

# CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION: CHALLENGES FOR NIGERIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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## **Abstract**

Curriculum development is the curriculum planning process that results in the broad and specific curriculum plan. It is nothing than decision making that involves selecting and organizing the components of teaching and learning situations. This is done through such activities as the determination of curriculum organizing centers and the specification of suggested objectives, subject matter, activities, resources and measuring devices. Curriculum development leads to the creation of resource units, unit plans, course outline and other curriculum guides that teachers and learners may use to facilitate the learning process. While curriculum implementation starts with the small scale testing involving few number of students who will offer useful suggestions and criticism so as to improve the curriculum before large scale implementation. This paper examines the term curriculum and its importance, concept of curriculum planning, concept of curriculum implementation, the people involved in curriculum planning in Nigeria, society role in curriculum planning and implementation in Nigerian Education system were highlighted.

## **Introduction**

Education is the instrument for social transformation of a people. It is the vehicle for transferring values, entire, knowledge and experience that make for proper molding and adjustment of an individual to his dynamic environment. Education achieves such laudable objectives through the use of the instrumentality of the curriculum; the curriculum of an educational system contains the aspirations projections and dream of the inhabitants of the system. The contents of a function of the cultural demands of the society, on it are the general education components which complements specific elements in giving a well balanced education to its recipients so as to play relevant roles in the society.

Curriculum from the view point of the recipients of school education means different things to different people. It has been seen by some as all the learning experiences that the learner acquired under the guidance of schools directed towards acquiring some skills or competences. People who favour this conception of curriculum attribute the advantage of this definition to its focus on the learner and learning rather than teaching and its inclusion of all experiences of the learners both planned and unplanned.

Furthermore, some people focus on its abstract and complex nature-making the curriculum of a school so comprehensive that it cannot be described in simple terms or short phrases.

## **Curriculum Defined**

Many definitions have been proposed for the curriculum but a close look each of them will show you one or two disadvantages. What curriculum means has been extended beyond its dictionary meanings as a course of study to embrace the total spectrums of content, resources, materials and method of teaching through which the purposes of education are achieved (Wasagu, 2000).

Brubacher (1969) referred to curriculum as the ground which pupils and teachers cover in order to reach the goal of education. In other words, it can be regarded as a total experience with which the school deals with educating young people. That is all the experiences both curricular and co-curricular which children pass through to become what is known as an educated person.

It has been noted that the definition of curriculum changes from time-to-time and it also changes due to social conditions, conception of knowledge, the learner and, indeed, education. Clearly, therefore, your definition of curriculum is a matter of your own perception.

Wheeler (1969) defined it as the planned experiences offered to the learner under the guidance of the school.

Fafumera (1974):58) Saw it as the whole of the educative process, that is, the total environment in which education takes place. In other words, the total environment in which education takes place; that is, the child, and the teacher the subject, the content, the method, the physical and psychological environment.

Hass (1980) defined curriculum as all the experiences that individual learners have in a programme of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives which is planned in terms of a frame work of theory and research or past or present professional practice.

As a process, curriculum can be seen as the development of educational experience and activities which will achieve for the pupils and all members of society some predetermined objectives.

#### **Importance of Curriculum (Functions of curriculum)**

- i. It determines educational direction including the decision of the type of society people want to live and serve in.
- ii. It determines the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes.
- iii. It concerns itself with the application of the chosen principles.
- iv. It determines and assesses what changes have been brought about.
- v. It determines the next steps to be taken.

#### **Concept of Curriculum Planning**

Curriculum planning refers to the processes involved in developing the curriculum design or plan before the implementation stage. Nggada (2006) identified six stages for curriculum plan which include the formulation of educational objectives or goals for the society which we are designing the curriculum, that is identifying the immediate goals for the society e.g. whether the Nigerian society need administrators, scientists or people with technological background as is the case with Nigeria today. When we have identified that Nigerian society today needs people with technological background, then what are the subjects we should select for the students to have the experience? May be we select subjects which are science biased plus vocational and technical subjects to met the needs of the society.

The next stage is to develop the courses which will lead to the much needed people with technology background for self employment or self reliance. The next stage is to organize these courses into scope and sequence, i.e. organizing these courses into the various levels to have horizontal and vertical relationship so as to make the students not to see the various courses in isolation. The curriculum planner also identifies the best methods for implementing the course in the classroom for easy learning so that the students can get the best out of the course. The last stage in curriculum planning or design is to evaluate from the first stage to the last stage to identify whether

the curriculum planner had succeeded or not. If the processes are not successful then he has to re-teach or repeat the whole processes to achieve his goal.

### **Concept of Curriculum Implementation**

Curriculum implementation has been defined in many ways by different people. Mkpá (1987:258), viewed curriculum implementation “as the execution of the contents of the curriculum document.” Mkpá (1987) further describes curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined effort of the students, teachers and others concerned.

Okebukola (2004:2) defined curriculum implementation as the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. Okebukola (2004), further notes that the process of curriculum implementation begins when the teacher is handed the curriculum and ends when learners have been exposed to the learning experiences prescribed in the document. To Okebukola (2004:2), the intermediate steps in curriculum implementation include teaching through verbal and non-verbal exposition, practical work in laboratories, workshops and in the field, student-student interactions, student-material interactions and ten evaluation and feedback. Ivowi (2004:11), defines curriculum implementation in a nutshell as “the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action”. To Babalola (2004:112) curriculum connotes the multifarious activities of translating a complex curriculum conception in the form of a design or plan into new patterns of practical action useable and realizable in a teaching-learning milieu. Saïdu (1995), in Garba (2004), is of the view that curriculum implementation is [putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed.

From all these definitions of curriculum implementation, one can rightly view 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.

### **The People Involved in Curriculum Planning in Nigeria?**

Ideally in Nigeria the curriculum should be planned by the community that is to use it. This is because the community knows its needs and aspirations for their society. Where people are enlightened and government is democratic enough as in U.S.A, the following groups in the society are involved in curriculum planning and implementation, so also the situation should not be different in Nigerian case since we are adapting the American system of education.

- a) **Teachers:** In Nigeria, teachers are made to implement the curriculum and are not much involved in the development process. However teachers should participate fully in curriculum development process as to have psychological ownership of the curriculum which will give them confidence in the implementation process and also they know their students better and they know the weakness of their students. According to Brown and et al (1982) the curriculum can be a great success or a dismal failure depending on teachers. They are the person who alone can make the curriculum design achieve what it was design to achieve. If they are dedicated, hardworking and imaginative they can enliven what would otherwise be dull and lifeless.
- b) **Students:** They should be included in curriculum planning so that their interest could be included and protected. The learner is the central focus in curriculum planning and

implementation; both the subject and object without whom the curriculum does not exist. A curriculum design incorporates aims and objective which it is hoped will be realized when the curriculum is implemented. It goes without saying that without the active and wholehearted cooperation of students such aims can never be achieved.

- c) **Parents:** In Nigeria where many people or parents are illiterate not much is got from this group in curriculum planning and implementation. However, the interest and needs of the country is considered on national level in curriculum planning.
- d) **Employers of Labour:** Ministries, banks and other private manufacturing companies, the needs should be considered in planning the curriculum so that the required professionals are not lacking in the society.
- e) **Trade Union/Pressure Groups:** Trade unions like Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) Academic Staff of Polytechnics (AUUP), College of Education Academic Staff Union (COESU) and Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) who will be directly involved in the implementation need to be involved. Pressure groups like Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Jama'atul Nasir Islam representing the Muslim group should also take part in planning the curriculum so as not to include things we are contrary to both religions
- f) **National Organizations:** In Nigeria national bodies like the Federal Ministry of Education, National Education Research and Development (NERDC) the Joint Consultative Committee, the Interim Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) the West African Examination Council (WAEC), National Examination Council (NEC), National Board for Technical Education (NBTE), National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE), National Universities Commission (NUC) and National Business and Technical Examination Board (NABTEB), Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, State Ministries of Education, Education Resources Centers all help to draw up National Policies on Education syllabi and examinations for use within the country because most examinations in Nigeria are of Federal nature. This type of arrangement ensures certain uniformity of standard throughout the country.

In curriculum planning in Nigeria also various State Ministries of Education have to be aware of the needs of their own particular states and of the different areas within these states; in translating what the Federal or national organizations have stipulated as desirable of attainment. Subject syllabi are fairly uniform throughout Nigeria but the number of lessons per week may differ from state to state. Out of class activities can vary widely throughout the country depending on the environment and climatic conditions.

### **Role of Society in Curriculum Planning and Implementation**

N.T.I (2000) mentioned that societies establish schools primarily for five purposes:

- a) To transmit the culture of the people.
- b) To socialize the youth
- c) To preserve the society as a nation
- d) To prepare the young for adulthood
- e) To develop the character of the young.

If one of the main function schools is to transmit culture, it follows that the curriculum plan must reflect values of the society. Such values in turn are derived from the various cultures of the society. Curriculum planners must use the detailed analysis of the values of the society and decide how such values affect curriculum planning. In a country such as Nigeria with multicultural setting, it becomes very vital for curriculum workers to decide which values must be respected in the process of curriculum planning for multi-cultural settings like Nigeria.

Society has its advantage in many forces that support traditions and reject change. The main advantage is legal authority. The second is the generally agreed upon values of what is right and wrong. The third is that, society has support of tradition in the psychological resistance to change. Human beings resist change in certain aspects or areas of their lives so much so that they would rather die than change their positions.

Curriculum planners in any society must take these and other forces of culture into account in their planning. This is because such forces affect their function.

In another different way the society influences action for curriculum planning by brining pressure on curriculum planners to reflect the curriculum aspects of changes that have occurred in the wider society.

Thus in considering all these factor the curriculum planner must to do the following things:

- i. They must be open-minded about such society and culture-based influences on the curriculum.
- ii. They must maintain dialogues with members of the larger society. The function of the curriculum planner is such that he listens to as well as information's his audience.
- iii. The curriculum workers in Nigeria must consider the feelings of Nigerians as to what they need in the curriculum. If consideration of the demands of society and culture are worthwhile, the curriculum planner must fin specific cultures that are good and then see that these cultural values are strengthened in the curriculum. Curriculum planner must also take direct responsibility for channeling social and cultural change meaningfully in the curriculum. They have the responsibility to relate the social and cultural heritage in the elementary and secondary school curriculum in ways which will benefit children for whom they design the curriculum.

Finally, society and culture can influence curriculum planning and implementation in the following ways:

- i. They can influence school rules and regulations.
- ii. They influence teacher/students relationship
- iii. They influence course scheduling or time spent in schools.

In addition to the people enumerated earlier who are stakeholders in curriculum planning the community occupy a prominent role in curriculum design and implementation.

In Nigeria today there are not currently as many community schools ad private schools and voluntary agency institutions in operation. However, with the recent emphasis on day secondary schools in Nigeria, it is likely that the local community will be asked to play a more important role in curriculum decision for the community.

According to Brown and et al (1982) when parents or guardians live close to their children's school, they tend to take more active interest in the day to day affairs to the school. They can organize

fund raising activities to help buy need equipments, building of laboratories or to put up an extra classroom.

Contractors and businessmen can help the school by supplying materials at cost price, which they are likely to do if they know that their children are going to benefit from the school sited in their locality. Parents who work in nearby factories, cooperative farms, water pumping and purification plants can help to arrange field trips for students. school sports terms are likely to have greater support in terms of funding from parents in local and state competitions when parents do not have to travel far to watch their children participating in competitions. Professional people from the community can be invited to talk to the student about their works in school and career guidance. Traditional rulers can also be invited to give a talk or detailed history of the area of their jurisdiction.

When the local community participates in any of the ways outlined above they are in fact participating in and contributing in building the curriculum. Another important contribution the local community can make is through forming Parents-Teachers Association (PTA). In most cases, this will help the school authorities running the day to day affairs of the school. This will mean developing a good relationship with the people of the area, and gaining their cooperation and respect. The P.T.A can also help in developing sport facilities, purchasing of books for the library, acquiring computers for the school and can even sometimes recruit and pay teachers from the P.T.A account. How the local community can contribute to developing and implementation school curriculum will vary and will depend on the schools immediate needs, but there is no doubt that it can in many ways make a valuable condition in curriculum planning and implementation in any society. According to Buba (2007) the community in which the school is located in many senses is an artificial reproduction of the conflicts and stresses of the larger society. Thus the child passing through the school curricula has to be educated in attitude development as well as trained in the skills of social interaction, discussion, compromise and mediation of the larger society. In short the larger society. Thus the school cannot do without the active participation of the society in which it is located.

### **Challenges of Curriculum in Nigerian Education System**

According to N.E.R.D.C (199) some of the teething curriculum issues in Nigerian educational system include the following:

1. The issue of reference of the curriculum to the goals, aspirations and needs of the society have remained largely unresolved.
2. Curriculum content is continually expanding and becoming overloaded as a result of additions and integration of new materials.
3. The interests and needs of learners and of the society at large are changing with times forcing the curriculum also to adopt changes.
4. Curriculum review, revision and adaptation are lagging behind and need to be considered as priorities.
5. Integration and infusion of global issues and concerns such as HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, drug abuse and population explosion, into the curriculum continue to pose serious challenges to curriculum developers, as well as to school textbook writers and publishers in Nigeria.
6. Large class sizes and overcrowded school time tables pose serious problems to curriculum implementation in Nigeria.
7. The possibilities of learning without teachers loan higher in our educational system today.
8. The quantity and quality of teachers produced over years have fallen short of national expectations and needs.

9. Curriculum assessment and evaluation are bedeviled by massive examination malpractices and fraud, aided by such domestic trauma as drug abuse and cultism in our schools.
10. Teachers are faced with an ever-growing variety of subject matter contents, skills techniques, machinery and equipments, information and communication technology (ICT), for which the teachers are ill-prepared.
11. Teachers require help to successfully mediate the new curricula, the new attitude towards learning the new technologies.
12. Strategies are yet to be developed to help our teachers cope effectively with the above problems in our educational system.

### **Conclusion**

In Nigeria the teaching profession is not a respected and lucrative one. Even some of those who are already professional teachers prefer to join other professions. Worse still, every failed applicant in Nigeria resort to teaching when unable to find other gainful employment just any body can teach.

The problems of teachers who implement the curriculum do not end there. One of the biggest challenges facing teachers' today lies as already mentioned earlier in this paper as coping with an ever-growing class size, a busy school timetable and the increasing variety of subject matter contents, skill, techniques, machinery/equipments, information/communication technologies, evaluation procedures, including continuous assessment and public examinations, examination malpractices, not to mention drug abuse and cultism in our higher institutions.

If there is any profession that requires public sympathy, understanding and help in Nigeria today, it is the teaching profession without which, all the big plans we have for our curricula will never see the day light.

### **Recommendation**

For teachers to cope with the myriad of social, economic and financial constraints as well as the numerous curricular, pedagogic and psychological problems, both the government and the citizens need to show greater understanding of the plight of teachers from primary to university level. Compassionate attention needs to be paid to teachers demands for recognitions and respect for the profession. Enacting and implementing favourable conditions of service for teachers through the teacher's salary structure (T.S.S); staff development i.e. training and retraining of teachers particularly about new information, knowledge and skills. Better conditions of service, remuneration, job mobility and promotion. The Nigerian society must be prepared for better funding of education to guarantee adequate infrastructure, school materials, supply of equipments to the laboratories and workshops. Finally the society must ensure confidence building measures in the teaching profession, such as certifying and recertifying teacher periodically after a mandatory period of teaching in the schools. Nigerian society must ensure that the language of the curricula is easy for interpretation and implementation by teachers. The curricula should be relevant and reflect the dynamism of the larger society.

According to Bude (1992) it has been well established that no curriculum succeeds if the classroom teachers do not approach it from the standpoint of knowledge and enthusiasm.

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