

SELECTING THE MOST APPROPRIATE STRATEGY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NIGERIA IN THE AGE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY



Hadiza Shehu Korau

*Department of Education,
Umaru Musa Yar'adua University,
Katsina.*

Abstract

In the early formative years, what, when, where and how the child learn are vital to child's success and his/her future education and indeed the rest of his/her life. In this age of Information and Communication Technology, the what, when and how are influence by the global trends of information network that found their ways into the child room. The degree of attention planners give and the time used in school, the quality and range of learning materials, methods, and assessments adopted are critical matters requiring expertise and creativity in planning. This paper addressed the concepts, aims and objective of early childhood education as outline in the National Policy on Education in Nigeria (FRN 2004), factors affecting the sustainability of early childhood education are outlined; valuable recommendation for its success were offered.

Early childhood education is a time bridge building. It is a time in a child's life when bridge are build between the shelter of home and the demands of the school, between play with a few neighborhoods; Brothers, sister, Relations, and friends to that with many children. The Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004) in her National Policy on Education defined early childhood education as "the education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering the primary school. It includes the crèches, the Nursery and the Kindergarten". It is a period of human development, which falls between ages of three to five or six. It is a period marked with significant changes and reorganization in child's behaviours; (Ibrahim, 2010).

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a general term used to describe the range of technologies for collecting, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing and transmitting information. ICT is the technology which supports activities involving the creation, storage, manipulation and communication of information together with their related methods, management and application (Oliver, 2000).

Therefore the application of ICT in the operation and utilization mechanism of early childhood education is in no doubt a yardstick for determining the quality of its effectiveness. This paper attempts to look at the philosophy and, objective of early childhood education in Nigeria as contained in the National Policy on education and the Strategy for selecting for selecting the most appropriate curriculum Nigeria.

Philosophy and Objectives of Early Childhood Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (FRN,2004) outlined the purpose of pre-primary education to be:

- (a) *Effect a smooth transition from the home to the school.*
- (b) *Prepare the child for the primary level of education.*
- (c) *Provide adequate care and supervision for the children while their parents are at work (on the farms, in the markets, offices, etc.).*
- (d) *Inculcate social norms.*
- (e) *Inculcate in the child the spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music and playing with toys etc.*
- (f) *Develop a sense of co-operation and team-spirit;*
- (g) *Learn good habits, especially good health habits; and*
- (h) *Teach the rudiments of numbers; letters, colour, shapes forms etc through play.*

The curriculum implication of the above stated objectives can be seen as follows: a good curriculum must be based on a good source which reflects the values of the society for which it is designed. Yunusa (2008) explained that the major purpose of curriculum theorizing is to make recommendations as to what is to be taught, which design the curriculum should take the dissemination strategies that should be adopted, how the learning experiences should be outlined, and how the curriculum should be evaluated.

Anderson (1965) as cited Yunusa (2008) suggested that every curriculum designed must have in mind the following components: the learner, a purpose, content, and process. Teachers of early childhood education must account for, and resolve in some consistent way the following questions:

How can I know the child, prepare and manage a classroom environment (PMCE) which will promote his optimum learning? How can I define, identify, select and use (DISU) my instructional objectives to determine the scope, direction and emphasis of the learner learning experience (DSDLLE)? How can I select and organize these experiences (SDE) so as to aid the child to achieve worthwhile educational ends (WEE)?

Selecting the Most Appropriate Strategy for Early Childhood Education in Nigeria in the Age of Information and Communication Technology- Hadiza Shehu Korau

How can I evaluate so as to determine the extent and quality of child's development (EECD) towards these ends?

Selecting the Most Appropriate Strategy

Warnock, (1977) stated that to promote genuine entitlement a curriculum must not only be common to all, it must also be genuinely suitable for all. According to (Kelly, 2004), the curriculum must be such as to promote equality of empowerment. It must be geared towards the development of capacities and capabilities which will support every individual in developing as an autonomous member of a free and genuinely self-governing community and it must do this in such a way as neither to favour to disadvantage any individual.

Therefore any curriculum used should be developmentally appropriate, this means that whatever happens to a people in school, what they are taught, the activities they participate in and how they are taught, should be appropriate to their physical, emotional, social and cognitive levels of development.

Furthermore an appropriate curriculum for a democratic society, then would be one which allows for the continuing development of knowledge and understanding which provides proper opportunities for a people to develop their powers of autonomous thinking and offered them social and intellectual empowerment and which provides teachers with the scope to achieve these goals through the exercise of their own judgment as professionals.

Therefore the formulation and application of criteria for judging which curriculum is better is essentially a device which could be used to translate consideration derived from the study of the sources for curriculum development into the function curriculum. These criteria includes the function of school in society, need and interest of society, nature, needs and interest of the learner, learning process nature of knowledge and of the subject matter. These criteria are a collective set of screens through which only experiences that are valid in the light of all pertinent consideration find their way into the curriculum, to produce a balanced, effective, efficient as well as well as a better curriculum it is necessary to retain only that content and those learning experiences which services the rigorous screening of all relevant criteria these criteria are:

- ❖ Validity and significance of content.
- ❖ Consistency with social realities
- ❖ Balance of breadth and depth
- ❖ Provision of wide range of objectives
- ❖ Learn ability and adaptability to experiences of the students.
- ❖ Appropriateness to the needs and interest of the student.

1. Validity and Significance of Content

This refers to the acceptability and importance of the curriculum content. The content to be selected and organized in the curriculum must be acceptable and of great importance to the society for which it was meant to serve. Curriculum content is valid and significant based on the degree to which it reflects contemporary knowledge and recognizes the fundamental basic knowledge that form the basis for attaining the set national goals.

2. Consistency with Social Realities

The set of curriculum that a people want “will naturally tend to reflect their values and their practices”.(Barrow, 1973).

A good curriculum must be consistent with social realities. In other words, it must go hand-in-hand with what actually obtains in the society for which it was meant to solve. This is so when the content is selected from the scientifically valid and fundamentally significant knowledge. For instance Nigerian education after independence was accused of being a by product of colonial government and lack Nigeria cultural, economic and social orientation. This necessitated the demands of the National Curriculum conference and subsequently the 1981 National Policy on Education. This criteria requires that the curriculum content should develop the knowledge and perspectives commensurate with the type of world in which the society live.

3. Balance of Breadth and Depth

A good curriculum must be balanced in terms of scope and in depth understanding and analysis of whatever was included in the curriculum it must provide a wider coverage and intensive analysis of the curriculum content or activities. The criteria recognize the need of a curriculum that broadly covers and understand fully clearly certain basic principles, ideas or concepts and their application or transfer. This refers to basic learning (facts, content, subject matter) which, according to (Ajala, 2002), that the student needs to help himself towards optimum realization of his life goals to the greatest extent possible.

4. Provision for Wide Range of Objectives

An effective curriculum should provide for the achievement of a wide range of educational objectives. Such objectives may include acquisition of significant new knowledge and the development of increasingly more effective ways of thinking, desirable attitudes and interest and appropriate habits, values, and skills. A realistic plan for a wide range of objectives may bridge the gap between the ideal and the practice. What is needed is the experiences included in the curriculum content could produce the knowledge of facts, ideas and practices they are meant for.

5. Learnability and Adaptability to Experiences of the Child

For effective learning and teaching the abilities of students must be taken into consideration during the selection and organisation of learning experiences. A reason for this lies in the fact that many skills, ideas and insights expected of students to learn are beyond their abilities. Similarly, the adaptation of curriculum to ability of the learners means modifying the scope of content covered or the pace of learning. Since there exist individual differences among learners (like high and low ability, fast and slow learners and middle and moderate mentally retarded) this requires logical development and utilization of all variety of talents.

6. Appropriateness to the Needs and Interests of the Students

A good curriculum is only appropriate when it considers the needs and interest of the learner. Therefore the curriculum planners must decide where in the curriculum content certain needs like psychological, social, the ego and integrative needs can be placed and to what extent. Hence a more reasonable look at the special needs, interests, weakness, strength and existing concerns of the learner in what is taught and how it is taught must be contained in any curriculum before it is judge as effective or better. Since it is part of the purpose o education to promote personal growth the interest and needs of the learners themselves must be put into consideration.

Conclusion

This paper makes a case for the adaptation of a diversified curriculum strategy which will take into consideration the values, cultural and religious diversity of Nigeria as a nation, and at the same maintaining a Uniform Philosophy. Effective and efficient information sharing is crucial strategy in this new era. Increase in the volumes of relevant at timely information, resources and source globally is made possible by information and Communication Technology (ICT). As the national policy on Education (2004) rightly outlined that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play-ICT provide an avenue where by its curriculum content to be taught using play method. The recent MTN Educational bundles is a right step in the right direction.

Recommendations

- Basic ICT knowledge should be incorporated in the country teacher education programmes. The National Commission for College of Education (NCCE) should ensure that.
- Workshops and seminars should be organized periodically to emphasize and provide refresher courses for ICT usage among early childhood/pre-primary education teachers in Nigeria.
- Integration of the private sector into the provision, management and funding of ICT facilities for early childhood education.

- International collaborations should be sought for sponsorships and in installing ICT facilities in Nigerian Education institutions.

References

- Ajala, J.A. (2002): *Designing Content of the Curriculum Guided to practice*. Ibadan, My Best Publishers.
- Barrow, R. (1973): *Common Sense and the Curriculum*: London; George Allen and Unwin.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004): *National Policy on Education* Abuja: N.E.R.D.C. Press.
- Ibrahim, D.S. (2004): *An Evaluation of the Strategies for the Implementation of Post Literacy Curriculum for Adult Learners in Kano State*. BUK, Unpublished M.Ed. Thesis.
- Kelly, A.V. (2004): *The Curriculum Theory and Practice*. London Sage.
- Warnock M. (1988): *School of Thought*. London:Feber & Feber.
- Yunusa, B.M. (2008): *Issues on Curriculum*. Zaria:Yag Enterprises.