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## THE ROLE OF QUALITY TEXTBOOKS IN EFFECTIVE LEARNING: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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### Abstract

This study investigated the role of quality textbooks in effective learning with a focus on a systematic literature review. It explored textbooks availability, challenges and the way forward in Nigerian schools to assess the degree of their essentiality as learning tools in meeting national educational policy objectives. Textbooks serve several important purposes such as a good source of information, orderliness of topics, a wide coverage of the syllabus among others. The challenges explored are expensive cost of textbooks, students' overdependency on textbooks, cultural insensitivity of textbooks, difficulty in comprehension of the text among others. Sequel to the challenges, there is absolute need for a periodic review of learning tools that comply with the standard to actualize the curriculum goals. It is recommended among others that government should provide adequate fund that will enhance adequate provision of textbooks in schools for students, parents should ensure that they provide financial support for textbooks and local authors should be encouraged to write textbooks using the language and cultural background of the environment in a clear content, free of ambiguity.

**Keywords:** Role, Quality textbooks, Effective Learning, Systematic Literature Review, Challenges

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### Introduction

Quality textbooks are indispensable tools needed by the learners for their effective learning as it is one of the most common resources in any educational

setting. Textbooks are manuals that guide students in their learning. They can be referred to as books that transform science and any other area of study in a manner that students can access for their learning. According to Carpenter (2024), a textbook is a comprehensive educational resource that serves as a primary source of information for students in a particular subject. Textbooks are valuable sources that provide the leverage for teachers in making their teaching qualitative.

Quality textbooks exhibit distinct attributes that make them good manuals for learning. UNESCO (2014) highlighted that textbooks are manuals of instruction that should ensure three principles: their accessibility for all, their quality and relevance to the curriculum, and their efficacy as a tool for peace and citizenship. The cover design, and the language in a textbook should be appealing to the students thereby making its appearance attractive. Quality textbooks should have an entire good structure that is well organized in such a way that the information it contains comprise of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that the students are expected to acquire about a particular subject, as delivered by the book's author(s). Quality textbooks enable the students to effectively comprehend the intended contents of the subject. Quality textbooks are well organized, and they are authored by those who have expertise in the subjects and prowess in writing. The authors utilize current curriculum content in accordance with Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) guidelines as recommended by the Federal Ministry of Education and various State Ministries of Education to achieve the curricular objectives.

In addition, its qualities are very important in ensuring that it meets the required standards. Thus, the qualities of a textbook were evaluated in perspectives. According to Mithans and Ivanuš Grmek (2020) textbook quality can be evaluated according to the following three perspectives: From the perspective of the country (the provider of the education system, and which legally defines the goals to be achieved by the participants in the education process) ,from the perspective of the mediators (the teachers, who transfer the determined educational content to their students) and from the perspective of the users, that is the students, for whom the textbook is intended. The three perspectives of textbook evaluation are in alliance with the qualities of textbooks. However, the focus of this study is on the third perspective of the qualities of a textbook (which is the perspective of the users).

Students have a crucial role to play in evaluating the relevance and efficacy of textbooks in effective learning. Effective learning refers to the ability of the students to learn and process information in different ways. Students have varying learning styles, focus, intentions, abilities, and disabilities that affect their ability to learn very well. Textbooks can play a critical role in supporting students to meet their learning needs by providing them with: Valuable insights into the importance and challenges of textbooks and inform strategies for improving their effectiveness, the capacity to give feedback on the relevance and accessibility of textbooks with emphasis on the areas for improvement and opportunities to work collaboratively with their teachers in planning instruction and developing strategies for using textbooks to support diverse learning needs.

Textbooks are very useful tools in learning especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. Hence, it appears that Nigeria has adopted it as the main source of referral for students and teachers as the country seems to be at the rudimentary level of educational technology struggling with the challenges on how to use information technology in the classroom. Researches have shown that even up to this digital age, textbooks remain the most valuable component of the curriculum in many countries, despite the proliferation of electronic media and other more sophisticated sources of information (Ruddick, 2014; Jonane, 2015; Wu & Liu, 2015; Bansiong, 2019). Textbooks are so essential in schools that they seem to be irreplaceable. This shows how valuable textbooks are and how much emphasis that has been placed on its essentiality to academic improvement.

Collins and Halverson (2018) revealed the existence of a high association between suggested textbooks and academic output in Integrated Science. Studies have shown that textbooks have positive effect on academic achievement (Attakumah & Tulasi, 2015; Kapur, 2018). Textbooks as learning materials have the tendency to determine the success of the learners. In an educational setting, it determines the academic success of the students. It, therefore, becomes imperative that quality textbooks are available for the learners' use.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Textbooks have the propensity to provide good source of information, guidance to the learners and scientific development. Despite how valuable textbooks are, it has been observed that quality textbooks appear not to have been accorded the

required place in effective learning in Nigeria. This could be attributed to cultural insensitivity, acute shortage, poor standard, inadequate research by authors, poor school management, and inadequate funding.

Prior studies have explored the availability and impact of textbooks on students learning outcomes and achievement (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015; Eraikhuemen, Oyakhirome & Achuba, 2024). A comprehensive systematic literature review on the role of quality textbooks particularly in Nigerian context has not been conducted. This is the identified gap that this study is designed to cover for a better understanding of the challenges facing the role of quality textbooks. Hence this study compensates for the limitations of the previous studies since it was conducted in Nigeria to fill the research gap.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Lev Vygotsky's theory was utilized in operationalizing this study. Theory emphasizes the crucial role of social interaction, culture, and language in cognitive development. He believed that learning is an active process that occurs because of collaboration and guidance from more knowledgeable others. The theory highlights that learning is a socially mediated process, where learners engage with more knowledgeable others, such as teachers, peers, or textbooks and actively construct knowledge by interacting with them. The theory is highly relevant to this study on the importance of quality textbooks because it supports effective students diverse learning needs. It is a solid bedrock for this study as quality textbooks can serve as mediating tools, providing learners with access to knowledge and understanding that they may not have acquired otherwise. The application of this theory provides temporary support to the learners through complex concepts and ideas as they construct knowledge. The theory is relevant to this study as quality textbooks are designed to help learners operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) thereby providing challenges that are neither too easy nor too difficult in promoting their cognitive growth and development.

### **Importance of Textbooks in Effective Learning**

The learning style, level of education and proposed function by the users or learners are determinants of textbooks usage by different individuals. Students may be indulged in the rigid use of textbooks in the absence of an instructor or as

support for instruction already given by a teacher to prepare them for lessons, or for other research purposes. This implies that textbooks are valuable for students' learning. Below are the importances of quality textbook to the learners.

1. **Good source of information:** Textbooks help in providing useful information for learning and they act as media for presentation of knowledge. Then also textbooks serve as the only material from which information for the student and program of study are gathered (Junco & Clem ,2015). Several teachers assume that textbooks could offer significant and efficient information without taking into consideration the role of instructors (Muijs & Reynolds ,2017).
2. **Orderliness of topics:** Textbooks provide all the necessary information about a topic in a systematic and well-organized manner for students to be abreast of what to do. It should not be difficult as its presentation is expected to be from simple to complex and from known to unknown. Textbooks that are of good quality have the potential to make learning more fun, lasting, and meaningful. Learners' cognition can actively be engaged through some mechanisms such as visual processing, analytical thinking, posing questions, testing hypotheses, and critical reasoning because of good quality textbooks.
3. **Coverage of the syllabus:** Textbooks help to delimit the syllabus by dividing it into sequential topics and units for various lessons. This implies that textbooks support the curriculum's scope and sequence. Quality textbooks should be prepared with a good structure that offers a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control and motivating texts and tapes" that make them attractively presentable. A good textbook should be prepared in accordance with the age of the learners, level of knowledge of the learners and the prescribed themes for the curricula.
4. **Classroom uniformity:** Textbooks aids in the maintenance of uniformity in the classroom as a situation whereby the students do not have textbooks for their learning is a chaotic one. The importance of textbook is very vital. Its availability is one good indicator of school quality.
5. **Provision of guidance to the learner:** It is a crucial learning tool (Hung Lau, Lam, Hon Kam, Nkhoma, Richards and Thomas, 2018) as it provides learning resources and contents that should motivate students to learn and actively engage the students to promote their understanding of the subject matter of the standard. Learning from a textbook can be efficient if it is adapted for

students and vice versa, as this is the only way students are able to learn how to use effective learning strategies. Textbooks, as well, guide the slow learners in improving their performance.

6. **Ease of understanding:** The textbooks should be free from ambiguity but written clearly in the language and cultural background of the learners for ease of understanding and comprehension of its contents in accordance with the learner's mental stage. With this, textbooks can promote inclusivity by using language and images that can reflect the diversity of students' views, experiences and backgrounds. Textbooks are used for ease of comprehension of scientific ideas or concepts
7. **Wider scope of knowledge and information:** Textbooks are a great source of knowledge and information as they can provide details on a topic and previous knowledge of ideas or concepts. Textbooks are very wide in scope as they have a long range of coverage for learning and enables the students to develop a depth of understanding of the content of the standard through use of the materials in the textbook.
8. **Scientific development:** The development of the scientific field is considered by the textbooks. Textbooks involve scientific inquiry taught, model, and practiced where appropriate. Textbooks have a great influence on the achievement of the curriculum goals (Hadar,2017).
9. **Availability of reading levels:** Several reading levels of supplemental reading should be available so that both advanced and learning-disabled learners can access the right literature. Textbooks have the propensity to disseminate useful information and make the information generated in research easily accessible. Textbooks act as a vehicle to connect students with emerging technologies, critical thinking and a viable source for problem-solving.
10. **Exercise:** Textbooks should contain exercises which are components of the text. Textbooks contain supplementary materials such as activity manuals, websites, CDROMs and so on to make learning more effective.

### **Challenges to Availability of Quality textbooks in Effective Learning**

Despite the essential role of quality textbooks in students' learning, numerous challenges pose as huge barrier to their availability. Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) asserted that schools lack adequate textbooks, revision books and resource books to extend children's knowledge. The drawback in textbooks

availability for students in our schools is an unfortunate situation. Studies have systematically reported the unavailability of significant textbooks for instruction and learning (Attakumah & Tulasi ,2015; Mupa & Chinooneka ,2015). However, the challenges associated with textbooks availability to students are below.

1. **Expensive cost:** Not every student can afford to purchase the textbooks for their learning because of the high cost of the books. Students not able to buy textbooks are one of the factors accounting for their unavailability among students (Sun, Flores and Tanguma'2012). Mupa and Chinooneka (2015) noted that parental support in terms of extra materials such as textbooks and revision books is very low.
2. **Overdependency:** Too much dependency or continuous use of textbooks does not create the avenue for the learner to think outside the box and become creative in learning rather the learner's creativity and critical thinking are hampered. Furthermore, the reality of time and resource constraints, and the high proportion of non-specialist science teachers teaching science, has resulted in the overreliance of textbooks (McDonald ,2016).
3. **Culturally insensitive:** Some textbooks were written without taking into consideration the cultural values for universal users. As a result of this, textbooks are not adequately available and the ones that are available are written by foreigners with their language and cultural background (Osuolale, 2014).
4. **Difficulty in comprehension:** Some textbooks contain ambiguous words rather making its content simpler and clear according to the mental stage of the learner thereby making it difficult for the students to comprehend.
5. **Incorrect information or outdated information:** It seems that some textbooks contain incorrect information or information that are outdated. Quality textbooks and learning materials are crucial for students, though they may contain incorrect information, obsolete ideas and possibly incorrect technology-related information.
6. **Poor school management and inadequate funding:** There is every tendency for textbooks not to be available if the school management is poor and funding is inadequate. Schools lack adequate textbooks, revision books and resource books to extend children's knowledge (Mupa & Chinooneka, 2015) as some of the necessary textbooks for learning seem not to be available in

our schools due to poor management of the schools, financial impediments, logistic issues among others.

This leaves the discourse on textbooks essentiality inconclusive. Moreover, in all these reviews, very few literatures had been sighted on the textbook situation in Nigeria. This creates a gap to explore the textbook issue in the context of Nigeria.

### **Conclusion**

The literature review emphasizes the vital role of quality textbooks in education. It implies from the findings that textbooks influence student motivation, academic achievement, and teacher instruction. Furthermore, the availability and accessibility of textbooks are obvious critical factors in determining their effectiveness. It is essential for educators and policymakers to prioritize the development and availability of textbook to improve educational outcomes.

A recurring theme throughout this study is the significance of textbooks in providing valuable support for teachers' instruction and students' learning. This is quite evident in the findings on the importance of textbook quality, the impact of textbooks on student motivation, and the role of textbooks in ensuring promoting educational parity. It is, therefore, important for educators and policymakers to recognize the vital role of textbooks in education and prioritize their development and availability.

This study identifies the potentials of textbooks as a powerful tool for enhancing educational innovation and reform. Textbooks can be made available in different forms such as digital (interactive simulation) to accommodate students with disabilities. This means that the use of digital technologies and innovative instructional design, textbooks can be transformed from static, print-based resources to dynamic, interactive learning environments. This change has the propensity to revolutionize education and improve learning outcomes for all students.

In view of the findings presented in this literature review, there is a need for more research on textbook development and availability, particularly in low-income and marginalized environments. Stakeholders such as educational managers, policymakers, and researchers should work together to prioritize textbook development and availability, and to ensure that all students have access to high-quality educational resources for their effective learning. Funds should be



allocated by policymakers to support textbook development and distribution, while educators should prioritize the use of high-quality textbooks in their instruction.

An ample of evidence from the literature reviewed shows that textbooks quality and availability should not be compromised as it is very vital for the students' academic achievement. Negligence of availability of quality textbooks for students learning will have a severe impact on the emotional and physical state of the students and the curricular goals would not be achieved. The students and invariably, the school authorities would experience situations that may pose a huge threat to the academic success of the students and the standard of the schools if it is not swiftly tackled.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were made from this study:

- i) **Government involvement:** Government should provide adequate fund that will enhance adequate provision of textbooks in schools for students and collaborate with publishers to subsidize textbooks cost.
- ii) **Parental support:** Parents should ensure that they provide financial support for textbooks.
- iii) **Authors:** Local authors should be encouraged to write textbooks using the language and cultural background of the environment in a clear content that is free of ambiguity.
- iv) **Digitalization:** Printed textbooks should be digitized for easy access via digital libraries as e-books.
- v) **Donor funding:** Donor funding should be sought to support in providing necessary textbooks whenever they are inadequate supply.
- vi) **School library development:** Schools should establish libraries that are well endowed and adequately equipped with quality textbooks for students' use.
- vii) **Online platform:** Online platforms and interactive learning materials such as multimedia and simulations should be provided for learning to enhance learner's virtual effective learning experience.
- viii) **School management:** School management should always ensure that the recommended textbooks are available and adequate.

- ix) **Periodic review:** Review panels which constitute of teachers, schools' administrators and curriculum specialists/planners should be set up to review the quality and availability of textbook in schools.
- x) **Teacher training:** Teachers should be trained and retrained on textbooks selection and usage.

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