific. This implies that teaching at the primary school level can only achieve meaningful results if the relevant instructional materials are deployed.

Igwe (2002) attributed the poor standard of primary education in River state to poor school infrastructure and lack of emphasis on the exposure of pupils to practical knowledge which requires concrete instructional materials that have the capacity to simplify lessons for pupil's comprehension.

6. Conclusion

This study investigated the effects of instructional materials on pupils' participation, literacy and numeracy development, and the formation of scientific and reflective thinking in primary schools. Findings of the study revealed that the effective use of instructional materials significantly enhances pupils' active participation in classroom activities, facilitates the development of permanent literacy and numeracy skills, and contributes meaningfully to the development of scientific and reflective thinking among primary school pupils. The study further established that instructional materials improve the overall teaching-learning process at the primary school level. Based on the findings, it was recommended that Government and providers of education at the primary school level should sponsor primary school teachers on periodic in-service training skills of the teachers at this level of education. The study also suggested further research on the availability and utilization of instructional materials in rural primary schools.

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