

DESIGNING AND IMPLEMENTING FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM FOR ENHANCEMENT OF QUALITY PRISON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study aims at designing and implementing a functional curriculum for Prison Education. Therefore, it focused on the concept and importance of Prison Education which centres on reforming the lives and outlook of prison inmates, rehabilitating them as they undergo penal servitude so that those who had no education or functional education will acquire skills which will help them to become employable and self-reliant, and re-orientating and re-integrating them, on discharge, into the society. The paper also discussed the place of functional curriculum in Prison Education, highlighting the major designing and implementation strategies of some of the learning opportunities in Prison Education, which include: Literacy Education, Functional Numeracy Education, Citizenship and Social Education, Health Education, Moral Education, Computer Education, Vocational Education and Leisure-time Activities. Some of the design strategies include the analysis of the societal situation; determining the goals and objectives from the outcome of the analysis; identifying and selecting of content and learning experiences. The implementation strategies also include recruitment of qualified Adult Education Facilitators, training of prison wardens who are used as part-time facilitators, adequate provision of learning and instructional materials, and provision of adequate physical environmental facilities.

Introduction

Prison is an institution set up for the reformation and rehabilitation of persons convicted of major crimes so that on their discharge, they will be reintegrated and accepted back in the society from where they were convicted. Obeta, Okenwa and Ukwuaba (2009) define prison as a place of confinement especially a public building or institution in which people are confined for safe custody while on trial for criminal offence or for punishment after trial and captivity. It could also be described as a place designed and declared by the law of the country to ensure restraint and custody of individual accused or convicted of violating the law of the state (Mango, 2007). This development led to the establishment of many houses of correction for the reform of minor offenders. The main emphasis was on strict discipline and hard labour. Morin and Mario in Obi (2006) pointed out that the objectives of incarceration of offenders today in prison institutions are of two folds, namely: to ensure the security of the society by locking up those who have been convicted, and secondly, to rehabilitate them.

In Nigeria, there are many prisons. Agomoh, Adeyemi and Ogbebor (2001) posited that there are 148 prisons and 83 satellite prisons, while Obia (2005) affirmed that there are 135 prisons across the country. The discrepancy in the figure notwithstanding, the Nigeria Prison Services is set up to achieve three major goals, namely: reforming the lives and outlook of prison inmates; rehabilitating them as they undergo penal servitude so that those who had no education when they were convicted, will acquire skills which will help them to become employable and self-reliant; and re-orientating them so that they can be re-integrated on their discharge, into their communities and be accepted back

in the society from which they were convicted. This re-orientation process will enable the discharged prisoners to go back to their communities and begin to live normal, responsible, free and law-abiding lives. It is expected that the reformation, rehabilitation and re-orientation processes, which the confined prisoners pass through in prison institution will reform their lives, outlook and orientation.

Indeed, prison institution is an educational institution. Duguid (1993) stressed that it is only when governments begin to see prisons as really educational institution that the world would have a successful system which will not only ensure a quiet, orderly, well-behaved prison but also one that restores to the society the largest number of intelligent resourceful and honest citizens who had formerly wasted. Therefore, provision of adequate education (learning opportunities) to prisoners is the major step towards meaningful reformation, rehabilitation and re-orientation of prison inmates. Mango (2007) defines education as the process by which the individual acquires many physical and social capacities demanded of him by the group into which he is born and within which he must function. According to Umunadi (2008), education is the foundation upon which the skills of workforce are built. It is therefore right to posit that education is the process of packaging all the scatter-brained into one meaningful totality. Prison Education is not an exception.

Prison Education is also known as Correctional Education. Wikipedia (2008) stated that Prison Education involves vocational training or academic education supplied to prisoners as part of their rehabilitation and preparation for life outside prison. In a related development, Alkin (1992) saw it as multitude of structured and semi-structured academic, vocational, recreational, and character-building experiences that many prisons require or make available to inmates. It also refers to virtually all strategies of inmate rehabilitation, which include formal educational programmes, diverse psychodynamic therapies, schemes of inmate self-governance, family counseling, and plans for the inmate's re-entry into the community (Gehring in Obeta, *et al*, 2009).

The Need for Prison Education in Nigeria

Prison Education serves a function, which was lost at home and society. In the prison, during lesson, a prisoner must learn to cooperate with those who are neither his kin nor his friends in order to regain the virtue of cooperation and social solidarity that might have been lost. The prison-learning environment provides a context where these skills can be learned. As such, it is a model of virtuous social system that prepares him for interacting with other inmates in terms of rules. It is by respecting the rules that the inmates learn to respect rules in general, and develop the habit of self-control and self-restraint, which are the first initiation into the austerity of duty.

Also, the creation of virtuous social understanding would ensure a commitment to society, a sense of belonging, and a feeling that the virtuous social unit is more important than the vicious unit. Therefore, to become attached to the virtuous social unit, the prisoner must feel in it something that is real, alive and powerful, which dominates the person and to which he also owes the best part of him. Prison Education would help instill virtuous norms and values into a population of prisoners with diverse criminal backgrounds. When learning opportunities are open to all the prisoners, the criminal-disordering factor would be dissolved and live away from criminal life (Mango, 2007). Also, a study by the U.S federal Bureau of Prisons in Wikipedia (2008) found out that the more educational programmes successfully completed for each six months confined, the lower the recidivism rate.

After primary socialization within the family in which some children grow with criminal life, Prison Education acts as a bridge between the family and the society as a whole, preparing children for their adult role. Also, within the family, the child's truancy and maladjustment, which are ascribed to poor parenting, must be guided by education so that in adult life, the child learns to achieve a virtuous life. Thus, the child must move from the bad particularistic influences and experiences of the

family to the good universalistic influences and experiences of a good society. Prison Education prepares badly influenced people for this transition. Their conduct is watched and controlled against the prison rules. This shows that Prison Education operates on virtuous principles.

There are many illiterate and lowly educated young boys and girls in prison institutions in Nigeria. Some of them for lack of certificates cannot find nor hold decent jobs. Therefore, for lack of decent means of livelihood, they frequently fall into crimes and become convicted. Therefore, if they are not reformed during the period of penal servitude, on discharge, they will not build a life away from crimes; hence, the need for Prison Education to inmates as a means of achieving the goals of reforming, rehabilitating and re-integrating them.

Abinitio, the prison inmates, due to their confined lifestyle, cannot participate in the conventional Adult Literacy Centres in the community in which they live. Therefore, they constitute a group of Nigerians who need special literacy education that would be exclusive to them, and which will be provided within the walls of the prison institution. In line with the fore-goings, Mango (2007) outlined the needs for Prison Education inter alia:

1. To provide adequate chances for prisoners to continue with their educational pursuit while in prison.
2. To provide literacy education for those who have never had the opportunity to attend any formal education.
3. To integrate the inmates' school dropouts back to schooling in prison.
4. To provide a remedial education for different categories of completers of formal education.
5. To provide vocational and technical skills for self-employment.
6. To provide a religious education to make them more religious.
7. To enable prison inmates obtain qualifications while in prison.

In a related development, the Council of Europe (2007) under the terms of Article 15.b noted that:

- i. The right to education is fundamental;
- ii. Education is important in the development of the individual and the community;
- iii. A high proportion of prisoners have had very little successful educational experience, and therefore now have many educational needs;
- iv. Education in prison helps to humanize prisons and to improve the condition of detention.
- v. Education in prison is an important way of facilitating the return of the prisoner to the community.

Based on these, the Council of Europe (2007) recommends the governments of member states to implement policies, which recognize the following:

1. All prisoners shall have access to education, which is envisaged as consisting of classroom subjects, vocational education, creative and cultural activities, physical education and sports, social education and library facilities;
2. Education for prisoners should be like the education provided for similar age groups in the outside world, and the range of learning opportunities for prisoners should be as wide as possible;
3. Education in prison shall aim to develop the whole person bearing in mind his/her social, economic and cultural context;
4. All those involved in the administration of the prison system and the management of prisons should facilitate and support education as much as possible;
5. Education should have no less a status than work within the prison regime and prisoners should not lose out financially or otherwise by taking part in education;

6. Every effort should be made to encourage the prisoner to participate actively in all aspects of education;
7. Development programmes should be provided to ensure that Prison Education adopts appropriate Adult Education methods;
8. Special attention should be given to those prisoners with particular differences and especially those with reading or writing problems;
9. Vocational education should aim at the wider development of the individual, as well as being sensitive to trends in the labour market;
10. Prisoners should have direct access to a well-stocked library at least once per week;
11. Physical education and sports for prisoners should be emphasized and encouraged;
12. Creative and cultural activities should be given a significant role because these activities have particular potential to enable prisoners to develop and express themselves;
13. Social education should include practical elements that enable the prisoner to manage daily life within the prison, with a view to facilitating the return to society;
14. Wherever possible, prisoners should be allowed to participate in education outside the prison;
15. Where education has to take place within the prison, the outside community should be involved as fully as possible;
16. Measures should be taken to enable prisoners to continue their education after release,
17. The funds, equipment and teaching staff needed to enable prisoners to receive appropriate education should be made available.

In Nigeria, the prison inmates will be very much helped if they are provided with functional literacy skills as a means of achieving the goals of reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration. Therefore, in order to achieve the aspired goals, the curriculum of the Prison Education should be functional.

The Place of Functional Curriculum in Prison Education

Curriculum is a broad term meant to include the complete experience of the learner while under the guidance and direction of the school. It includes activities, which are academic and non-academic, vocational, emotional and recreational. Ezeliora and Eze (2000) define curriculum as a set of opportunities to engage the learner in or outside the school under the guidance and direction of the school. To them, all the experiences the child is exposed to once admitted into school until he/she completes the programme of study constitute the term 'Curriculum'. Olaitan and Ali (1997) emphasized that the curriculum of education is anchored on the objectives of education, which are to produce an individual who is honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative, and conforms to the social order of the day. In particular, they stressed that curriculum of education has the following objectives:

- i. To develop the child's latent physical skills;
- ii. To develop character in the learners;
- iii. To inculcate respect for elders and those in position of authority;
- iv. To develop intellectual skills;
- v. To acquire specific vocational training and develop a healthy attitude towards honest labour;
- vi. To develop sense of belonging and to participate actively in family and community affairs,
- vii. To understand, appreciate and promote the cultural heritage of the community.

It therefore means that the aim of curriculum is to ensure all round development of the child through the content, the subject matter and all experiences that are planned for the education of the child. It shows therefore that it will not be so easy to achieve the aims of education without proper and appropriate design of a curriculum.

Strategies for Designing a Functional Prison Education Curriculum

Onwuka in Ezeliora and Eze (2000) refers to Curriculum Design as the pattern of learning opportunities or way of presenting opportunities in order to emphasize a chosen set of educational goals. The Curriculum Design is closely related to the primary objective of the school. It is a guide for evaluating the entire educational programme. Based on this therefore, Offorma (1994) identified seven steps, which serve as guide in Curriculum Designing. They are:

1. Situational analysis which implies the study of the society to identify its needs, problems, and values to ensure that functional curriculum is designed for the society.
2. Determination of general goals and objectives from the outcome of the analysis.
3. Identification and selection of content and learning experiences that will lead to the attainment of the goals.
4. Sequential organization of the identified learning opportunities in such a way that there is continuity.
5. Selection of appropriate instructional strategies for teaching and learning.
6. Selection of appropriate evaluation techniques.
7. Identification of implementation requirements as well as the modalities for effectiveness.

Considering the fact that Curriculum Design is so important and does bring to focus the entire meaning of the educational process, the need for designing a curriculum framework for Prison Education include the following:

- i. The design of the Prison Education Curriculum facilitates and encourages the selection and development of all kinds of learning experiences essential for the achievement of the desired outcomes sought by the Prison Education.
- ii. It enables the facilitator develop goals that are most meaningful to the particular prison inmates that are being facilitated.
- iii. The design permits facilitators to utilize sound principles of learning in the selection and the development of learning activities for their classes.
- iv. The design enables the facilitator to adapt learning experiences to the developmental needs, capacities and maturity levels of his learners (prison inmates).
- vi. It encourages the facilitators of Adult Literacy Programmes in prisons to take account of learning experiences, which the prisoners have acquired outside the prison yards and relate these to activities carried on in the prison.
- vii. The design provides continuity in learning experience so that the experiences acquired by the prisoner at any time are built upon previous learning or experiences, which will lead to further and future experiences.
- viii. The Prison Education Curriculum Design assists the prison inmates to build up good character and personality well-rooted in their culture and way of life.
- ix. The design is realistic, feasible and acceptable.

It is pertinent to state that the Curriculum Design for Prison Education should encompass Social processes and Life functions curriculum and Activity or Experience curriculum (official instructional programme) and hidden curriculum (the unofficial instructional programme) of the Prison Education. Therefore, functional curriculum that can be provided to the prison inmates include:

- i. Literacy education (reading and writing).
- ii. Functional numeracy education.
- iii. Human development education.
- iv. Citizenship education.
- v. Health education.

- vi. Moral education/instruction.
- vii. Computer education
- Viii. Vocational education/skills (which would include cabinet-making, metal fabrication, shoe-making, carpentry and other craftsmanship).
- ix. Leisure-time activities (which would include singing, dramatization, creative and cultural arts, drawings, printing, photography, foot-balling, and other sporting activities).
- x. Social education.

Through these learning opportunities in Prison Education, prisoners become truly human and develop the patterns of civilization needed in the society. The prison inmates therefore need to be educated with a view towards the future, for man is evolving, and has within himself seeds of perfection. However, for the designed Prison Education Curriculum to be fully functional, the mode of implementation need to checked.

Strategies for Implementing Prison Education Curriculum

Proper implementation of the curriculum meets the targeted aims and objectives of the curriculum. Okebukola (2004) states that Curriculum implementation is the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. It is a process that begins when the Adult literacy facilitator is handed the curriculum and ends when learners (especially, prison inmates) have been exposed to the learning experiences prescribed in the document. In Prison Education, the prison is the centre of Curriculum implementation and the Adult literacy facilitator is the key player in the process. Therefore, when the prison inmates have not learnt the content of the curriculum, it means that the Adult literacy facilitator has not facilitated (taught) the content.

Therefore, for proper implementation of the Prison Education Curriculum, many bodies have to be involved. According to Ivowi (2004), they include the learners, instructors, school administrators, community leaders, examination bodies, and publishers. Others include Prison officers and government. However, the following are instrumental to effective Prison Education Curriculum Implementation:

1. Employment of qualified Adult education facilitators and organizers for the provision and implementation of Prison Education Curriculum. This is because jobs done by experts are more qualitative than those done by 'lay men'. Learners could better understand some subjects if specialists in the field handle them.
2. Training of prison wardens who are used as part-time facilitators helps in the Curriculum Implementation. The training could be done through seminars, symposia, conferences, and workshops on the good warden/inmate relationship, as well as on the implementation of learning opportunities in the prison.
3. Equipment of the inmates' literacy centres with learning and instructional materials. The materials could be inform of learning kits, writing and sitting desks that are suitable to the age of the learners; electronic media such as computer, television, video, cinema, projectors, slides, etc.
4. Equipment of library in the prison with modern and relevant books and other learning materials. They help to make learning more interesting, relevant and captivating on the part of the prison inmates.
5. Awaken the inmates' curiosity and self-reflection so as to convey subject matter and facilitate them on utilitarian skills. The ability to gain and maintain the inmates' interest depend on

- discovering the inmates' plane of thought, guarding against outside distractions, providing lesson suited to the inmates' capacity and enlisting their cooperation in the lesson.
6. Adequate facilitator/learner, learner/learner, facilitator/material, and learner/material relationship is encouraged. Learning cannot take place effectively without serious interaction between the facilitators, learners and instructional materials.
 7. Provision of adequate physical environmental facilities such as buildings or space in which learning take place. Others are proper ventilation, recreational facilities, spacious accommodation, light and adequate environmental sanitation.

Conclusion

The design and implementation of functional Prison Education Curriculum is a step towards improving the quality of Prison Education. This is because before now, the curriculum of Prison Education in Nigeria had been handled in a "cut and join" form, which often a time produces poor results on the prison inmates when they are discharged. Therefore, for the Prison Education Curriculum to be effectively designed and implemented, all hands must be on deck —learners, parents, facilitators, Adult literacy administrators, Adult literacy curriculum designers, government, and even the society. The proper design and implementation of the functional Prison Education Curriculum can lead to achievement of the national educational goals since the purpose of Prison Education is for the reformation, rehabilitation and re-integration of the prison inmates into the society.

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