

**ASSESSING CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA
SECONDARY SCHOOLS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY
HURDLES AND PROSPECTS.**



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Abstract

Curriculum implementation in this 21st century is bedeviled with many problems. This paper tries to discuss the concept of curriculum implementation, factors hindering the effective implementation of the curriculum which include lack of facilities, instructional materials, absence of teachers participation in decision! curriculum planning, inadequate of qualified teachers, lack of funding, and motivation. Finally, some recommendations for effective implementation of secondary school curriculum are made.

A necessary tool for societal development is education. Education is able to achieve this only when its curriculum(heart and soul of the school) is well planned, developed and implemented. It is when this is achieved that the learner is said to be fortified for acquisition of further knowledge and development of skills. “A learner who is well grounded in acquiring appropriate skills and competences, becomes not only effective, but also competent and contented in his/her future life. He also functions by contributing meaningfully to the society’, (Okoro, 2007a:91).

The Concept of Curriculum

Knowledge, attitudes and skills which are imparted to the learners by the school are referred to as curriculum. This embraces what is to be taught and how it should be taught. Knowledge means facts, information and understanding which learner need to acquire through experience in the course of instruction. This requires the learner to be competent in his discipline. In the acquisition of attitude, the learners need to acquire a particular way of thinking or behaving which is initiated by feelings, interests and emotions in the course of instruction. Again, curriculum products also include acquisition of skills. Skills refer to the ability to expertly use our hands, legs, entire body in combination with facts in our brains in order to perform a task. It goes beyond mere recalls of facts to applying them along with body movement to perform a task, (Eze, 2009:40), Deducing from the above definitions, instances can be given with dancers, drummers, typists etc, they perform their tasks of dancing, drumming, typing by coordinating the movements of the eyes, hands, legs, body movements, among others. Take for instance, a typist coordinates the activities of the fingers, eyes, reading ability and speed in typing and his competency is recognized with his efficiency on the above qualities.

It could be seen here that curriculum is visualized as a force that produces change, action or effects. To this end, Agusiobo (2003) in Okoro (2007a) considers curriculum as;

An organized framework that sets out the content that children are to learn; the processes through which children achieve goals which the curriculum sets for them; what educators do to help children to achieve these goals and the contexts in which teaching and learning occur. In addition to this, Ivowi (2008) opines that curriculum is a tool designed for educating a person in order to change the orientation, behaviour, actions and values of that person whose concern is not only to develop self but also the world around him. It is an instructional guide which is documented to be utilized for teaching and learning for the realization of desirable changes in the learners under the guidance and supervision of the school. One may pose to know what is meant by the utilization of the mentioned document and this leads us to the concept of curriculum implementation of which its effectiveness is highly desired in this 21st century.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

The term curriculum implementation has been defined in different ways by different scholars. Ivowi (2004:12) defined curriculum implementation as “the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action”. Onyeachu (2008) viewed curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combined effort of the teachers, learners, school administrators, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environment. All these definitions show that curriculum implementation is the interaction between the teachers,

learners and other stakeholders in education geared towards achieving the objectives of education.

Factors Hindering the Effective Implementation of the Nigeria Curriculum at Secondary School Level are;

There are so many implementation issues in secondary education curriculum. They include:

- Lack of infrastructural facilities.
- Lack or inadequate provision of instructional materials.
- Absence of teachers' participation in decision-making and curriculum planning.
- Lack or inadequacy of qualified teachers.
- Lack or inadequate funding.
- Lack or Inadequate Motivation of Teachers.

Lack of Infrastructural Facilities

Facilities are plants, equipments, buildings, furniture such as tables, chairs which enable workers to perform their work effectively. To Ehiamealor (2001:305) facilities are: "those factors which enable production workers to achieve the goals of an organization." Supporting Ehiamealor, Olorok (2006) noted that the use of instructional facilities enhances learning experiences and leads to interaction within the learning environment. The issue at stake is to what extent are these facilities being provided for effective implementation of secondary education curriculum? Facilities are not provided adequately. What is found in most schools in Nigeria are dilapidated buildings, leaking roofs, lack of chairs and tables for students and teachers use. These affect students' performance. Lamenting on the type of building found in our schools, Nwachuku (2005) remarked that, the public sector of education (primary and secondary levels) have witnessed stagnation and decay.

He further complains with dismay that most schools are a caricature of what schools should be in a modern state, collapsing buildings, leaking roofs, unkept surroundings, houses with few or no public toilets, a disdain for aesthetics, schools that are designed and run merely to maintain the status quo, that is, poor quality services for majority of the populace. This issue needs to be re-addressed because of its negative effect. Appreciating the importance of facilities, Ehiamealor (2001:305) opined that: "school facilities are the operational inputs of every instructional programme. The school is like a manufacturing organization where plants and equipment must be in a top operational shape to produce result". In line with the views of Ehiamealor (2001), Ivowi (2004) noted that to ensure that curriculum must be effectively implemented, infrastructural facilities, equipment, tools and materials must be provided in adequate quantities.

Lack or Inadequate Provision of Instructional Materials

This is another implementation issue in secondary school curriculum. Instructional materials which Dike (1987) described as alternative channels of communication which a teacher can use to compress information and make them more vivid to his learners is needed for effective school curriculum. Appreciating the need to improve instructional materials for effective teaching and learning in Nigerian schools, Onyejemezi (1991:67) asserted that: all learners in the various levels of the nation's educational system are expected to be provided with appropriate learning experiences. A systematic integration of variety of resources in a teaching learning process or environment produces appropriate learning experiences, which in turn results in effective (active) or meaningful learning. Onyejemezi (1991) further noted that, since experience implies activity of some kind- it is not simply something that happens, experience for the learners means having them (learners) see, hear, touch, taste, make, do and try.

Instructional materials are ways and means of making the teaching and learning process easy, more meaningful and understandable. Babalola (2004) noted that as ingredient is to soup, so also is resource materials to curriculum implementation. These instructional materials are lacking in Nigerian secondary schools, as a consequence, teachers take to teach chalk and talk as they have no visual or audiovisual materials which the students can see, touch, smell and hear in the process of teaching and learning. Onyeachu (2006) observed that when instructional materials are not available learners cannot do well. This means that when learners are not doing well, the set objectives of education cannot be achieved.

Absence of Teacher's Participation in the Decision-Making and Curriculum Planning Stages:

For the set objectives of education to be achieved, teachers must be involved in decision-making and planning of curriculum. Observing the importance of involving teachers in decision-making and planning of curriculum, Obinna (2007:8) observed that: "no government policy on education can be realized if it does not first of all perceive the problems and opportunities before initiating decision-making process." The teacher is in the best position and most qualified resource person to be consulted. Mkpa (1987:345) emphatically remarked that: "as a most important person in the programme of curriculum implementation, the teacher must be involved in all stages of the curriculum process." Obinna (2007) found out that in most cases, teachers are deliberately neglected when major decisions on education and matters concerning their welfare are taken. This ugly situation has tragic and negative consequences on curriculum implementation. This is an implementation issue that needs to be looked into. This is necessary because, as Ugwu (2005:234) observed, the relevance of a curriculum is determined only when it is faithfully implemented. Kanno (2004) recognized the fact that the success of any curriculum, significantly, depends on the

extent to which the classroom teacher is able not only to interpret the curriculum but to implement it. No wonder Ereh (2005) concluded that teachers characteristics can make or mar curriculum implementation since the responsibility of interpreting and putting the curriculum into use solely rests with the teacher. Unfortunately, these teachers are not involved in decision-making and curriculum planning.

Lack or Inadequacy of Qualified Teachers

This is one of the critical issues in implementing secondary school curriculum. For any programme to be successfully implemented, the implementer must be adequate. Okoro (2008) noted:

It is disheartening to note that in most schools; very few teachers are in existence to the extent that in most cases, teachers are compelled to teach subjects that are not their areas of specialization. For instance, a situation where a teacher who read Christian religious knowledge is allowed to teach English language and mathematics, one wonders the type of knowledge he is going to impart to the learners since no teacher teaches what he does not know.

The question that arises is how can we get adequate number of qualified subject teachers to handle effectively all the subjects meant for secondary education? This needs to be looked into for appropriate action because as Offiong (2005) observed, the teacher is a major hub around which the success of education revolves. Lassa (2007) therefore viewed the teacher as the key to proper development of the child and consequently they are needed in greater number in all the secondary schools.

Lack or Inadequate Funding

This is another issue that affects implementation of school curriculum. Fund refers to money. Every project requires money for its effective implementation. Confirming this, Onyeachu (2006) noted that, no organization functions effectively without fund. Unfortunately, fund allotted for education is grossly inadequate. This affects implementation of a well designed curriculum. Onyeachu continued: CA situation where there is no money for payment of teachers salaries, purchase of equipment, books, furniture and other facilities, teachers cannot perform effectively". Commenting on the negative effects of inadequate funding of education in Nigeria, Nwachuku (2005) lamented that the present level of underfunding by the state, the public sector of education (primary and secondary levels) has witnessed stagnation and decay. Supporting Nwachuku (2005), Gwany (2006:87) observed that: "In Nigeria, education receives less per capita funding than many other African countries." Gwany further noted that the education industry is usually the first and easiest victim of budget cuts during "Austerity""Low profile""Structural Adjustments" and other economic strategies. This means that for the well designed curriculum of secondary education to be implemented, the issues of money have to be addressed.

Lack or Inadequate Motivation of Teachers

Motivation can be described as anything that encourages an individual to perform his or her duty in an expected manner. Ofoegbu (2001) viewed motivation as any force that would reduce tension, stress, worries and frustration arising from a problematic situation in a person's life. Ofoegbu further argued that where such an incidence of tension, stress and worries are traceable to work situation, it might be referred to as negative organizational motivation. He therefore described teachers motivation as those factors that operate within the school system which are not available to the teacher but would hamper performance, cause stress, discontent and frustration all of which subsequently reduce student quality output. This means that in order to improve performance on the part of students, teachers have to be motivated. Ugwu(2005) therefore is of the opinion that when a person is gingered to do something, that person is motivated. To that end, he noted that for a worker to live up to expectations, such worker must be motivated. He must in addition to getting his salaries and entitlements, be given other incentives and materials which will make his work easier and faster for him. In implementing school curriculum, the teacher who is the key actor needs to be motivated. The issue at stake now is how can a teacher be motivated so that he can do the work of implementing the school curriculum well? Teachers can be motivated by all the stakeholders in education by realizing the need to regard teachers as the number one worker in their list to be cared for in terms of prompt payment of salaries, promotion and payment of other allowances and remunerations.

Conclusions

Effective curriculum implementation at secondary school education level is an issue as well as a challenge in Nigeria, that is worthy of discussion. This is because secondary education provides a solid foundation to other educational levels in that it teaches the rudiments of every subject to the students between the ages of 12 to 16 plus.

In this 21st century, effective curriculum implementation at the secondary education level is seen as a challenge in that all that are required for this to be carried out are not provided. Products of Nigerian educational system are not functioning as expected. This results in Nigerians employing other nations services when expert hands are needed to perform certain special tasks. One of the causes is that effective curriculum implementation has failed at the tender stage of our secondary education.

Recommendations

For effective implementation of school curriculum, the following recommendations are made: Provision of facilities should be by a combined effort of the government, parent Teacher's Association and school administrators. Teachers and students should provide instructional materials. The government should equally assist in the provision of both visual and audio-visual instructional materials. International Journal of Research Development Teachers should be involved in decision-making and curriculum planning. State government should employ adequate number of qualified

subject teachers so that they will handle all the subjects meant for secondary education. Enough funds should be allotted for secondary education so that payment of teachers salaries, allowances and other remunerations should be done with ease. This will as well make purchase of instructional materials and provision of facilities possible. Monies allotted for education should be judiciously used. To ensure this, there should be a monitoring team that monitors how monies meant for secondary education are used.

The government should ensure that information and communication technology facilities are used in all schools. This can be done by sending computers and computer instructors to all secondary schools. The federal and state government should listen to the teachers' cry concerning Teachers Salary Structure (TSS), implementing this will motivate them to work harder and better.

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