

CHALLENGES OF EFFECTING INNOVATION AND CHANGE IN THE CURRICULA OF THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Education is an excellent instrument for effecting positive changes in the behaviour of individuals. For expected changes to occur, curriculum is a veritable tool to be used. The need for curriculum innovation and change is a clarion call on all stakeholders in the educational sector. The purpose of education is a factor that affects curriculum innovation and change. Barriers to curriculum innovation and change include perception of stakeholders, organizational structure, non-implementation of educational reforms, absence of follow-up, lack of holistic approach, absence of support, the change process, expectations and attitudes and lack of professional development of the curriculum implementers. That teachers must accept the inevitability of change and understand the rationales for proposed change and innovations is one of the recommendations proffered.

Education is an excellent instrument for effecting positive changes in the behaviour of individuals. For expected changes to occur, curriculum is a veritable tool to be used.

There are numerous definitions of curriculum. Tyler (1949) defined curriculum as “all of the learning of student which is planned by and directed by the school to attain its educational goals. Taba (1962) simply put it as “a plan for learning”. Wheeler (1972) viewed it as “planned experiences offered to the learners under the guidance of the school. Tanner and

Tanner (1975) wrote that it is the “planned and guided learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school for the learners’ continuous and willful growth in personal-social competence. Enaibe (2013) opined that curriculum is the totality of learning experiences that the learners (are expected to) acquire in a learning environment.

In general, curriculum can be described as the working tool for one to become educated. It is the planned interaction of pupils/learners with the instructional content, materials, resources and the processes for evaluating the extent to which educational objectives have been achieved.

Curriculum ought to be dynamic, according to the Progressives’ viewpoint. There is need to bring innovation and changes into the curriculum from time to time so that the individuals being educated with it can keep pace with the changing nature of the society, science and technology.

Innovation has to do with the introduction of new things, ideas or ways of doing something that has been introduced or discovered (Hornby, 2010). Innovation refers to renewing, changing or creating more effective processes, products or ways of doing things. An innovation is something original, new and important in any field to enhance improvement in that field. Note that innovation differs from improvement. While innovation is the notion of doing something different, improvement refers to doing the same thing better. It relates to the

search for motivated teachers who will promote the development of the teaching/learning process, the renewal of methods of teaching and learning, the management of students in participatory learning, etc.

Change means to become different; to make something different. It may refer to the process of becoming different or making the form, nature, content of something different from its status quo. It may be described as the adoption of an innovation in which the ultimate goal is the improvement of outcomes through the manipulation or alteration of practices.

The phrase "Curriculum Innovation and Change" can, therefore, be described as the extent to which change and innovation can be effected on the curriculum to yield more efficient and effective results in the attainment of the objectives of the school system. The extent to which the curriculum is managed is a key factor to the success of any programme. The educational system needs constant monitoring. This needs to be done in order to identify areas that can be worked upon for possible improvement.

Factors Affecting Curriculum Innovation and Change

The need for curriculum innovation and change is a clarion call on all stakeholders in the educational sector. In order to keep abreast with the demands of globalization, it is necessary and obligatory that practices in the educational sector be reformed and reappraised continuously. There is need to update one's professional knowledge, upgrade and update one's practices in the field of research and national trends of events.

Changes too numerous to mention have taken place over the years in the educational sector. Such changes in the curriculum, school structure, staff-student relationship, from teacher-centred to student-centred curriculum etc display the great need for reformation in the teaching

practices; school the learners in the educational system.

No doubt, innovation and change are necessary ingredients to promote the practices of the curriculum. It is, therefore, pertinent to examine the factors that can affect or influence curriculum innovation and change. These factors are:

[1] Purpose of Education

The purpose of education is a factor that affects curriculum innovation and change. According to Inlow (1966), "the purposes of education relate directly to the factors that facilitate or hinder curriculum change. These purposes are threefold: cultural transmission, environmental adaptation and total personality development".

One of the reasons why people go for education is that they want to develop their personality. The intellect, mental, emotional, aesthetics, social, ethical and psychomotor combine to make a person who or what he is. A fully educated person should possess traits such as self-acceptance, autonomy, high-frustration tolerance level, patience, consistency in values, etc. This they ought to get from the home, community and school. In the school, the formal education to be provided should not be through the academic channel alone. Other areas of personality development in the emotional, social and physical areas should be considered. The programme/curriculum should focus on all the channels or areas extensively so that the results at the end will fulfill the purpose of education. After all, curriculum arises from the values that a culture upholds. Hence, if the curriculum does not emanate from the culture of the society it serves, then it will be like a Christian who does great works in the Lord's Vineyard but has no faith.

Cultural transmission makes a society to be able to uphold its beliefs, ideas, values, etc for many generations. Individuals or

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citizens who have undergone the process of education are supposed to have gone through this cultural transmission so that they can adapt to the environment since no organism can grow unless it first adapts to its environment.

However, if the adaptation to the environment is an end in itself, then situations become static. If it is a means to an end, then the question of “what are the subsequent or proposed ends?” will arise.

Any fundamental change in the intellectual and social outlook of any society has to be preceded by an educational revolution (NPE, 2004). In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education rightly spells out its national goals, philosophy and purposes of education.

On page 6 of the Nigeria National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004), the five main national goals are the building of:

- [a] a free and democratic society;
- [b] a just and egalitarian society;
- [c] a united, strong and self-reliant nation;
- [d] a great and dynamic economy;
- [e] a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens.

In a related development, the philosophy of education in Nigeria is based on:

- [a] the development of the individual into a sound and effective citizen;
- [b] the full integration of the individual into the community; and
- [c] the provision of equal access to the educational opportunities for all citizens of the country at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside the formal school system. (NPE, 2004)

Based on the philosophy of education, national educational goals are spelt out. These national educational goals which derive from the philosophy of education as stipulated on page 8 of the NPE (2004), are:

- [a] the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity;

- [b] the inculcation of the right type of values and attitudes for the survival of the individual and the Nigerian society;
- [c] the training of the mind in the understanding of the world; and
- [d] the acquisition of appropriate skills and the development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live in and contribute to the development of the society.

In order to be able to achieve all these laudable philosophy and goals, the curriculum and quality of instruction at all levels have to be properly channelled towards inculcating the following values as spelt out in the NPE (2004):

- [a] respect for the worth and dignity of the individual;
- [b] faith in man’s ability to make rational decisions;
- [c] moral and spiritual principle in interpersonal and human relations;
- [d] shared responsibility for the common good of society;
- [e] promotion of the physical, emotional and psychological development of all children; and
- [f] acquisition of competencies necessary for self-reliance.

The purpose of education are spelt out in the NPE (2004) for each educational level of the school system (for the Pre-Primary Education – page 11; Primary Education – page 14; Secondary Education – pages 18 and 19; Mass Literacy, Adult and Non-Forman Education page 25; Science Education – page 29, Technical and Vocational Education – pages 30 and 31; Tertiary Education – page 36; Teacher Education – page 39; Technology Education – pages 41 and 42; Open and

Distance Education – page 45; Special Education – page 48).

The question is, “To what extent are these goals/purposes achieved?” For effective results of these goals and purposes of education, a lot of changes and innovations need to take place in the curriculum from time to time. For instance, when the educational system was changed from the 6-5-4 to 6-3-3-4 structure, a curriculum emerged that addressed all the aspects of the new system. Now that the 9-3-4 is in vogue to focus attention on Basic Education for the first 9 years, some aspects of the curriculum have been modified; new courses/subjects have been introduced. Innovation and changes have taken place in the curriculum.

Consequently, in the actual fulfillment of the goals/purposes of education of any nation or society, there is need for curriculum innovation and change in order that all the aspects of cultural transmission, environmental adaptability and personality development can be achieved.

[2] The Educational Structure

One thing to note is that the nature of the structural framework of education is hierarchical. In this hierarchy, each sector is composed of people who have varying goals, interests, needs, values and opinions. These varying perspectives of individuals result in different groups that possess different cultures, structures, practices, policies and goals. All these factors determine the success or failure of the implementation of change and innovation.

Educational institutions are structured or organized on many levels – from the level of the individual or single classroom which is placed under the management/supervision of a single teacher, then the level of groups of classrooms under the supervision of a Head of Department or assistant head, the whole school structure under the guidance and management of the Head teacher/Principal (Provost or Vice Chancellor); all these levels are under the control of the Local Education Authority and/or the Ministry of

Education at the local, state and federal levels headed by the Chief Inspector of Education, Commissioner and Minister respectively). There are, of course, private schools whose management also reports to the school board or ministry.

What is the significance of this hierarchy? There exists the possibility of improvement in the practices and outcomes of the participants within each level of this education hierarchy. For instance, an individual teacher at the classroom level will look for new ways or methods of teaching the class for more effective results or may innovate new assessment/evaluation processes that will be of great benefit to the learners of that class.

Moreover, the Local Education Authority officers may organize new systems of distributing equipment for schools to improve the curriculum; the Commissioner or Minister of Education may design/instigate new procedures that can address some ills or deficiencies or bridge inequalities in human and non-human resources among schools.

All these actions are geared towards innovation and change and hence the educational structure is one of the factors affecting curriculum innovation and change.

Innovations that are introduced at national, state or local levels that have no political support from law/policy makers do not often achieve their purpose. Even if the teachers who are the implementers of the curriculum do not give adequate support to innovation/change, success is not expected (Enaibe, 2013).

[3] School Culture

The way a department or faculty or school is organized can have a significant effect on the process of innovation and change. In the class, the teacher controls the teaching and class assignments, assessment of outcomes, the evaluation procedures, the management and discipline of the class.

A teacher who is mandated to teach the same class year in year out will become efficient and there is reduction in class preparation time and effort. There is also provision of consistency in the curriculum.

However, the consistency of the teacher in teaching the same class can lead to stifling of the curriculum and teaching, innovation and change. As Enaibe (2013) rightly remarked, many teachers use the same method to teach a topic year in year out because they are not innovative. So the conservative attitude of teachers (administrators and ministry officials) is a factor. They feel threatened by any change because they want the curriculum static to ease their job. If different teachers or instructors are made to teach the class, there is room for new preparation to consider new approaches to the course. Consequently, periodic rotation of the teaching force or teaching responsibilities of the teachers will encourage or promote innovation and change in the curriculum. The size of the school (whether large or small), the nature of the school (whether private or public), the mission of the school (whether teaching or research), are contributory factors to innovation and change in the curriculum.

Repeatedly, inability of teachers to effect the desired change or innovation can affect it. Lack of knowledge or understanding of new methods, skills, etc will create a gap in implementation.

[4] Students/Learners' Opinion

Current students may feel that any change in the curriculum may impact on their degree or course of study negatively. Consequently, it is essential that the personnel in charge of effecting an innovation or change notifies the current students and involve them in the process of change at an early stage.

In addition, students who have graduated and prospective students can be involved because they can contribute valuable input for the curriculum innovation and change project.

[5] The Nature of Change Itself

The question of what to change or innovate matters. Is it the entire curriculum? Is it the curriculum of a level of the educational system (e.g the primary school curriculum, the secondary school curriculum, or undergraduate curriculum, or post-graduate curriculum, etc.) Is it a small portion of each of the curriculum for the different levels? The identification of areas of change is the initial stage of the change process and it is a factor affecting curriculum change.

[6] Funding Possibilities

The possibilities of getting enough funds to effect changes in the curriculum can also pose as a factor affecting curriculum innovation and change. Curriculum innovation involves huge sum of money. If there is lack of fund to provide necessary human and non-human resources or to sponsor teachers to workshops or recruit new teachers who are expected to implement the curriculum, then the curriculum innovation faces a problem.

[7] Dependency on Other Countries

When a country is not stable in its educational policies and tends to depend on other countries for some of her needs in implementing the curriculum, problems must surface. If a country depends on external funding for its innovation programmes, there is a set back if the funding is withdrawn.

In a related development, inconsistency in the execution of the curriculum can also be a factor militating against curriculum innovation and change. For instance, frequent changes in the educational system of this country – Nigeria – in a bid to copy from other countries' system of education have landed the educational system into a mess. If educationists are asked today what type of educational system is practiced in Nigeria, they will give different answers.

[8] Non-Involvement of Teachers in Decision Making

It is a common practice that teachers are often left out of the scheme of affairs when it comes to re-examining the existing curriculum or planning a new curriculum to introduce a new course, scheme or system. This is not supposed to be so because the teachers being the curriculum implementers are supposed to effect innovation or change at the classroom level. So, if they are not involved in the decision making, then curriculum innovation will be hampered.

[9] Poor Dissemination of Information

On normal basis, a gap in communication causes a lot of havoc in obtaining the desired result. Therefore, if information about any new change in the curriculum or school system is not properly passed across to the stakeholders or people concerned, then the expected result will not be achieved.

Innovation and change are not easily obtainable goals because at every stage there are dynamics in operation that may resist the proposed change. Many aspects present barriers to achieving effective change. Paradoxically, the same factors that influence curriculum innovation and change are also the things that can pose as barriers to the achievement of the innovation and change. The barriers can be itemized as follows:

[1] Perception of Stakeholders

The stakeholders include the students, teachers, administrators, parents, employers, the wider society etc. All these sectors are concerned with educational structures and procedures.

All these stakeholders have their perceptions which can pose as barriers to change and innovation implementation. For example, students' perception about school work is that it involves reading and writing. So, if classroom practice becomes participatory, their perception is that of not actually engaging in learning. That has already caused a barrier.

Parents on one hand expect their children to spend much of their school time in writing-

based activities as they experience in their school time. Even some employers still require a subjective assessment based on examinations for lower level employment before the employer can be promoted to higher level positions when they have got higher order skills.

The amount of written work, the format of examination and classroom experiences in our schools that are not effective can cause barriers to any change.

If the stakeholders do not understand the implications of the change and for the change, they will not participate effectively in the process of change. Moreover, teachers, parents, students, administrators may be resistant to the change because they are very comfortable with the way things are.

[2] Organizational Structure

The way the school is organized into different faculties/departments and the way subjects are allocated to teachers to teach year in year out will pose as barriers to curriculum innovation and change.

[3] Non-implementation of Educational Reforms

This has often resulted in huge wastage of fund, human and non-human resources and lost potential. Implementation of proposed innovation is a complex one to achieve. Educational reforms are difficult to think about and are even more difficult to put into practice. The failure to review critically prevailing philosophies and assumptions when formulating new strategies is a cause of failure to implement innovative decisions and practices.

[4] Absence of Follow-up

For the effective creation of change to be achieved, one does not stop at the implementation phase of the change. There is

therefore the need for continued attention to be paid to the expected outcome. There is need for follow up in the evaluative procedure taken to monitor the desired result. When desired outcomes have been successfully achieved, there is need for continual monitoring or follow up to promote sustainability of such success. Consequently, the absence of follow up is a barrier that can act as a deficiency to the implementation procedures, future evaluation procedures and provision for future amendments. If effective evaluation and monitoring take place, the weakness of implementation of any change will be exposed and necessary amendments will be highlighted and accomplished.

[5] Lack of Holistic Approach

If an ill-conceived change in the curriculum is rapidly introduced into the school system without considering the effect it has on individual parts of the system or the system as a whole, it results in fragmentation of the system rather than its coagulation. This piecemeal approach will be ineffective in producing the desired educational outcome.

[6] Absence of Support

Stakeholders that are involved in any change process ought to undergo a learning process so as to appreciate the objective of such a proposed change. They are supposed to create room for the new practices and are to be permitted or encouraged to achieve personal and professional growth before attempting to implement the change. However, these processes need support which in most cases are not got from the bodies or organisations concerned. Absence of financial, moral, psychological, etc support can affect the process of innovation and change.

When money, manpower and supplies of resources are not provided to effect a change, the staff will not be interested in adopting any new practice.

[7] The Change Process

The process of change is itself a barrier to achieving change. In any on-going change, there is bound to be disturbance to what was formally in vogue (the status quo) and this is likely to cause friction.

[8] Expectations and Attitudes

In many cases, administrators force changes on schools without providing them with training and resources and yet expect the change to be immediate and the realization of success to be prompt. Such expectation is unrealistic and such unrealistic expectations often result in failure. Moreover, the negative attitude from stakeholders of the educational system can paralyze change in the curriculum. Many teachers, for instance, often condemn their students as having dull brains and as good-for-nothing people who are no materials for education. In such a situation, what chance does any change have to be effected? In addition, students and parents may condemn the school system as not representing their interest well; administrators may condemn teachers as not being competent enough in their work; even the community may view the school and its staff as failures. If all these negative attitudes persist among the stakeholders, then educational reform movements may become frustrated and hindered.

[9] Lack of Professional Development of the Curriculum Implementers

Many teachers have conservative attitude towards change because they do not have the professional knowledge to back up the implementation of such a change. For instance, the library has advanced from mere store of books to usher in computer technology for users. Digital technology is presently making great impact on school libraries. A classroom teacher librarian who acted as a custodian of the books in the 60's must have Information Technology (IT) skills to utilize the resource in

present day school system. If he lacks such I T skills, he will not be able to implement any change in the library system. In the normal classroom, a new curriculum introduced without a corresponding professional teacher in that area will meet its waterloo. For instance, when the educational system of 6-3-3-4 came on board, it was the federal government's plan to ensure that learners of the first "3" system become self-reliant at graduation. Expensive equipment were supplied to all the secondary schools for use to train the learners to become proficient in different vocations. Why did the plan collapse? It is because the manpower to implement the new curriculum was lacking. So, lack of professional teachers for the curriculum change was a barrier to the successful implementation of that laudable curriculum change.

For curriculum change to occur successfully, teachers must be properly trained because they are to implement the change. There is a dearth of quality of personnel services. Present practices are inadequate to meet changes in work, knowledge and citizenship while serving a greater number of students with diverse background and emotional objectives.

Conclusions

A perusal of the definitions of curriculum, its indispensability in the educational sector and the explanations of the key words – curriculum, innovation and change – buttress the need to change the curriculum from time to time and embrace innovations regularly. No doubt, effecting innovation and change in the curriculum of the Nigerian educational system is faced with numerous challenges.

However, constant monitoring of the educational system to see areas that need innovation and change and abiding by the various proposals in the Nigerian National Education Policy will go a long way towards effecting needed innovation and change in the curriculum. It is the hope of the writer that if the

recommendations are adhered to, the challenges can be positively resolved.

Recommendations

Without doubt, curriculum innovation and change is very crucial to any institution. The ability to sustain such innovation and change is also very important. A lot of innovative teaching and learning practices are taking place in the education sector. However, this is done to motivate and aid the stakeholders involved in the process. In order to encourage curriculum innovation and change and sustain it, the following can be considered:

1. Learner-centred education is a major curriculum innovation that can address political and economic goals. How teachers teach and how learners learn have become more important than what they learn. A paradigm shift from instruction to learning is required to adequately serve the clients of educational institutions which in turn require an alternative in procedures for improved outcomes. Replacing role learning, call-and-response forms of learning with more modern learner-centred styles has become an area of interest linked to the achievement of the projects of the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Learner-centred and outcomes-based education is ideal but it is unsustainable without major financial assistance to provide the conditions necessary for successful learning and teaching in the classroom implementation of innovation and change.
2. New approaches to teaching and learning need to be improved upon to be in line with the changing nature of the education process.
3. Teachers must accept the inevitability of change and understand the rationales for proposed changes and innovations.

4. Fund should be made available, for support of teacher-development projects, purchase of equipment and funding of changes in the curriculum. A supportive atmosphere for innovation can encourage stakeholders to innovate new practices.

5. Curriculum planners at the macro level should pass down new approaches to teaching and learning promptly. All stakeholders of the education sector should be well acquainted with such changes. It should be understood that end-user innovation is crucial to developing new practices and approaches.

6. There should be an established relationship between the innovation, the capacity and disposition of the innovators and the environment in which the innovation occurs.

7. Curriculum content should be balanced to stress the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

8. Educational opportunities should be divided equally among all learners regardless of their Social Economic status and ability differences.

9. There should be increased personal services. Classroom teachers and school administrators should promote mental health and live by the same values.

10. There is need for positive attitudinal approach to issues because such approach can lead to successful achievement of philosophies, purposes and goals of curriculum innovation and change.

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