

CURRICULUM AS INSTRUMENT FOR ACHIEVING THE SEVEN POINT AGENDA IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study is on curriculum as instrument for achieving the seven point agenda in Nigeria. The Seven Point Agenda was formulated to promote national development. To achieve the seven point agenda, using curriculum as a tool the curriculum at all levels of education should incorporate academic potency, scientific and technological skill and vocational skill. The paper suggests that if this curriculum is implemented, it is intended to equip the recipients with useful vocational skills to enable them perform routine tasks in the society thereby, helping to achieve the seven point agenda.

Introduction

As the driving force of this administration's policies and programme, the president Umar Musa Yar'dua's administration on August 1st 2007, came up with the "seven point Agenda". The 7-Point Agenda must be properly conceptualized and comprehensively articulated, and the implementation strategies adequately laid out to ensure their realization. It is not a new thing in Nigeria, that when a new administration is sworn into office, they always come up with "new" policy or order. The experience of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) introduced by the Babangida regime is still fresh in our memory. The Obasanjo regime came up with the "Fight Against Corruption" crusade, and to achieve this they set up the EFCC and ICPC. All the aforementioned policies were formulated to promote national development.

Curriculum according to Okoro (2004) are those experiences which the individual has in school or under its jurisdiction can curriculum be used to achieve the seven-point agenda? This paper therefore addresses the following issues:

- ⇒ Umar Yar'Adua's seven point agenda
- ⇒ How far they have been achieved
- ⇒ Curriculum as an instrument to achieve the seven point agenda.

Umar Yar'Adua's Seven Point Agenda

The following is a summary of the 7-point Agenda

- ⇒ **Power and Energy:** To develop an adequate power supply so as to ensure Nigeria's ability to develop as a modern economy by the year 2015.
- ⇒ **Food Security:** The emphasis is on the development of modern technology, research, financial injection into research, production and development of agricultural inputs leading to a 5 to 10 fold increase in yields and production. This is supposed to result in massive domestic and commercial output and technological knowledge transfer to farmers.
- ⇒ **Wealth Creation:** This reform is focused on wealth creation through diversified production especially in the Agricultural and solid mineral sector. This requires Nigerians to "choose" to work, as hard work by all is required to achieve this reform.
- ⇒ **Transport Sector:** The transportation sector in Nigeria with its poor road networks is an inefficient means of mass transit of people and goods. With the goal of a modernized and industrialized Nigeria, it is Mandatory that Nigeria develop its transport sector.
- ⇒ **Land Reforms:** While hundreds of billions of dollars have been lost through unused government-owned landed assets, changes in the land laws and the emergence of land reforms is supposed to optimize Nigeria's growth through the release of land for commercialized farming and other large scale business by the private sector. The final result is supposed to assure improvements and boosts to the production and "wealth creation initiatives".

- ⇒ **Security:** An unfriendly security climate apparently “preclude both external and internal investment into the nation”. Thus security will be seen as not only a constitutional requirement but also as a necessary infrastructure for the development of a “modern Nigerian economy”.
- ⇒ **Education:** The two-fold reforms in the educational sector are supposed to achieve the “minimum acceptable international standards of education for all” The question one may ask at this juncture is: What has been achieved so far.

Review of the Achievement made so Far on the Seven Point Agenda

According to (2008 nigeriafirst.org) the status of the Seven Point Agenda is as follows.

- i. **On power and energy:** Presently the electric energy output of the country is roughly 2000mw out of a total capacity of 6000mw, which they have never reached.
- ii. **On land Reform:** The Yar’Adua administration promised to change the land laws and the emergence of land reforms so as to optimize Nigeria’s growth through the release of land for commercialized farming and other large-scale businesses by the private sector. Instead of the government taking up the land, developing it for housing estates and making it affordable for ordinary people to rent or buy, land is never allocated to ordinary people.
- iii. **Food security:** Majority of our farmers still use the old implements like the hoe and the cutlass to cultivate their land. Modern implements like tractors, harvesters and the simple watering can are beyond the reach of ordinary farmers.
- iv. **Education:** The present state of Education in Nigeria is pathetic. Education they say is the bedrock of any development. Quality is disaster; with secondary school levels at a 13% quality rate and primary school levels are even lower than this. The literacy rate in Nigeria is presently less than 20% while in Asia it is 90% and Japan has a 100% literacy rate.
- v. **Transport:** Most of the roads in the country today are death traps.
- vi. **Wealth Creation:** Most factories that are supposed to employ people are folding up due to lack of power and high cost of running generator. In a population of 140 million, just about one million are employed.
- vii. **Security:** The government cannot guarantee security of life and property for its citizens when a majority of her able and educated men and women who are willing to work have no jobs.

Having reviewed the achievement made so far on the 7-point agenda, how then would curriculum score as an instrument to achieve them? Before we look at curriculum as an instrument to achieve the 7-point agenda let us discuss the concept “curriculum”.

What is Curriculum?

Many experts in the field of education have variously defined the concept curriculum. The definitions offered vary according to the orientation of the educators concerned. According to Farrant (1988) curriculum represents that distilled thinking of society on what it wants to achieve using education as a tool. It tends to mirror society itself, reflecting its aims, values and priorities. It spells out clearly the knowledge society considers important and useful. For these reasons, an examination of a national curriculum/package reveals a great deal about the country in question.

Tanner and Tanner (1975:35) defined curriculum as:

a planned and guided learning experience and learning outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the institution or agency for the learners continuous and willful growth in personal social competence.

The above definition tells us that one major focus of the curriculum is the child who in the course of schooling selects, course(s) and other activities that align with his needs and aspiration. Other activities such as clubs, sports/games, etc are important contributors to the total development of the individual. From this perspective therefore, the curriculum should be considered as both academic and non-academic.

Curriculum as Instrument for Achieving the Seven Point Agenda in Nigeria

Eisner and Vallance in Anwukah (2000) classified curriculum into five major orientations viz

- i. Curriculum as development of cognitive processes
 - ii. Curriculum as technology
 - iii. Curriculum for self actualization
 - iv. Curriculum for social reconstructing and
 - v. Curriculum as academic rationalism
- i. **Curriculum as development of cognitive processes:** This is concerned with refining the intellectual operations of learners. Under this orientation, the goals of schooling should be to supply a list of cognitive skills that could be applied to many situations.
 - ii. **Curriculum as technology:** This orientation sees the function of curriculum primarily in terms of finding efficient ways of solving pre-defined problems.
 - iii. **Curriculum for self-actualization:** This orientation views the function of curriculum as providing personally satisfying consummation experience for each individual learner.
 - iv. **Curriculum for social reconstruction:** The curriculum in use must not only enable the individual to cope with change but must also, be such that it aids the education of the individual to intervene actively to shape the changes in the society.
 - v. **Curriculum as academic rationalism:** The academic rationalism approach to curriculum feels that the function of the school should be to cultivate the child's intellect by affording him opportunities to acquire the proven and most contextually powerful products of man's intelligence. Having discussed the meaning of curriculum, how then would curriculum serve as instrument for achieving the Nation's seven point agenda?

Curriculum as an Instrument to Achieve the Seven Point Agenda

The term curriculum so far in this discussion as broadly used today has come to mean those experiences, which the individual has in the school or under its jurisdiction and that curriculum reflects societal characteristics and trends. The Seven Point Agenda Policy is geared toward societal welfare and national development. The curriculum at all levels of education should incorporate three educational packages of conceptual and contextual learner based activities for their potency in the sustenance of the individual in a competitive society. They are

- i. Academic potency
 - ii. Scientific and technological skill and
 - iii. Vocational skill.
- i. **Academic Potency:** This is the traditional role of education, emphasizing the development for literacy and numeracy and the acquisition of knowledge to enable a person to play a meaningful and self-fulfilling role in society. Curriculum here borders on cultural transmission in the most specific sense. To be educated according to this orientation, is to be able to read and understand the works that the great researchers have produced. The stress here is on the classic. If the curriculum emphasizes academic potency from the early school age of the child, the individual can contribute meaningfully towards achieving the seven point agenda.
 - ii. **Scientific and Technological Skill:** The main emphasis of this curriculum is to prepare children in formal schooling and occupational settings to acquire scientific and technological literacy to enable them make informed decisions in their daily lives and function effectively as citizens in a contemporary technologically-based society.

Science and technology have been described by Millstone and Crouch (1986) as agents of both intellectual and material liberation. Science offers true knowledge that liberates mankind

from superstition and ignorance. Technology provides control over the material world and hopefully liberates mankind from hunger and poverty, poor health, inadequate housing, etc.

The Bangalore conference on Science and Technological Education and Future Human Needs (1987) identified a set of basic/technology knowledge topic areas needed for scientific and technological literacy viz:

- 1) Health
- 2) Food and Agriculture
- 3) Energy
- 4) Land, Water, and Mineral Resources
- 5) Industry and Technology
- 6) The Environment
- 7) Information, Communication and Technology
- 8) Ethics and Social Responsibility

The inclusion of science and technology education similar to the topic included in Bangalore conference should become the priority goal of our curriculum, if our seven point agenda would be achieved come 2015. Bowyer (1990) opined that knowledge in these topics has the potentials for improving traditional ways of carrying out economic and life-sustaining activities.

iii. Vocational Skill

Vocational curriculum focuses on education for work and self-reliance in this diminishing work opportunity. The main emphases is to prepare every citizenry primary and secondary schooling pupils, adults at home or in formal and non-formal occupations to acquire some skills that make for self reliance and life-long occupational independence. It is only when the citizens possess these productive skills that each can make a meaning for himself and contribute effectively to societal development.

The curriculum packages should reflect the culture of the immediate society and as much as possible be community based. Some basic vocational knowledge topic areas needed for inclusive are:

- 1) Local crafts using local resources.
- 2) Palm/cocoa/cereal production and utilization
- 3) Food production
- 4) ICT (computer software communications and technology) operations and usage
- 5) Business management (sales and marketing)
- 6) Management of resources and the environment
- 7) Farming, animal and poultry production/rearing
- 8) Road and housing construction and maintenance

If this curriculum is implemented, it is intended to equip the recipients with useful vocational skills to enable them perform routine tasks in the society thereby, helping to achieve the seven point agenda.

Conclusion

To achieve the seven point agenda every child, youth and adult need to participate in the educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. They need knowledge skills, values and attitudes required to be able to survive, live and work. Academic, scientific, technological, and vocational curricula represents the engine power that can sustain development and improve the quality of life in the society and our vision 2015.

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