

## Developing Total Child Through Universal Design Learning: The Role of School Library

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### Abstract

*The paper reviewed the concept of universal design for learning and total child development, the school library in the picture. Universal Design for Learning was explained as a way of teaching and learning that give students equal opportunity to succeed. The three major principles of UDL were thoroughly described as the keys to planning, motivating and accessing curriculum in inclusive classrooms. The concept of school library involvement in relation to total child was fully described. Benefits of universal design for learning in formation of total child development as well as roles of school libraries in facilitating universal design for learning for children and young adults was well stated. Finally, it was recommended that teachers should use different methods to teach different categories of students in their custody, school libraries should be well equipped with various instructional and information resources, this will help UDL in formation and building a total child for the society.*

**Keywords:** Universal design for learning, school library, total child development, Formation, UDL principles.

### Introduction

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of teaching and learning that give students equal opportunity to succeed (students with disabilities inclusive). It is the use of variety of teaching methods and resources to remove barriers to learning. According to Higher Education Opportunity Act (2008), UDL is a scientific framework for guiding educational practice which will provide flexibility in the way information is presented as well as students respond to knowledge. In addition, National Center on Universal Design for Learning (2014) stated that UDL provides an outline for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone that is, flexible approaches that can be modified and adjusted to meet individual needs. UDL supports the needs of learners, including disabled students from diverse cultural background (King-Sears 2009). It also helps students to make learning more accessible in the classrooms. UDL presents information to learners in familiar way and give them numerous opportunities to interact with materials. Centre for applied and special technology (2017) defines UDL as a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn.

Universal design for learning focuses on three major principles of, representation, expression, and engagement. Representation means teaching the content to make it accessible to students. Teachers must learn how to present the content so that it is not just oral or in print. Expression is a way of students showing what they learned. It means teachers need to provide students with varieties of options to communicate what they have learned; this will move teaching from traditional means to options that allow students to use their skills and talents and the content must be represented through various library resources such as videos, websites, pictures and realia Engagement is how to motivate all learners to do their best. They must use varieties of classroom methods to draw their students into learning. These three principles are the cornerstones of UDL and are the keys to planning, motivating and accessing curriculum in inclusive classrooms (CAST, 2018). These will help teachers to develop, motivate and access instruction that can increase the participation of all learners, including those with special needs. Classroom application of UDL includes the use of technology, diverse modalities of instruction,

flexible evaluation and group activities that will give students choices and provide them with opportunities to empower themselves as learners (Spencer, 2011). UDL give students choices of ways to demonstrate what they have learned and allows them opportunities to successfully participate in the curriculum, despite their learning challenges (Rose and Meyer, 2002). What is important is that the students are developing metacognition by focusing on their own learning assets, and they are experiencing success by using a mode of expression that suits their individual affinities.

The concept of total child development is very important to UDL. Total child development includes physical, emotional, mental and social life of children. Physical development consists of broad motor skills such as standing, walking, running, and sitting as well as being able to maintain balance, change positions, it also includes using fingers and hands to clutch, eat, draw, dress, play and write. Emotional development is ability to react to issues. This includes how to reacts to events and occurrences. Mental development includes thinking, learning, understanding, problem-solving, reasoning, and remembering. Social development has to do with personal interactions, developing and maintaining relationships with family, friends and teachers. In addition, total child development can be categorized into three broad stages, these are early childhood, middle childhood, and adolescence. Early childhood is birth to eight years. A child doubles her height and quadruples her weight. She has mastered sitting, walking, toilet training, using a spoon, scribbling, and sufficient hand-eye coordination for play. These early physical childhood skills are accompanied by social and emotional development. Middle childhood is between eight to twelve years.

Every child should be able to understand some basic abstract concepts. Their cognitive skills, personality, motivation, and interpersonal relationships will undergo modification. The primary developmental task of middle childhood is integration within the social context. Physical development is less dramatic than in early childhood or adolescence. The age twelve to eighteen is referred to adolescence. Adolescence is a time of confusing and changes due to significant physical, emotional and cognitive growth. Frequent mood swings, depression, and other psychological disorders are common. Adolescence is an important period for cognitive development, marking a change in ways of thinking and reasoning about problems and ideas. Children gain ability to solve more abstract and theoretical problems. Adolescents often rely on their peers rather than family for direction and emotional support. The use of UDL in developing total child at these stages of development is inevitable. Therefore, total child development is basic and germane to UDL.

The role of school library in universal design for learning and total child development cannot be overemphasized. The school library is an important source of knowledge to young minds. It plays a great role in the universal design for learning and development of total child by serving as the store house of knowledge and impact positively on students' academic, social and emotional achievement. School library support UDL goals and objectives by facilitating the work of the classroom teachers and ensures each student has equitable access to information resources irrespective of home, opportunities or constraints. It collaborates with classroom teachers to plan, implement and evaluate programs that will ensure students acquire skills to collect, analyze, organize information and communicate their findings. It provides teachers with access to relevant curriculum information and professional development materials within and outside the school and opportunities to plan, implement and evaluate learning program. Furthermore, it helps students in running independent learning programs which integrate information resources and technologies. It also assists students with the skills necessary to succeed in a technological, social and economic environment. School library provides and promote students the habit of reading for pleasure and to enrich students intellectual, aesthetic,

cultural and emotional growth. Differences in learning and teaching styles are catered for through the provision and access to, a wide range of curriculum resources such as fiction, non-fiction, digital, print, audio and video. Students using school library regularly can perform better during examination by reading various books. Summarily school library impact achievement, helps teachers, makes students independence, provide lifelong skills and build all round growth for children.

### **Benefits of Universal Design for Learning in formation of Total Child Development**

The role of UDL in formation of total child development is numerous. UDL improve access for students with sensory or physical limitations, it is a framework for teaching that offers flexibility in how students access learning materials, engage with content, and show what they know. It provides students with multiple ways to engage with the course content. This can mean giving students the chance to actively participate, explore, and reflect on their learning experience alone or in groups. Having students set personal goals for learning and allowing them to reflect on their progress is one way of helping students to build their own metacognitive abilities in the classroom. Giving students multiples means of engagement and encouraging them to set goals for learning can also increase their motivation to learn. In addition, Universal design for learning offers students with options for how they will be assessed and this can reduce learning barriers, and lessen anxiety. If concepts can be presented with images as well as verbally and are connected to knowledge, the learning experience will be more powerful than if it were presented through just one of these methods. According to Meo (2008), teachers trained in UDL for high school instruction place less blame on the students for insufficient learning but relate the under performances of students to poor instructional design. Another aspect of UDL is the use of technology to enhance instruction. Boyle et al. (2003) found that audio textbooks were more effective than a regular textbook in helping students with disabilities learning content. Similarly, Anderson-Inman and Horney (2007) found the use of technology such as e-readers and electronic dictionaries helped build positive outcomes in reading, while Xin and Reith (2001) used video to improve the vocabulary acquisition of elementary students with learning disabilities. In addition, students' behavioral problems will reduce significantly if their learning needs are met with the use of UDL (Morrissey, 2009).

### **Roles of School Library in Facilitating Universal Design for Learning for Children and Young Adults**

A consistent expectation of school libraries is the effective delivery of instructions to students with a range of learning needs. Zhong (2012) noted that the adoption of UDL in schools facilitates students mastering of skills. The principles of UDL when incorporated in school libraries, provide learning opportunities for different categories of students especially students with learning disabilities inclusive (Clark, 2015). UDL can greatly enhance the school library experiences of students, leading to inclusion and independence for students with disabilities (Blue and Darra 2011). American Association of School Librarians (2009) described the teacher role of the school librarian as one that empowers students to become critical thinkers, enthusiastic readers, skillful researchers and ethical users of information. The school librarian also performs the roles of instructional partner and understands the curriculum of the school thoroughly, they can partner with teachers to create exciting learning experiences in an information and media rich environment. These key roles of the school librarians, particularly the roles of instructional partner and information specialist, serve as a framework for modeling and infusing UDL principles and strategies throughout the entire school curriculum.

### **Roles of School Library in facilitating the Development of Total Child**

School library performs two major roles, provision of instructional materials for teachers as well as conducive environment and relevant information resources for learners. According to Okiy

(2014), school libraries are the core of the school by making school programmes available to learners. Libraries, provide teachers with a diversity of library resources to use when preparing lesson note. Textbook information is not adequate for production of total child. Teachers need information resources that they will refer to when teaching. Information resources like E-textbooks, e-readers and electronic dictionaries helped build positive outcomes in reading when they are used in schools by teachers (Anderson-Inman and Horney 2007). Video games and video recording goes a long way to improve the vocabulary acquisition of elementary students especially students with learning disabilities (Xin and Reith 2001). When stories are read to learners during story hours or reading periods, learners will appreciate reading and have more understandings. This will promote and develop students' habit of reading for pleasure and also enrich students intellectual, aesthetic, cultural and emotional growth. The teacher will also enable learners to gain an upper hand in developing emergent reading skills by training them to read books, tell stories, dramatize a story based on a book that was read, recite rhymes, and sing choral verses from a book. In addition, school library provides relevant facilities, resources and opportunities to improve and build all round learners for our society and nation as a whole. Information resources like books, periodicals, journals, biographies, online resources, pictures, realia, photographs, music, computers, charts and posters can go a long way in formation of total child.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The role of school library in promoting UDL to form a total child is important and attainable. Well-equipped school library with right instructional materials will go a long way in achieving goals and objectives of UDL. Therefore, it is recommended that UDL should be included in school curriculum, teachers are to be trained and prepared for it. They should use different methods to teach different categories of students in their custody. Finally, school libraries should be well equipped with various instructional and information resources, this will help UDL in formation and building a total child for the society.

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