

Chromium doped nano In_2O_3 – An efficient catalyst for synthesis of benzoxazoles and 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones

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Abstract : Gel-combustion method was used to prepare nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Chromium. The prepared nano materials were characterized by powder XRD, Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) and standard BET technique. The effect of doping of Chromium upon catalytic activity of nano In_2O_3 was evaluated by using it in synthesis of important pharmacophores such as benzoxazoles and 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones. Even if both nano materials were found to be useful in carrying out conversions, nano In_2O_3 doped with Chromium was found to be more effective as a catalyst in terms of reaction time and yields. The heterogeneous nature of nano materials in reaction medium made its recycling possible making overall process cost effective.

Keywords : Gel-combustion method, doped, chromium, catalytic activity, pharmacophores, effective, heterogeneous nature, recycling, cost effective.

1. Introduction

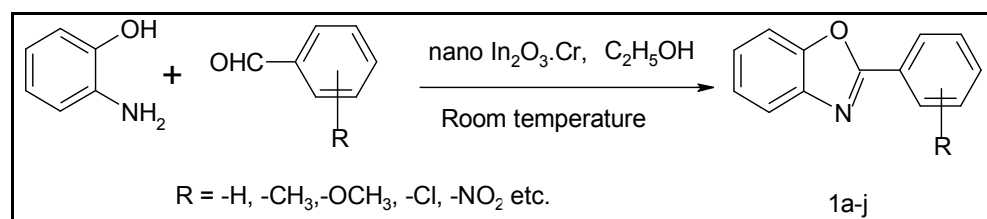
In recent years, Nanoscience has emerged as an upcoming field for research and has been playing an important role in overall development process^{1,2}. Nano materials are found to be useful in various fields of applications including catalysis^{3,4,5}. Nanocrystalline metal oxides are found to be efficient as catalyst in various organic syntheses due to their high surface area to volume ratio and large number of coordination sites. Moreover, by using nano crystalline metal oxides it is possible to frame environment friendly, high yield giving organic synthesis^{6,7,8}. The literature survey shows that biologically active organic compounds such as benzoxazoles have been synthesized using nano-sized metal oxides⁹. The literature survey shows that chromium is possessing catalytic properties¹⁰ which encouraged to dope Chromium in nano In_2O_3 .

Benzoxazoles constitutes an important class of natural as well as synthetic heterocyclic compounds. Some benzoxazole derivatives exhibit biological properties such as antitumour, antiviral and antimicrobial properties¹¹. Due to this, benzoxazoles are considered as important pharmacophores. Several methods have been reported in the literature for the synthesis of benzoxazoles. These include coupling of 2-aminophenols with carboxylic acids in presence of strong acids as catalyst¹² or microwaves as a source of energy.¹³ The second method involves oxidative cyclization of phenolic Schiff bases obtained from the condensation of 2-amino phenols and aldehydes in presence of various oxidants such as DDQ¹⁴, $\text{Mn}(\text{OAc})_3$ ¹⁵, $\text{PhI}(\text{OAc})_2$ ¹⁶, $\text{Th}^+\text{ClO}_4^-$ ¹⁷, BaMnO_4 ¹⁸, NiO_2 .¹⁹ Some synthetic protocols involve use of different Lewis acids such as FeCl_3 , CeCl_3 as catalysts.²⁰ The nucleophilic addition & metal-free *ortho*-C–H functionalization are few more pathways to synthesize these important pharmacophores²¹. Even if these protocols are effective in carrying out desired conversions, some of these protocols suffer from one or other disadvantages such as vigorous reaction condition

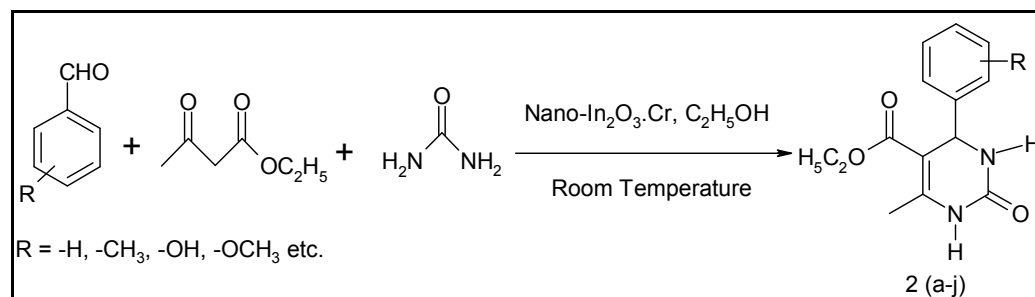
conditions, prolonged reaction time, low yields, use of expensive toxic chemicals etc. Therefore, a search for mild and still more effective protocols for synthesis of benzoxazoles is continued.

Similarly, It is observed that 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones constitutes a class of organic compounds which possess therapeutic and pharmacological properties such as anti-tumor, anti-inflammatory, anti-viral and anti-malarial activities.²² These compounds also serve as calcium channel blockers and neuropeptides Y (NPY) antagonists.²³ Apart from original reaction condition various new reaction conditions have been introduced for the classical Biginelli reaction which includes use of solvent free conditions, microwave and ultrasound irradiation etc.²⁴⁻²⁹ Some of these syntheses are performed in presence of Lewis acid catalysts such as $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$, InBr_3 , $\text{LaCl}_3 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{O}$, $\text{Yb}(\text{Otf})_3$, CuCl_2 etc.³⁰⁻³⁴ These protocols suffer from one or other drawbacks such as requirement of sophisticated apparatus, sensitive and costly reagents which are difficult to handle, long reaction time, low yields etc. So search for still more convenient synthetic pathways for the classical as well as Biginelli like reactions is continued.

The present study deals with preparation of nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr using Gel-combustion method which possess several advantages such as simplicity and cost effectiveness³⁵. The synthesized nano material is used effectively in synthesis of biologically active organic compounds such as benzoxazoles (Scheme 1) and 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones (Scheme 2). Further, the obtained data is also compared with data when same Schemes were performed with nano In_2O_3 as catalyst.



Scheme 1



Scheme 2

2. Experimental

2.1 Materials and Methods

All necessary chemicals were AR grade and used without further purification. The reactions were monitored by thin-layer chromatography (TLC) using 0.25 mm E-Merck Silica Gel 60F254 percoated plates and were observed with U.V. light. ¹H NMR spectra of synthesized compounds were recorded on 400 MHz Varian FT-NMR spectrometer. The values of all the chemical shifts were expressed in terms of δ with reference to Tetramethylsilane (TMS, $\delta=0$) as an internal standard and expressed as ppm. All IR spectra were recorded on Perkin Elmer FT-IR spectrometer as KBr pellets. Melting points were determined by open capillary method and used without correction.

2.2 Typical procedure for synthesis of Benzoxazoles using nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr as catalyst.

A reaction mixture prepared by mixing 2-aminophenol (1.0 mmol), aromatic aldehyde (1.0 mmol) dissolved in ethyl alcohol (3.0 ml) with nano catalyst (0.08 mmol) was stirred magnetically at room

temperature. After completion of reaction as indicated by TLC, the catalyst was removed through filtration and product was extracted in Ethyl acetate. The solvent was evaporated and obtained product was further purified by using column chromatography using Silica gel (Size- 60 to 120 mesh) and system of Pet ether and Ethyl acetate (10:4). The identity of products was established by comparison of melting point and spectral data with those reported in the literature. The separated catalyst was washed with Ethyl acetate and reused for two more batches.

2.2a Spectral data of selected Benzoxazole derivatives

Entry (1a) 2-Phenylbenzoxazole (White solid crystals)

^1H NMR (400MHz, CDCl_3) δ = 8.30-8.25 (m, 2H, Ar-H), 7.83 (t, J =7.7Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.61-7.49 (m, 4H, Ar-H), 7.37-7.32 (m, 2H, Ar-H). IR (KBr): 1050, 1248, 1452, 1614, 2976 cm^{-1}

2.3 Typical procedure for synthesis of 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones

A reaction mixture was prepared by dissolving aromatic aldehyde (1.0 mmol), ethyl acetoacetate (1.0 mmol) and urea (1.0 mmol) in $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}$ (3.5 ml) followed by addition of nano catalyst (0.1mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred magnetically at room temperature and progress of reaction mixture was studied by using TLC. After the completion of reaction as indicated by TLC, the reaction mixture was filtered and catalyst was separated and washed thoroughly with ethyl acetate and reused for the next round of same set of reaction. The catalyst was found to be active to form corresponding product with considerable yield for at least three rounds. The remaining content of reaction mixture was dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4 and further concentrated under reduced pressure to get crude product. The purification of product was done using hot ethyl alcohol.

2.3a Spectral data for selected 5-unsubstituted 3, 4-dihydropyrimidinones.

Entry 2a - 5-Ethoxycarbonyl-4-phenyl-6-methyl-3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-one

IR (KBr): 1092, 1225, 1650, 1705, 1728, 3120, 3242 cm^{-1}

^1H NMR (400MHz, DMSO-d_6): δ = 1.12 (t, 3H, J =7.2Hz), 2.28 (s,3H), 3.97 (q, 2H, J =7.2Hz), 5.12(d, 1H, J =3.2Hz), 7.22-7.32 (m, 5H, Ar-H), 7.75 (s,1H, NH), 9.20(s,1H,NH)

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Characterization of nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr

We prepared nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr using Gel-combustion method. The prepared nano materials were successfully used to synthesize various benzoxazoles and 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones. Further, catalytic activity of both materials was evaluated by comparing respective data for synthesis. X-ray diffraction (XRD) pattern of nano In_2O_3 is shown in Fig. 1

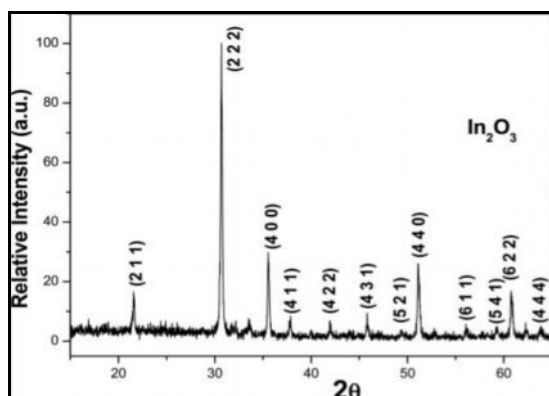


Fig.1 XRD pattern of nano In_2O_3

The powder XRD pattern of nano In_2O_3 proved single-phasic nature of the material. All diffraction peaks were in agreement with JCPDS card no. 06-0416. The crystallite size, as calculated by using Scherrer's equation was found to be 48 nm. The specific surface area was found to be $47.55 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$. TEM image of nano In_2O_3 (Fig.2) showed presence of chains of irregular shaped nano particles.

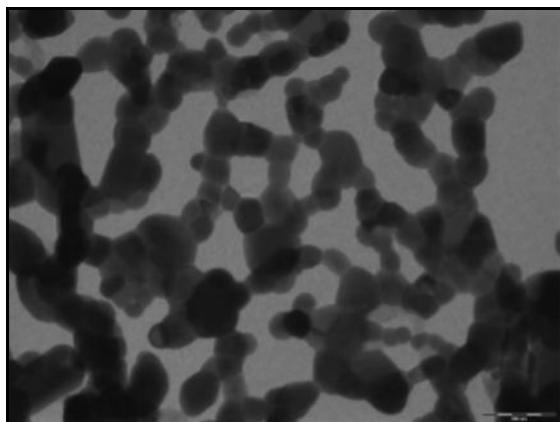


Fig.2 TEM image of nano In_2O_3

Similarly, powder XRD of nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr (Fig.3) showed single-phasic nature of the material and all diffraction peaks were in agreement with the JCPDS card no. 06-0416.

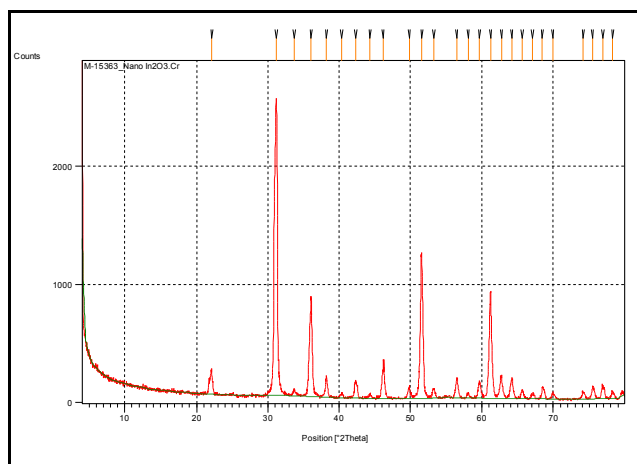


Fig.3 XRD pattern of nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr.

The crystallite size was found to be 22.4 nm as calculated by using Scherrer's equation. The specific surface area was found to be $75.6 \text{ m}^2/\text{g}$. Thus, nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr was found to have large surface area as compare to that of nano In_2O_3 .

3.2 Study of synthesis of benzoxazoles using nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr

The prepared nano materials were used to synthesize benzoxazole derivatives. Accordingly, reaction between o-aminophenol (0.109 gm, 1.0 mmol) and benzaldehyde (1.0 mmol) to form 2-phenyl benzoxazole was selected as model reaction and performed in presence of both nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr.

A suitable solvent was selected by performing model reaction in a series of solvents with increasing polarity as shown in Table 1.

Table1. Investigation of solvent effects for the synthesis of 2-phenyl benzoxazole (1a) using nano In₂O₃ and nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr at room temperature

Entry	Solvent	Nano-In ₂ O ₃		Nano-In ₂ O ₃ .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	CH ₂ Cl ₂	60	76	40	88
2	CHCl ₃	55	77	35	90
3	CH ₃ CN	50	79	25	81
4	C ₂ H ₅ OH	45	86	10	93
5	H ₂ O	No reaction	No reaction	No reaction	No reaction

^{cc} Isolated Yields

Thus, a maximum yield of product was obtained when model reactions were performed in C₂H₅OH as a polar solvent. Similarly, amount of catalyst to be added was determined by performing model reactions in presence of increasing amount of catalyst as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Investigation of catalytic effect of nano In₂O₃ and nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr on synthesis of 2-phenyl benzoxazole (1a) in C₂H₅OH at room temperature

Entry	Amount of Catalyst (mmol)	Nano-In ₂ O ₃		Nano-In ₂ O ₃ .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	0.02	55	79	35	83
2	0.04	52	83	30	85
3	0.06	50	85	25	86
4	0.08	48	86	10	93
5	0.1	45	86	10	93
6	0.2	45	86	10	93

^{cc} Isolated Yields

The maximum yield was obtained when 0.1 mmol of nano In₂O₃ and 0.08 mmol of nano In₂O₃.Cr were used. To study the general applicability of the Scheme 1, different aromatic aldehydes containing either electron-donating or electron withdrawing substituents were made to react with o-aminophenol. All reactions proceeded smoothly and gave corresponding benzoxazole derivatives in good to excellent yield without any side product (Table 3).

Table 3. Synthesis of benzoxazole derivatives using nano In₂O₃ and nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr separately in C₂H₅OH at room temperature

Entry	R ^a	Product ^b 1(a-j)	Nano In ₂ O ₃		Nano In ₂ O ₃ .Cr		M.P.(°C) Observed (Literature Value)
			Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	
1	-H	1a	45	86	10	93	102 (101) ³⁶
2	4-CH ₃	1b	50	82	20	88	113 (113-114) ³⁶
3	4-Cl	1c	40	84	15	93	146 (147) ³⁶
4	4-NO ₂	1d	45	85	10	95	267 (266-268) ³⁶
5	4-OCH ₃	1e	55	83	20	87	103 (101) ³⁶
6	2-NO ₂	1f	50	81	15	90	102 (104-105) ⁴⁰
7	4-CF ₃	1g	35	85	10	94	144 (143-145) ³⁷

8	2-CH ₃	1h	55	80	25	85	66 (63-66) ³⁸
9	2-OH	1i	38	82	25	86	86-88 (87) ³⁹
10	2-NH ₂	1j	35	79	22	88	102-103 (106-108) ⁴¹

^aAldehydes(1.0mmol) were reacted with o-aminophenol (1.0mmol) in presence of nano-In₂O₃ and nano-In₂O₃.Cr in C₂H₅OH as catalyst

^bAll products were identified by comparing their spectral data and melting points with similar data from literature

^{cc} Isolated Yields

In Scheme 1, as the catalysts were found to be heterogeneous in reaction mixture they were removed by filtration and washed with ethyl acetate. The recovered catalysts were found to be effective in carrying out conversions for two more cycles (Table 4).

Table 4 Study of reusability of heterogeneous nano catalysts

Entry	Run	Nano-In ₂ O ₃		Nano-In ₂ O ₃ .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	1	45	86	10	93
2	2	48	81	15	90
3	3	55	75	25	88

^{cc} Isolated Yields

Under the established reaction condition, different aromatic aldehydes reacted smoothly. Aromatic aldehydes bearing electron withdrawing substituents gave maximum yield in short reaction time (Table 3, Entries 3, 4, 6, 7) as compare to those with electron donating substituents (Table 3, Entries 2, 5, 8, 9, 10). Both nano-In₂O₃ and nano-In₂O₃ doped with Cr were found to be effective catalysts in synthesis of benzoxazoles. When data of catalytic activity of both nano-In₂O₃ and nano-In₂O₃ doped with Cr was compared, it was observed that nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr could catalyze the conversions more effectively in terms of both yields and reaction time. There was considerable decrease in reaction time with enhancement in yield when nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr was used as catalyst (Table 3, Entries 1 a-j).

3.3 Study of synthesis of 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones using nano In₂O₃ and nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr

The suitable reaction conditions were established by selecting condensation between benzaldehyde, ethylacetoacetate and urea as model reaction. The model reaction was performed in presence of both nano In₂O₃ and nano In₂O₃ doped with Cr. When model reaction was performed in polar and non-polar solvents, it was observed that maximum yield of corresponding product was obtained in short reaction time when reaction was performed in C₂H₅OH, a polar solvent (Table 5. Entry 4)

Table 5. Investigation of solvent effects for the synthesis of 5-Ethoxycarbonyl -6-methyl-4-phenyl-3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-one (1b) at room temperature

Entry	Solvent	Nano-In ₂ O ₃		Nano-In ₂ O ₃ .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	CH ₂ Cl ₂	75	45	60	48
2	CHCl ₃	70	43	68	49
3	CH ₃ CN	60	55	50	61
4	C ₂ H ₅ OH	32	91	20	96
5	H ₂ O	NR	NR	NR	NR

^{cc} Isolated Yields

Similarly, catalytic activity of both nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr was studied with respect to loading amount in reaction mixture (Table 6)

Table 6. Investigation of catalytic effect of nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 .Cr on synthesis of 5-Ethoxycarbonyl-6-methyl-4-phenyl-3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-one (1b)

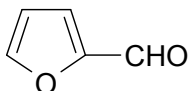
Entry	Amount of Catalyst (mmol)	Nano- In_2O_3		Nano- In_2O_3 .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	0.02	60	46	45	49
2	0.04	58	48	41	53
3	0.06	55	48	42	60
4	0.08	50	49	40	62
5	0.1	32	91	20	96
6	0.2	32	91	19	96

^{cc} Isolated Yields

Thus, both nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr were effective in small amount that is 0.1mmol (Table 6, Entry 5). Even if the amount of catalyst was increased to 0.2 mmol hardly any improvement in terms of yield and reaction time was observed.

The effectiveness of both catalysts was further studied by performing Scheme 2 in presence of nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr separately and the results were compared (Table 7).

Table 7 Synthesis of 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones using nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr separately in $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}$ at room temperature

Entry	R^a	Product ^b 2(a-j)	Nano In_2O_3		Nano In_2O_3 .Cr		M.P.(°C) Observed (Literature)
			Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	
1	-H	2a	32	91	20	96	205 (206-208) ^{42a}
2	4- CH_3	2b	35	92	25	95	168-169 (169-171) ⁴⁴
3	4- OCH_3	2c	28	89	20	93	203 (202-204) ^{42d}
4	4-Cl	2d	25	88	15	92	216 (213-215) ^{42d}
5	2-Cl	2e	30	87	20	90	221-223 (222-224) ⁴³
6	4- NO_2	2f	32	85	18	89	210-211 (211-213) ^{42b}
7	3- NO_2	2g	30	88	20	91	228-230 (229-231) ^{42d}
8	2- NO_2	2h	28	90	20	91	220-222 (221) ^{42c}
9	4-OH	2i	30	84	22	88	231 (230-232) ^{42d}
10		2j	28	86	20	89	205-207 (206-208) ^{42e}

^a Aldehydes (1.0mmol) were reacted with ethylacetoacetate (1.0mmol) & urea (1.0mmol) in presence of Nano- In_2O_3 and Nano- In_2O_3 .Cr in $\text{C}_2\text{H}_5\text{OH}$ as catalyst

^b All products were identified by comparing their spectral data and melting points with data from literature

^{cc} Isolated Yields

Study of recyclability of nano In_2O_3 and nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr

Both catalysts were found to be heterogeneous in reaction mixtures during synthesis. Moreover, it was easy to recover catalysts from reaction mixtures which encouraged checking their reusability. It was observed that catalysts could afford corresponding products for at least three times without much loss in catalytic activity as shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Study of reusability of heterogeneous nano catalysts

Entry	Run	Nano- In_2O_3		Nano- In_2O_3 .Cr	
		Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)	Time (min.)	Yield ^c (%)
1	1	32	91	20	96
2	2	40	87	25	91
3	3	48	84	35	89

^{cc} Isolated Yields

During synthesis of 3, 4-dihydropyrimidinones also, nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr was found to be more effective in carrying out conversions in terms of reaction time and yields (Table 7, Entries 2a-j) as compare to that of nano- In_2O_3 . The nature of substituents was found to have hardly any effect upon reactivity of aromatic aldehydes under the present reaction condition (Table 7, Entries 2a-j).

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, we could successfully prepare nano- In_2O_3 and nano- In_2O_3 doped with Cr using Gel-combustion method. Both nano materials were found to be quite effective as catalyst in synthesise of benzoxazoles and 3, 4-dihydropyrimidin-2(1H)-ones. It was observed that nano- In_2O_3 doped with Cr was found to be more efficient one. The presence of Cr which itself is good catalyst must be responsible for the high efficiency of the material as catalyst. The high catalytic activity of nano In_2O_3 doped with Cr could be further attributed to small crystallite size (22.4 nm), large specific surface area (75.6 m^2/g). Moreover, it was required in minimum amount (0.08 mmol) as compare to nano- In_2O_3 (0.1 mmol) in synthesis of benzoxazoles. During recycling also, its catalytic activity was found to be more sustainable as compare to that of nano- In_2O_3 . The advantages of the present protocol include the ease of preparation of nano catalysts, reusability and heterogeneous nature of nano catalysts, mild reaction conditions, easy work up and overall convenient nature of the process.

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