

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION: A STRATEGY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE

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Abstract

Nigeria is not lacking in developing beautiful plans in all sectors including vocational education. The problem has always been that of effective implementation. This paper has examined the concepts of education, vocational education, curriculum development and quality assurance. It discussed community involvement in Curriculum Implementation in Vocational Education. It highlighted courses in vocational education as contained in the National Policy on Education and pointed out that none of the courses listed can be effectively and successfully implemented without involving the community. It defined community as all people who live in a particular area or country and opined that of community is involved in curriculum implementation in vocational education the mission and vision of vocational education will be achieved. In addition quality assurance will be ensured and sustained. The paper concluded by calling on all the vocational education teachers to involve the community in implementing the curriculum.

Education in Nigeria is an instrument “par excellence” for effecting national development (NPE 2004). Education in Nigeria has witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as government intervention. Education has been defined by several people at different ages and places. Peters (1964) defined education as a process of cultural transfer of what is worthwhile in the society. Moris (1961) defined education as “the gradual acquisition of information, facts, understanding, attitudes, feelings and skills supplied by adults which the individual takes in the course of growing up”. Eya (2012) sees education as a process of developing individuals in a given society to acquire appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes, aptitudes and competencies in order to live useful life and contribute to the progress of such a society in all its ramifications. Education is so fundamental that no nation or community can progress without good education. It is the bedrock for any meaningful development in any nation.

To educate is to teach as well as to inculcate desirable values in the learner. The information, which the learner requires is contained in the various subjects taught in the school. Each subject has a specific lesson to teach the learner. This is because the content of each subject is carefully selected in such a way that it will bring about the positive changes in the learner. It is perhaps for this purpose or reason that the subject, curriculum exist. Mkpa (1 998) said that the term curriculum is an organization of the content of education into subjects of instruction.

Curriculum like education also has many definitions. (Eya 20 1 2) defined curriculum as all the learning experiences provided for the learner by the school for achievement of a predetermined goal. Specialists have used curriculum in two ways as a plan for the education of learners, and as a field of study. Oliva in Oteh & Akuma (2011) sums up several interpretations of curriculum and list them as follows.

- ...that which is taught in school
- ...a set of subjects
- ...content
- ...a programme of studies
- ... a sequence of courses
- ... everything that goes on within the school, including extra-class activities, guidance and interpersonal relationships.
- ... a series of experiences undergone by learners in a school;

The definitions variously present curriculum as planned learning, subjects or courses, intended learning outcomes, and educational experiences. No matter how this concept is defined, curriculum is central to education. Infact curriculum is the vehicle through which educational objectives are achieved.

Curriculum Development

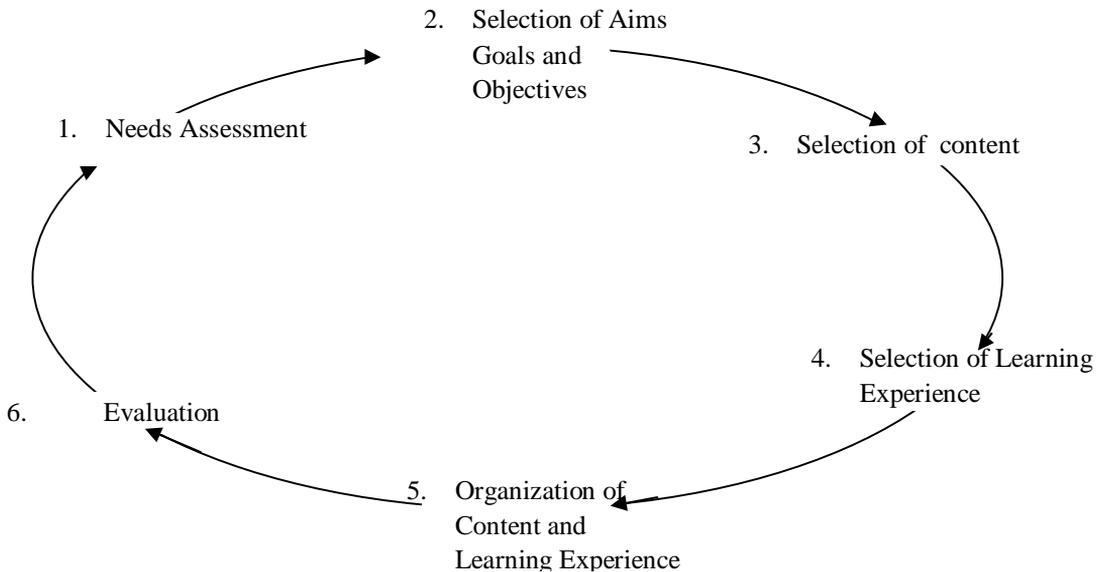
Curriculum development is the construction of the curriculum or the process of making a curriculum. "It is the mapping out of what ought to be covered within a stipulated period and at a certain level of education" (Offorma 2009).

The process of curriculum development starts with needs assessment. The stages involved differ in number with individual specialists. Tyler (1949) identified four levels which are represented in question form:-

- a. What educational purposes should the school seek to attend?
- b. What educational experiences should be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
- c. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
- d. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained? Taba (1962) outlined seven major steps of curriculum developments.

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Wheeler (1978) outlined five levels. Other models abound but they are very much Oteh and Akuma (2010) came up with a modified model of six steps. This model is cyclic as shown below:



In Nigeria, curriculum is developed for four education levels of

1. Early Childhood/Pre-primary education
2. Basic Education (Primary and Junior Secondary education)
3. Post Basic Education (Senior Secondary level)
4. Tertiary Education level (Colleges of Education,

At these levels of curriculum development, the community is usually considered. This is because the societal norms, traditions, human and economic resources are necessary influencing factors in curriculum development.

The major agency responsible for curriculum development is the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Other agencies are:- The National Universities Commission (NUC) for the Universities, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) for the Polytechnics, National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) for Colleges of Education. The three agencies-NUC, NBTE and NCCE publish minimum standards for each programme, discipline or course of study. Accreditation of programmes in Universities, Polytechnics and Colleges of Education is based on these minimum standards.

The NERDC develops curriculum for the other three lower levels of education:

- i the Early Childcare Development and Education (ECCDE)
- ii Basic Education (Primary and Junior Secondary Education)

Curriculum Implementation

When curriculum is developed, the next thing is to implement it so that the objectives, aims and goals can be achieved. The actual execution of the contents of curriculum document is curriculum implementation. The classroom efforts of the teacher and student of a school in putting into operation the curriculum document, is equally curriculum implementation. It is to be noted that what matters more is the effectiveness of the implementation.

Community involvement is one of the strongest factors that enhance effective implementation of vocational education curriculum. Other factors militating against effective curriculum implementation include:

1. Inadequate funding
2. Inadequate teachers both in quality and quantity
3. Inaccurate data
4. Politics
5. Poor attitude of implementers
6. Inadequate supply of curriculum material
7. Non involvement of relevant stakeholders in education

These factors when properly addressed will help in the achievement of effective implementation of vocational education curriculum in Nigeria.

Vocational Education

There are varying definitions of vocational education according to authorities, time and place in literature. While many of these definitions narrowly conceive vocational education, some are too broad and can easily be misinterpreted to be general education. Committee on Research and Publication of the American Vocational Association stated in 1954 that vocational education is “Education designed to develop skills, abilities, understandings, attitudes, work habits and appreciations encompassing knowledge and information needed by workers to enter and make progress in employment on a useful and productive basis”. The committee sees vocational education as a work-oriented education, a means whereby the individual acquires occupational education to enable him function productively in his job. In the views of Maduka (1980) vocational education is a type of education deliberately designed for the development of skills and knowledge which can be useful to both the individual concerned and the society. Maduka’s definition reflects the utilitarian idea of vocational education. It can be seen from the definition that the skills acquired by an individual will not benefit him alone but also the society at large. Olaitan (1990) defined vocational education as a designed area of study for the development of skills, attitudes and appreciations including information and knowledge needed by workers to enter into and progress successfully in a chosen vocation. The National policy on Education (2004) classified vocational and technical

education as “that aspect of education which leads to the acquisition of practical and applied skills and basic scientific knowledge.

Despite the various definitions given to vocational education by various authors the main objective or emphasis is on development of skills, attitudes and understanding in an individual. Vocational education empowers an individual to be a responsible and self reliant citizen to contribute maximally to the economic development of the nation.

Community Involvement in Curriculum Implementation in Vocational Education

Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary edition defines community as “all people who live in a particular area, country etc or a group of people who share the same religion, race, job, etc. From this definition, schools are communities as well as parts of communities. Within the community where schools are members there are other establishments that are equally members. Such establishments include banks, industries, and factories. These members of the community are very useful in the implementation of vocational education curriculum. Most of the vocational education courses/subjects offered in the secondary school, require resources from the community for students proper understanding of such courses/subjects. Teachers need relevant instructional materials to drive their lesson home. They need materials like cheque book or check leaf.

Foreign currencies like Dollar, Poundsterling, Cephar etc as examples for easy understanding. These are commonly collected from the bank. Apart from these material, resources, knowledgeable personnel from these establishments could be invited to come and teach a particular topic as a resource person.

In addition, students equally can be taken out on field study to these establishments to see things for themselves. They can be taken to the post office, factories, markets, churches and Railway stations for study. Members of the immediate community can equally donate materials to the Business Studies teacher for her lessons.

The nature of the courses in vocational education is such that they require community involvement for effective implementation. According to National Policy Education NPE (2004) such courses include:

A Mechanical Trades

1. Agricultural Implements and Equipments Mechanics’ work.
2. Automobile Engineering Practice; Autobody Repair and Spray Painting
3. Automobile Engineering Practice. Auto Electrical Work
4. Automobile Practice: Autobody Mechanics” Work.
5. Automobile Engineering Practice: Autobody Building
6. Auto Engineering Practice: Part-Merchandising

7. Air-conditioning and Refrigeration: Mechanics' Work
8. Mechanical Engineering Craft Practice
9. Welding and Fabrication Engineering Craft Practice
10. Foundry Craft Practice
11. Instrument Mechanics Work
12. Marine Engineering Craft

B Computer Craft Practice

13. Computer Maintenance Work
14. Data Processing

C. Electrical Engineering Trades

15. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
16. Radio Television and Electrical Work
17. Appliances repairs

D Building Trades

18. Block laying, Bricklaying and Concrete Work
19. Painting and Decorating
20. Plumbing and Pipe-fitting

E Wood Trades

21. Machine
22. Carpentry and Joinery
23. Upholstery
24. Furniture making

F Hospitality

25. Catering craft practice

G Textile Trade

26. Garment Making (Ladies/Man Dresses)
27. Textile Trades
28. Dyeing and Bleaching

H Printing Trades

29. Printing Craft Practice
30. Graphic Arts
31. Ceramics

I Beauty Culture Trades

32. Cosmetology

J Business Trades

33. Stenography
34. Typewriting
35. Store Keeping
36. Book Keeping
37. Office Practice

K Others

38. Leather Goods manufacturing including shoe making and repairs

None of the courses listed above can effectively and successfully be implemented without involving the community. Now that schools are not fully equipped, the teachers heavily depend on the community resources for effective curriculum implementation.

More importantly in the involvement of community in curriculum implementation is the accompanying quality assurance it enhances. Nigeria has been trying like every other nation to educate her people as evidenced by efforts being made over the years in universalizing and massifying education. These efforts include the launching of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976 and Universal Basic Education UBE (1999). This has resulted in the increase in the enrolment figure of learners at all levels and increase in number of institutions. The relevant and critical question is on the quality of education. Increasing incidence of examination malpractice, indiscipline among students and staff of educational institutions and other factors militate against the quality of education. A lot of strategies have been tried in solving the problem of quality and none has proved very effective. It is the opinion of this author that if the community is involved in curriculum implementation especially in vocational education the quality of education in Nigeria will be assured. A situation where students see that their parents, the church, the industry, the professionals and the banks within their environment are contributing to their teaching and learning process, they will be more committed to their studies. When the learners become more committed, they work harder and the end result will be high quality performance. They build up their self confidence and the issue of cheating and malpractices will be reduced to a great extent. According to Obi in Eyibe (1998), "Vocational and Technical Education as a means of preparing for an occupational field must develop and maintain standards". Standards should also be maintained in terms of the quality of teachers, equipment and supplies. The financing of the programme must also meet the required standard. Above all, the inferiority label attached to vocational/technical education must be removed to enable qualified persons from different socio-economic backgrounds take up vocational/technical education.

Quality Assurance

Quality assurance according to Mohammed (2011) refers to a systematic process of checking to ensure that inputs, processes, outputs, outcomes, products or services are meeting specified requirements and minimum standards. In the field of education, this involves whole school evaluation that supersedes the traditional monitoring and inspection that have been in existence and operation since 1841 in Nigeria. It is a mechanism for evaluating the efficiency and appropriateness of teaching and learning so as to ensure the delivery of high standards of education. Quality assurance is the management of teachers, pupils, resources, school environment as well as teaching- learning activities so as to ensure that quality is maintained at every stage and that the students who emerge from the entire process conform to national norms both in terms of academic achievement, moral development and social skills. The goal of quality assurance according to Abolade (2011) “is to make every school effective”. Community involvement in curriculum implementation in vocational education to a very large extent will enhance quality assurance.

Conclusion

Vocational education is very important especially in a developing country like Nigeria. Since this aspect of education is essential, follows that all efforts should be made to implement its curriculum effectively. Involvement of community in the implementation is hereby recommended for the purposes of quality assurance. In addition, enough fund, adequate instructional materials and appointment of leaders should be on merit and performance. Above all, conditions of services of teachers should be improved since they are the final implementers of curriculum.

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