Abstract

The paper analyzed the intricate relationship between “curriculum” and development of society. First, it analyzed the concept of “curriculum” and “curriculum liberalization”. It also analyzed the concept of “Social Engineering”. The paper then surveyed the political, economic and intellectual pressures that influence different curriculum reforms. Finally, the paper discussed the relationship between education and different kinds of development.

The curriculum in any educational process and the learner are inseparable. For the purpose of this paper, curriculum is adhered to as a conscious formal educational programme of desired experiences provided in a purposely designed settings for specified benefits. This focus intends to incorporate most varying curricula views on theory and practice paradigms.

Advances in scientific study of curriculum sets in the beginning of curriculum development and liberalization to meet up with various challenges and requirements of different societies. In recent times, curriculum liberalization has reached very high proportions signified by numerous specializations and skills in all forms of human endeavours. Curriculum liberalization is observed at different levels, national, institutional and instructional levels with focus on the content, objective, the learner, the teacher and the milieu. In a nutshell, curriculum can be described as the umbrella for education since it absorbs, accommodates and covers all aspects of education. (Okoro, 2003). From the foregoing, this paper refers to curriculum and education interchangeably.

Curriculum Defined

There are various definitions of curriculum given by different specialists according to their philosophical background and experiences. These differences in the definition of curriculum is as a result of the fact that curriculum is dynamic and its development changes over the years.

General opinions held by many is that curriculum is simply the aggregate of all school subjects. Doll (1970) saw curriculum as “all the experiences learner acquire in the school. For Daniel (1985), curriculum is a written plan of action. According to Onuebunwa (2009) in Obomanu (1999) a curriculum is considered as a written statement outlining educational goals and the means of achieving them. Tyler (1994) cited in Okoro (2003) opined that curriculum consists of an orderly arrangement of series of courses and supporting activities designed to help individuals reach a long range of educational goals.

Perhaps, a more comprehensive and encompassing definition of curriculum to many people is the one given by Andrew and Howard (1974). They defined curriculum as a planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the institution of the learner’s continuous and willful growth in personal social competence.

Omieibi (2006), believed that the content of the curriculum is what learners learn while Acheuonye and Ajoku (2007) see curriculum as a systematic plan of activities learners undergo under the guidance and direction of the school which depicts the scope needed to attain the aims and objectives of a particular level. Sofolhan (1992), defined curriculum as all goal- directed activities that are generated by the school whether they take place in the institution or outside it.
From the foregoing, curriculum is the sum total of all supervised learning experiences of the school whether they are in class or out of class, on the campus or off the school campus. It includes the complete school environment, courses or school subjects. The curriculum includes all planned school activities besides courses of study, organized play, athletics, dramatics and clubs. Each school, college or university has its specific activities designed to meet the needs of the learners and society. The curriculum is a planned learning activities engaged in by the learners to induct them into society. The curricula of the various educational levels are a reflection of what the people of this country think, feel, believe and do.

**Curriculum: The Nigerian Experience**

Nigeria like other societies have witnessed various kinds of reforms on curriculum and their consequent influence on social changes. Nigeria emerged from a primitive culture to both Christian and Islamic experiences. Traditional education in Nigeria had seven (7) curriculum objectives (Fafunwa 1974) which include: “Physical training development, development of character, respect for elders and peers, intellectual training, vocational training, community participation and promotion of cultural heritage”.

The early European visitors to Nigeria came for either business or missionary/spiritual purpose and realized that Nigerians must be educated first to be good partners in progress. This was the case from 1515 up to 1843 when the first missionary school was set up in Benin with the curriculum tailored for training priests and teachers. By 1843 the curriculum included: singing, reading, catechism, writing and English. Later, both parents and pupils saw education as a means of social change (emancipation) and avenue for economic improvement” (Fafunwa 1974 in Ellah 2000). With liberalization of the curriculum, the graduates became clerks, priests, agriculturalists and teachers from the initial curriculum.


From 1882 to 1920 were the beginnings of modern formal education, when education management boards were set up to regulate curriculum, salaries and the general conduct of education. In 1887, there was an education ordinance for Nigeria which established: a board of education, Grant-in-aid, differentiated infant, primary, secondary and vocational schools. In 1909, the first government secondary school was opened in Lagos and was called Kings College, Lagos. In 1911 the first Imperial education conference was held in London for annual progress report on education. Schools for Mallams in Northern Nigeria were opened for some of the Emirs and Chiefs in which the curriculum included: Roman character for writing, Hausa, colloquial English, arithmetic geography and civics. The objective was to produce loyal emirs, educated local chiefs and contented clerks for easier colonial governance. In 1916 came the Education Ordinance with greater curriculum liberalization and grand-in-aid.

In 1920 came the Phelps-Stokes Education report on the quality and quantity of education. The report criticized the colonial education policy as not tailored to the peculiar needs and development of the people. Agricultural education was advocated for the rural areas while technical, literary and vocational education was advocated for the urban areas. Health education, local languages and character training were added to the curriculum to produce more suitable graduates for working life. The report further recommended technical and agricultural education, teacher education, medical education, law, theology and women education parallel and simultaneous with that of men. This report resulted in the 1925 memoranda on education and the Elliot Commission on Higher Education in 1943. By this time as Fafunwa (1974) rightly put it, “more people became convinced that “bread and butter” education opened the door of opportunity for good employment and good living. The Elliot Commission on Higher Education recommended a University Education in arts, sciences, agriculture, veterinary, human medicine, education, engineering and survey. The recommendation was implemented by the opening of University College Ibadan.
The first official comprehensive review of higher education in Nigeria was in 1960 by the Ashby Commission of 3 Nigerians, 3 British and 2 American experts. The commission conducted an exhaustive investigation into Nigeria’s educational needs at tertiary and higher than tertiary levels. This commission reflected on the Harbison High Level Manpower Study for Nigeria’s future and noted that: there was serious imbalance between all the levels of education, there were 80,000 unqualified teachers in the education industry, too much emphasis on literary education at the expense of technological, agricultural, vocational and business education. The commission advocated for wider diversity and greater curricular liberalization. Then came the National Policy on Education in 1978 and revised in 1981 which became necessary when “the society regarded education as a means to an end and not an end in itself”.

It emphasized responsibility, skill, work ethics, political participation, spiritual and moral values (Tamuno and Atanda, 1989). The National Policy on Education was as a result of National Curriculum Conference in 1969 and National Seminar in 1973. These events preceded the National Policy on Education at independence. Tamuno and Atanda (1989) reflected that many educationists expressed concern about lack of relevance of the Nigerian educational system in meeting the pressing economic, social and cultural needs of the nation. As a result of that the National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) provided a complete review of the entire educational system of Nigeria with a 6-3-3-4 structural framework. The senior secondary school certificates replaced the former G.C.E. ‘O’ level.

The curricular at the JSS levels includes, academic literary and pre-vocational skills. Greater emphasis was given to science and technology curricula (Yoloye, 1994). General knowledge, environmental and population education were also added to the curriculum.

On the 30th September, 1999, the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme was launched by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The UBE scheme covers three areas of education namely the formal Basic Education, Nomadic Education and Non-formal Education. The Formal Basic Education covers the first nine years of schooling (Primary and Junior Secondary Education of 6 and 3 years respectively for all children). The nomadic education is for school-age children of pastoral farmers and migrant fishermen. The literacy and non-formal education is meant for out-of-school children and illiterate adults. The objectives of the UBE programme as specified in the implementation guideline by government in 1999 are as follows:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong conscientiousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion.
- The provision of free, universal basic education for every Nigeria child of school going age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system.
- Catering for the learning needs of young persons, their schooling through appropriate forms, their complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skill as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life long learning.

In summary, at various points in Nigeria’s long journey to socio-economic development are different curriculum reforms to meet up with social changes and demands for greater socio-economic developments. And so the different curricular contributed in no small measure to the social, political and economic growth and development in Nigeria.
Social Engineering

The word “Engine” was derived from the Latin word “engenerate” which means “to create”. The English dictionary and Encyclopedia referred to engine as, a system that converts resources into action and “engineering” as the practical application of scientific resources in the control of systems for optimal conversion of resources (Crowther, 1995). Social engineering therefore is the scientific process of understanding peoples’ behaviour, predicting people’s behaviour and controlling peoples’ behaviour. In essence, it is the changing of people and society for better. As a corollary then, social engineering means social development. For this reason in this paper, social engineering and social development are used interchangeably.

Throughout history, curriculum liberalization has served as a tool for some or less systematic transmission of certain cultural heritage from one population to another (Goodlad, 1994, Hansen et al 1994). In an informal way, primitive cultures and prehistoric civilization survived by informally educating their children through spontaneous imitations and acquisition of sex roles.

Then a “saber tooth” kind of curriculum emerged out of natural challenges and quest for food, medication, clothing, shelter and security. At that period, society developed from unplanned spontaneous dependence on nature to purposeful formal plan of ways, means and skills of understanding, predicting and engineering nature for adaptive survival.

Curriculum liberalization and schooling actually, began with apprenticeship in which children watch, learn, and help skillful mentors performing specific skills or craft in designated settings. That was the beginning of education having the central purpose of adaptation and control of learning environment for survival and comfort. Only then did curriculum become a vehicle for socialization (education) or process of transmission of cultural skills, values and preparation for a working life. Learning became a formal purposeful pursuit, socialization venues became schools and teaching took a professional status. Development was then targeted and pursued.

Development, as Fagerlind and Saha (1989 and 1994) put it, is the realization and or exploitation of an individual’s or society’s potentials for personal, economic, political and socio-cultural benefits. In this paper, social development or social engineering includes economic, political and socio-cultural enhancement of either the individual or the society at large. Development is commonly perceived as the increase in the availability of scarce resources towards the eradication of poverty and the maximization of comfort. This is usually through scientific, technological and psychosocial advancement. This however, is dependent on social-political development and stability.

Curriculum: Tool for Social Development

The chronicle of different stages and phases of curriculum as presented above show how a change in society triggers requirements for curricular review to meet up with peculiar needs for society’s development. Development is commonly attributed to economic status, and so models of economic growth and development mostly imply national or individual’s economic well-being. The fact is that development is more than economic change. It includes social, cultural and political developments which are dependents on socio-cultural development and so, should be given priority and pride of place.

The “human capital theory” of development means that economic development is dependent on the mental and physical health and quality of the citizenry of any society. The self esteem, knowledge and skills of the citizenry constitute the quality of the labour force. Thus, education is meant to produce people who have the following indices of social development;

1. Physically and mentally healthy
2. Have the necessary knowledge and skills for functional survival
3. Satisfied with basic human needs.
Curriculum as a Tool for Social Engineering and Development

In details, Fagerlind and Saha (1989 and 1994) analyzed the characteristics of socially developed or modern citizenry to include the followings:

i) Positive attitudes, beliefs and values
ii) Open to new experiences
iii) ready for change
iv) Disposed to holding opinion, but appreciates diversity of attitudes and opinions.
v) Fact-oriented in forming opinion
vi) Knowledgeable of the past while focusing on the present and future
vii) Having sense of self worth
viii) Having trust in people and institutions
ix) Having sense of long term planning
x) Having regard for general education and technical skills.
xi) Having respect for people and animals.

Studies (Inkeles and Smith, 1974, Obanya 1984) has shown a high positive correlation between good education and manifestation of those characteristics of socially developed people. Other studies (Fagerlind and Saha, 1994) showed that in 32 Mexican states, educational level was positively related with the acquisition of basic needs like good health, good nutrition and clean water.

However, the relationship between education and social development is not all roses. By this is meant that education does have its social disadvantages for example, popular “brain drain”, disruption of traditional social relations, educated elitism etc.

Education and Political Development

Education, historically, has been seen to play significant role in the political socialization of the citizenry in the forms of positive political attitudes, values and behaviour. These in turn, bring about: political integration, participation, consciousness, patriotism, leadership and power sharing. Any society characterized with these political qualities is likely to have political stability in which its citizenry have a sense of belonging and egalitarianism and in turn, brings about greater political development.

Education and Economic Development

As stated earlier, economic development depends on sound social development and political stability. A study showed that educational attainment increases productivity in specific areas, while Fagerlind and Saha, (1994) in their study showed that higher levels of education is related to opportunities to change jobs of higher skill demands and of higher income. Psacharopoulos (1985) in a 7-year study of 60 countries showed high positive correlations between investments in education and economic growth and development in those countries.

Conclusion

At every point of a society’s history is the instability of her levels of development and so the need for greater development. Every need for greater development in turn requires curriculum change to affect the quest for development. As such, different societies have witnessed various types of intellectual, political and economic pressures for change which resulted in various curriculum reforms. Education is a major agent of social, political and economic development, but only if it is properly thought out, planned, funded, implemented and supervised. So also, only if education is adapted appropriately to the development needs of any particular society will it bring about the desired social engineering.

Recommendations
1) The curriculum in any learning process cannot be separated from the learner and as such, learner’s interest, His social and psychological milieu must be considered in developing the curriculum.
2) The maturation level of students, their range of assimilation and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) must also be considered while developing curriculum. The reason being that when contents that are delivered in the class are within the student’s realm of understanding learning will be achieved.

3) The teacher’s familiarization and specialization on the content also has an impact on the learning process. The curriculum should therefore be structured in such a way that the teacher is familiar with its contents, have specialization in it and can interpret and deliver its contents effectively so as to promote and facilitate students learning.

4) It should be noted that curriculum development process is not complete until it is implemented. The designers of the curriculum should endeavour to see that they ensure regular visit and supervision of the implementers of the curriculum at various levels and stages of the programmes.

References


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