

QUALITATIVE CURRICULA AND STAFFING POLICY, PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA HIGHER EDUCATION FOR SKILL ACQUISITION: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

This paper centers on Curricula and staffing policy planning and implementation in Nigeria Higher Education for skill Acquisition. A well planned and implemented educational programmes and policies become a developmental tool for empowerment and sustenance for self, the family, society, the entire nation and the world at large. This is because, such educational programmes empower the recipients toward economic self-reliance and maximum productivity and poverty eradication. However, this paper notices some constraints posed by curricula in the higher institutions vocational and technical education faculties/departments. The curricula are noticeably outdated, too theoretical and civil service-oriented consequently such curricula cannot lead to skill acquisition. Another area looked at was the entry qualifications of the students who are being trained. Majority of the applicant and entrants are got from pre-degree/pre-NCE and/or rejects from other faculties/departments. This affects the quality of staffing. As a result of the above points on curricular and staffing, the paper suggested/recommended that the curricula of education faculties/departments should be replanned, redesigned and implemented to be broad based leading to skill acquisition and self reliance. There should also be adequate manpower planning and implementation in terms of staff training and total preparation of the would be trainers. There should also be adequate quality and uniformed admission policy.

Introduction

Education is a developmental tool for empowerment and sustainable development for the family, the society and the entire nation and

the world at large. If education is well planned, organized and co-ordinated, it generates positive impacts on learning and facilitate the realization of those desirable changes which are expected in the learner.

The broad goals of tertiary/higher education in Nigeria as stated in National Policy on Education (NPE) (2004:36), are to;

- Contribute to national development-through high-level relevant manpower training;
- Develop and inculcate proper values for the survival of the individual and; society;
- Develop the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments;
- Acquire both physical and intellectual skills which will enable individuals to be self-reliant and useful members of the society;
- Promote and encourage scholarship and community service;
- Forge and cement national unity; and
- Promote national and international understanding and interaction.

These goals are well planned and laudable. How have Nigerians benefited from this plan? How have the products of Nigerian higher education acquired the necessary skills to be self-reliant and productive members of Nigerian society? These goals are realizable through proper teaching, learning and research in tertiary institutions. It is therefore expected that such knowledge from education should be well planned. World Bank (2007) stated that knowledge has become the most important factor for economic development. Similarly, the

Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2006 advocates functional education to promote skill acquisition, entrepreneurship and self-employment. It is expected that functional education will help the poor economic climate in Nigeria which has worsened the unemployment rate functional education will also lead to the achievement of the objective of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategies (NEEDS) aimed at empowering people through inculcating the right types of values, attitudes and skills.

In view of the problem of high level unemployment among products of higher institution in Nigeria, high poverty level and total lack of necessary skills for self-reliance, there is need for a qualitative revisit to the curricula and staffing, through proper planning and implementation of higher education or programmes in Nigeria for redirection to enhance skill acquisition entrepreneurship and eventual self-reliance

Policy Planning and Implementation in Higher Institutions

Planning is the process in which one decides in advance what to do, how to do it and who to do it. In planning policies are formulated, goals set, feasibility study carried out and forecast or projection made. Individuals, government and even the society or communities are all involved in planning.

Dror (1963:50) defined planning *"as the process of preparing a set of decision for action in the future, directed, at achieving goals by optimal means"*. Planning according to Stellar (1980:240) can be viewed as *"a proposal for the future organization of an enterprise which makes dear (he present status of the enterprise, its intended direction and a clear cut statement of the procedures of getting to its intended objectives"*. Two main concepts arise from the two definitions;

- a set of decisions or proposals which are designed to impact on the future of an organization,
- by identifying the procedures to meet set objectives.

This paper will therefore refer to planning as a set of decisions designed to impact on the future of higher educational clearly defining the procedures aimed at achieving the set objectives.

Implementation refers to the carrying out or the execution of the various course of actions determined at the planning stage of policies to achieve the objectives of (higher education) organization.

Higher education policy refers to statements, which guide and direct all actions and activities aimed at achieving national development through higher education. According to Maduabum (2006) a relationship exists between educational policy and planning which is a statement of aims and ideals, which leads to implementation.

Tertiary education also referred to as higher education by the National Policy on Education (2004): *"the education given after secondary education in Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, including those institutions offering correspondence courses"*. The goal of tertiary education is to primarily contribute to national development, through high level relevant manpower training. Therefore, tertiary education contributes to human resource development through training, which eventually lead to economic, scientific, social and technical development. The current thinking worldwide is that higher education should develop in the beneficiary certain number of generic skills to a level that will ensure the continued creative productivity of the individual. (World Education Forum, 2000:70 Education For All 2000).

As retrieved from
http://www.undp.org/nidg/basjcs.sh_tnil,

16.12.2007 the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were adopted at the world's summits of the 1990s by world's government as a blueprint for a better world in the 21st century. The goals represent a global partnership in response to the calls of civil society on the level of imbalance the socio-economic development across the countries, regions and races of the world. The actions and targets contained in the Millennium Development goals was signed in September 2000, during the United Nations Millennium Summit attended by 147 heads of state and governments.

The eight MDGs break down with eighteen quantifiable targets and forty-eight indicators are as follows:

Goals 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goals 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goals 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goals 4: Reduce child mortality
Goals 5: Improve material health
Goals 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Goals 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goals 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development (MDGS: Basics, 2007)

The realizable target years is 2015, Emphasis is on children, women and gender equality, poverty eradication and empowerment. Empowerment will enable Nigeria citizens especially the target persons-children, youth and women- to be assertive, proactive and independent thereby, creating sustainable growth and development.

However, national growth and development depends on the industrialization network, which comes with the technology and vocational education available and utilized in that nation. Technology and vocational education is a programme that demands high scientific knowledge as well as manipulative, practical skills needed for industrialization and self-reliance.

What is Vocational Education?

Olaitan (1982) defined vocational education as *"that part of the total experiences of the individual whereby he learns successfully to carry on a gainful occupation"*. He further stressed that, it is an aspect of education that provides individuals with skills necessary for entry into gainful occupation. Similarly, Okoro (1999) sees vocational education as *"that aspect of total education process that focuses on individual occupations"*. He further stated that its function is to provide knowledge, skills and the attitudes that are necessary for entry into and progress in an occupation.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in the National Policy on Education (NPE) defines vocational education as *"that form of education which is obtainable at the technical colleges"*. The same documents outlined the \ goals of Vocational and Technical Education as follows:

- (a) to provide trained manpower in the applied science, technology and business particularly art and craft,
- (b) to provide the technical knowledge and vocational skills necessary for agricultural, commercial and economic development,
- (c) to give training and impart the necessary skills to individuals who shall be self-reliant economically.

Poor Currila: Constraints to Realizing the Goals for Skill Acquisition:

In pursuance of the goals of vocational and technical education to make Nigerian citizens acquire skills for self-reliant, the government developed curricula for these areas of education. Technical and Vocational Courses are run by Universities, Polytechnics, Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Technical Colleges and Commercial Schools all over Nigeria run courses. In spite of this establishment, there is still high level importation of goods,

Unemployment, poverty, crime, and total lack of self-reliance. How appropriate, relevant and up to date are the curricula of the Nation's tertiary institutions' vocational and technical departments? Curricula have not been able to impact the desired skills in the trainees as the curricula operated in most technical education institutions are outdated, According to Yakubu (2006) the curricula have been in use for about fifteen years. It needs review and upgrading.

Any curriculum to be mounted should be tested for relevance before use. Some curricular irrelevant. They emphasize the humanities and pure science ignoring technical, vocational and entrepreneurial curriculum.

In order that the courses mounted in our University should have a cumulative effect, they must be organized such in a way that each subject in the curriculum must reinforce the other. Additionally, what is to be studied should be so arranged so as not to duplicate (the curriculum (Agwaranze, 1998). Tanner and Tanner, (1980) saw curriculum as the reconstruction of knowledge and experience, systematically developed under the auspices of the school to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge or experiences. It is therefore expected that higher education curriculum should be so designed to take the experiences the individuals acquire adequately prepare them to become responsible citizens who can contribute meaningfully to the needs of the individual, society, organizations and industries. The National Board for Technical Education (1988), highlighted the content of the curriculum to include; practical and theoretical skill and knowledge essential to fulfill the requirements of the specific job objectives, to equip the student with adequate communication and small business management skills, a sound knowledge of political, social and economic environment as well as all round knowledge not only to become skilled worker and or employee but also to

become self-employed. This is what leads to skill acquisition.

There is therefore need to adjust the present curriculum in use in our higher institutions to have more technological and vocational education in the quest towards national development to attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS). In spite of Nigeria's commitment to higher educational programme, there is problem between policy formulation and implementation Egonwan (1993); Ajayi (1995); Nwana (1997) and Oriafor (1997) variously stated that there is gap between the intended curriculum and the attained curriculum as a result of various variables and factors.

The declining quality of University graduates and their inability to be self-sufficient or employed is due to lack of skill acquisition. Oyeneye (2006) noted that Nigerian Universities running the civil service system-based courses initially meant to develop people for the top civil service job, have made private employers of University graduates to consider them misfits. Chukwuma (2001) pointed out that the training employees receive from higher institutions is largely theoretical to the negligence of professional skills and other appropriate skills of University graduates. Thus Ajayi (2004) stated that the current thinking, is that the University should develop in the beneficiary a certain number of generic skills to a level that will ensure the continued creative productivity of the individual.

It is the view of this paper that one important sector that will lead to the achievement of skill acquisition and the attainment of MDGs by the year 2015 is implementation of the Federal Government of Nigeria Programme through the Directorate of Employment (NDE) of eventually establishing entrepreneurs hip programme to train graduates of Universities, Polytechnics, Monotechnics, and Colleges of

Education to be self-employed through the reviewing and development of courses/programmes in higher Institutions.

There is need to revisit and replan the technical and vocational education curricula in Nigeria higher institutions. It is an established fact that the curricula being operated in our technical institutions and faculties/departments are outdated. This is the reason UNESCO project has advocated revitalizing of technical and vocation education in Nigeria. Anho (2008) explained that UNESCO advocated the revision and updating of the existing curricula for new disciplines in three main engineering areas; electrical, mechanical and civil building. The paper explains that the purpose of the review is to make the curricula more practically oriented with clear guidelines for teacher activities and student experiences aimed at utility self-reliance and productivity. This will result in skill acquisition.

Entry Qualification and Curricula of Training Teachers in Higher Institutions a Constraint

Agusiobo (1997) pointed out that effective skill acquisition and entrepreneur education is indispensable towards empowering people to produce a self-reliant nation with dynamic economy. There is a strong need for entrepreneurship skills to be embodied into such curricula.

Business education programmes are not exposing students adequately to current and relevant information, and modern information technology that are required to enhance entrepreneurship awareness and motivation are lacking in business departments (Ojukwu, 2000) A good curriculum is never static but dynamic. The curriculum of technical and business education at present, need to be revised so as to accommodate entrepreneurship and technological skills acquisition as the modern technological

innovations were not there when the present curriculum was planned in 1989 (NBTE, 1989).

1) Curricula Review

The curriculum of faculties, departments and schools of business, vocational and technological education therefore, need to be revised and updated to accommodate entrepreneurship, technological and vocational skills that can lead to self-reliance and respond to the needs of the society.

To meet the policy goals of NPE, the challenges facing the Vocational and Technological Education in Nigeria, the curriculum should institute flexible, workable and adaptable programme for the graduates to be able to meet work expectations, create jobs for themselves and for others. The National Universities Commission (NUC) and the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) should emphasize uniform instructional objectives and minimum academic standards to ensure capacity to provide the required service as to employer. There should be use of uniform curriculum of studies in the same courses or programmes in all-higher institutions. The prospects in the curricula are that the curricular of training craftsmen for skill acquisition has four components namely: General Education, Theory and related courses, workshop practice and industrial training/production work. This innovation of including general education has the prospect of removing the frustration and inferiority complex of candidates of associated with skill acquisition tertiary institutions

2) Staffing.

The stipulated minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession is Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE). The courses, which lead to the award of this certificate, are offered in Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Schools of Education, Institutes of Education of Universities National Teachers Institute Faculty

of Education in Universities, the Nigeria Institute for Nigerian Languages (NINLAN) and the National Mathematical Center (NMC). These various bodies run courses in various subjects to provide teachers for the primary, junior and senior secondary schools. Areas of study, which leads to entrepreneur study and skill acquisition, include the technical, business and vocational education.

It was expected that adequate manpower training and preparation will go a long way in realizing the objectives of these higher institutions. To ensure adequate quality and uniformity in the administration of the Universities, Colleges and Schools, the National University Commission (NUC) was instituted for Universities while the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) was established for College of Education to lay down standards for all programmes. One constraint to the proper implementation of the various programmes over the years is deficiency in entry requirements into the faculties of Education and the Colleges of Education, which has led to much dependence on the pre-degree/pre-NCE programme for recruitment of entrants. The quality and quality of teachers/lecturers in Faculties/Colleges/Schools of Vocational and Technical Education pose an obstacle to the implementation of the skills acquisition programme. The National Certificate of Education (NCE) (technical) holders are the prescribed teachers for teaching technical courses at the Junior Secondary School level. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), which advocates the recruitment of Advanced Craft Certificate holders with two years, post qualification work experience as technical teachers' is yet to see its implementation. The situation is pathetic that the products above and those holding degrees in Vocational and Technical Education prefer to work in companies and industries to teaching. This has resulted in shortage of technical teachers or low quality of

technical and vocational teachers. The National Policy on Education did not state where the teachers for Polytechnics will be trained.

As Okoro (2006) indicates that vocational technical education teachers are looked upon as not capable of holding administrative position in Universities and Colleges. This according to him (Okoro) is because the Universities and Colleges of Education with vocational schools denied instructors position of responsibilities as heads of departments and deans of faculties; whereas their counterparts of equivalent status salary wise are given positions of responsibilities as heads of department and deans of faculties. This discriminatory tendency could deter brilliant would be vocational educators. Therefore the structure of vocational technical education should be adopted to put an end to the discrimination.

The NCCE Minimum Standard (2002) stipulates that (the minimum (caching and technical support staff for a class of 15 students for each major area of specialization should include one lecturer, instructor, store-keeper and cleaner respectively. The document also stipulates a minimum of eight lecturers comprising one specialist per discipline and three others per department. This applies to staff work-load which states that a full time staff should have minimum teaching load of eight credit units per semester. However, a closer look reveal that some faculties/departments have over 500 students in each programme with only 2 lecturers and 1 instructor while some others with over 400 have just 2 lecturers and only 3 instructors. (NCCE Minimum Standard, 2002). This call for recruitment of more qualified lecturers and instructors, to address the shortage of qualified technical staff. The teachers to teach the revised, up-dated curricula should be properly trained and retrained to suite the new curricula.

Conclusion

The success of skill acquisition in Nigeria, depends on the curricula in the higher institutions' vocation and technical departments/schools and the staff to handle/implement the curricula. Thus the emphasis is on efficient redesigning/planning, implementing, and monitoring of the curricula and staffing situations. Adequate qualified lecturers/instructor should be recruited and properly motivated. There is need to improve staff remunerations as obtainable in other countries. This is to elicit commitment, efficiency and total good disposition from staff. Research grants should be given to both staff and students to encourage skills acquisition and develop the problem solving skills, geared towards addressing, economic, technological, agricultural, scientific and educational problems.

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