

# EXAMINING THE STRUCTURE OF A REVISED CURRICULUM DOCUMENT AS A MODEL FOR NIGERIA CURRICULUM REVIEW FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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## **Abstract**

*Nigeria like some other West African Countries like Sierra Leone and Ghana operate a centralized curriculum process. In this type of system, curriculum planning and implementation is derived from a central source and dissemination throughout the country. Centralized curriculum planning has been criticized by some for its inability to reflect the multiple cultures of the people who will be exposed to the curriculum especially in a multicultural setting like Nigeria. Critics prefer the decentralized curriculum process where planning and development take place at various local levels. This practice, they believe would make the curriculum more relevant because it is tailored to the needs and the environment of the people. The paper examined and proposed the structures of the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) document of Malta as a model for Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Examine, Structure, Revised, Curriculum, Document, Model, Nigeria, Sustainable, Development.

The society that the curriculum serves is never static. It is dynamic. In a constantly changing society, it is logical that the curriculum which serves it should also change from time to time to reflect the new needs, values and aspirations of its members.

In Godwin's (2017) words, from pre-colonial times, Nigerian societies had the unwritten curriculum in "schools without walls" through which they shaped their members in what is today referred to as traditional education. Though it seems driven under, its ethos and import keep resonating; leading the education sage of Africa, Obanya, P.A.I (2007) describe it as "the education Africa lost". Colonial rule brought the British curriculum with which our education was driven in the First Republic and much of the military era. A significant attempt to decolonize the nation's curriculum took place in 1985. Ever since, there have been curricular modifications leading to inclusions, infusions, enrichments, articulations and disarticulations. Often times therefore, subjects offerings have had to change – sometimes at a pace that introduces confusion into the education system.

Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, Nigeria's curriculum development efforts has witnessed remarkable and unprecedented changes at a pace too fast for the State Governments, Schools and teachers to cope with. According to Obioma (2014), between 2008 and now, the country has witnessed two major curriculum reform initiatives at the Basic Education level, namely;

1. The 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) September 2008 – August 2014; and
2. The Revised 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) September 2014; present.

**The Structure of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) September 2008 – August 2014; and**

The structure of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum was such that subject offerings ranged between ten and sixteen from primary I – JSS III. Some schools even stretched it further so much that it caught national attention thus leading to the setting up of a presidential committee to critically look at subjects offered at basic and post basic levels with a view to drastically reducing them (see table 1) for example,

**Table 1. The Structure of the 9-year Education Curriculum**

Lower Basic Education Curriculum	Middle Basic Education Curriculum	Upper Basic Education Curriculum
Primary 1 – 3	Primary 4 – 6	JSS 1 – 3
Core Compulsory Subjects 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science and Technology 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural And Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies 9. Physical and Health Studies (PHE) 10. Computer Studies (ICT)	Core Compulsory Subjects 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural and Creative Arts 8. Christian Religious Studies 9. Physical and Health Studies (PHE) 10. Computer Studies (ICT)	Core Compulsory Subjects 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education 7. Cultural and Creative Arts 8. Christian Religious Studies 9. Physical and Health Studies (PHE) 10. Basic Technology 11. Computer Studies (ICT)

**Source NERDC (2008)**

The outcome of that committee’s report led to the re-designation of some subjects as themes and the regrouping of some thematic areas into fields of studies. The fusion of hitherto self standing subjects into fields of studies was greeted with confusion, anger and resistance from professional and confessional groups. The National Assembly and the national council on education (NCE) were drawn into the issue and new resolutions and modifications were made. (see table 2).

**New Approved Subjects and Field Studies (September 2014- present)**

Table 2 shows the new approved subjects for lower, middle and upper basic education level.

**Table 2: Approved Subjects for the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum**

S/N	Lower Basic (Primary 1-3)	Middle Basic (Primary 4-6)	Upper Basic (Junior Secondary 1-3)
1.	English studies	English studies	English studies
2.	Mathematics	Mathematics	Mathematics
3.	One Nigeria Language	One Nigeria Language	One Nigeria Language
4.	Basic Science and Technology (BST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Science</li> <li>• Basic technology</li> <li>• PHE</li> <li>• Information technology (IT)</li> </ul>	Basic Science and Technology (BST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Science</li> <li>• Basic technology</li> <li>• PHE</li> </ul> Information Technology (IT)	Basic Science and Technology (BST) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Basic Science</li> <li>• Basic technology</li> <li>• PHE</li> </ul> Information Technology (IT)
5.	Religion CRS OR IRS	Religion CRS OR IRS	Religion CRS OR IRS
6.	National values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social studies</li> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Security education</li> </ul>	National values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social studies</li> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Security education</li> </ul>	National values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social studies</li> <li>• Civic education</li> <li>• Security education</li> </ul>
7.	Cultural and Creative Arts (CCA)	Cultural and Creative Arts	Cultural and Creative Arts
8.	Historical Studies	Historical Studies	Historical Studies
9.	Arabic (Optional)	French	Historical Studies
10.		Arabic (Optional)	Business Studies
11.			French
12.			Arabic (Optional)

**Source: Adapted from the 6<sup>th</sup> Edition of the National Policy on Education/Resolutions of the 2017 NCE Meeting Held in Kano**

Nigeria, like some other West African countries such as Sierra Leone and Ghana operate a centralized curriculum process. In this type of system, curriculum planning and implementation are derived from a central source and for dissemination throughout the country. Centralized curriculum planning has been criticized by some for its inability to reflect the multiple cultures of the people who will be exposed to the curriculum especially in a multicultural setting like Nigeria.

Rassekh, S. (1996) observed that “it appears Nigeria is very much committed to the objective of education for all, endorsed by Jomtien Conference. However, we continue to find that many children still leave school without completing their education.

Commenting further he said, although the international community has recommended life-long education for some decades now, Nigeria does not seem to have made any noteworthy progress in this area hence, the need to examine the structure of a revised curriculum document. The document is being proposed here as a model for Nigeria. It is being examined simply to clarify the broad manner in which its content is organized, and especially to clarify how a hierarchy of objectives is managed in it.

### **The Malta Model of the Structure of a Revised Curriculum Document**

The curriculum document being examined is the National Minimum Curriculum (NMC) of Malta. It is a legally authorized and endorsed national document, obligatory for all state and non-state schools. Malta is a two-party parliamentary democratic republic of just over 1.3 million people spread over only 120 square miles. Between the central structure and the school level there are no regional educational administration institutions, such as school district authorities or departments.

According to UNESCO (2007) the NMC is not the type of curriculum that includes the detailed content of courses and classes. The document expects that, in the spirit of the educational aims and guidelines that it proposes that such course syllabuses be created at the school or other level. This expectation is part of a deliberate attempt at decentralizing, or at least diversifying, the choice of lessons, books and resources, and course design, which had previously always been designed centrally for state schools.

The initial pages of the published document present messages from the Minister of Education, the Director-General of Education, the Director of the Department of Curriculum Management, the President of the Malta Union of Teachers, and the President of the Association of School Councils, as well as a preamble.

### **Background to the review process**

Box 1, gives the legal background and justification for the creation of the new curriculum document.

Box 1. The legal Framework of the Maltese National Minimum Curriculum – NMC

- Entitlement to education;
- State duties;
- Right of the State to regulate education;
- Minister’s right to establish the curriculum; and
- The power to make regulations.

Box 2. The process of the curriculum review

The initial stages:

- Establishment of working committees;
  - Consultations;
  - Analysis and discussion;
  - Publication of the draft document;
  - Immediate reactions.
- Formulation of the final document.

### **Contemporary Challenges and Educational Response**

The validity of the curricular experience can be judged from the extent to which the educational system succeeds in responding to the realities and challenges that have emerged in Maltese society, in a world that is becoming ever more complex, global and interdependent. It appears, from the process of consultation, that there is agreement among the educational community regarding what should be the parameters of an educational system that prepares students to live and work in a world that is changing rapidly. The educational community generally agrees that a dynamic curriculum should provide an educational experience that (1) promotes fundamental values among students; (2) facilitates their holistic development; (3) motivates and prepares them to be lifelong learners; (4) enables them to live a full and productive life in a shrinking global village; (5) prepares them for the world of work, where change is a fact of life.

There are five sub-sections (see Box 3) to correspond to these five responses.

Box 3. Sections of a dynamic curriculum

1. Values and socialization;
2. Holistic development;
3. Lifelong education;
4. Global perspective;
5. The world of work.

### **The Curriculum Principles**

Box 4. Curricular principles

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Principle 1:  | Quality education for all;                                       |
| Principle 2:  | Respect for diversity;   |
| Principle 3:  | Stimulation of analytical, critical and creative thinking skill; |
| Principle 4:  | Education relevant for life;                                     |
| Principle 5:  | Stable learning environment;                                     |
| Principle 6:  | Nurturing commitment;  |
| Principle 7:  | Holistic education;  |
| Principle 8:  | An inclusive education;  |
| Principle 9:  | A more formative assessment;                                     |
| Principle 10: | The strengthening of bilingualism in schools;                    |
| Principle 11: | Gender equality;   |
| Principle 12: | Vocation and competence;   |
| Principle 13: | The importance of learning environment;                          |
| Principle 14: | Increasing participation in curriculum development.              |

A number of principles' are proposed in this major part of the document (Box 4). They are stated to be principles on which the curriculum document as a whole is based, but they are also proposed as tools for educators. Where did they come from? The curriculum drafters were very concerned about social justice and equity, especially the other aspects of justice and entitlement. The principles that shape this document are inspired by the belief in social justice. Each of the principles described are indispensable for the implementation of this socio-educational project (of education). It seems, therefore, that the drafting team: (a) took into consideration the then current educational practices and results, as well as complaints of parents and other who were consulted; (b) adopted a critical social-justice perspective on certain parts of the education services delivery system; (c) crystallized their responses to the anomalies in the form of 'principles'. The overall implications of each principle are presented as guidelines for interpreting the present curriculum, for teaching and for school organization.

### **Educational Objectives**

Box 5. Educational objectives.

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| Objective 1:  | Self-awareness and the development of a system of ethical and moral values |
| Objective 2:  | The development of citizens and a democratic environment                   |
| Objective 3:  | Developing a sense of identity through creative expression                 |
| Objective 4:  | Religious education  |
| Objective 5:  | Strengthening of gender equality   |
| Objective 6:  | Education on human sexuality   |
| Objective 7:  | Preparing educated consumers   |
| Objective 8:  | Media education  |
| Objective 9:  | Effective and productive participation in the world of work                |
| Objective 10: | Education for leisure  |
| Objective 11: | Wise choices in the field of health  |
| Objective 12: | Greater awareness of the role of science and technology in everyday life   |
| Objective 13: | Competence in communication  |
| Objective 14: | Preparation for change   |

- Expected outcomes in terms of knowledge/information;
- Expected outcomes in terms of skills;
- Expected outcomes in terms of attitudes.

### **Special Aims and Expected Results for the Different Levels of the Education System**

Besides the widely applicable objectives given in the previous section, special aims are required for each of the bands or levels of education: early childhood, primary and secondary (box 6). These age-related and level-related educational aims tend to be more specific than the ones in the previous sections, although no schema of mapping has been attempted that links each of the objectives numbered in the previous section to the more specific aims given in the present section.

Box 6. Aims and expected results of education specific to the level: early childhood, primary and secondary.

#### **1. Early childhood education**

- a. Intellectual development
- b. Socio-emotional development
- c. Physical development
- d. Moral development
- e. Development of a sense of aesthetics and creativity
- f. Religious development (for those who believe)
- g. Effective tools that facilitate the holistic development of children

#### **2. Primary education**

- a. Learning a repertoire of skills
- b. Strengthening of personal and social education
- c. Development of enhanced skills, knowledge and attitudes linked to the basic subjects
- d. Fulfilling principle of education for diversity
- e. Linking formative and summative forms of assessment
- f. Implementing a policy of bilingualism
- g. The teaching of religion
- h. Parent education programmes

#### **3. Secondary education**

- a. Strengthening and refinement of the skills developed at primary level
- b. Strengthening of personal and social education
- c. Implementing of the broad aims within the curriculum content
- d. Implementing a policy for language teaching
- e. Adopting formative and summative forms of assessment
- f. Developing projects revolving around themes
- g. Teaching of religion
- h. Strengthening of emotional development
- i. Strengthening parent participation.

### **Part Schools and the Interpretation of the Curriculum**

This section encourages decentralization to the school level by challenging the 'educational community' within each school to interpret the curriculum and develop school-level curricula and course syllabuses based on it, using and boosting consensus and democratic processes in education. Heads are told their various special responsibilities in facilitating and supporting this process of school-level curriculum interpretation and development among teachers and heads.

## **Conclusion**

As has been stated before, the issue of policy somersault has been the bane of Nigerian education sector. Since the return to democratic governance in 1999, the country has experienced remarkable changes in its educational scene. The recent alteration in the national curriculum was greeted with stiff resistance from professional and confessional groups with schools at crossroads as to what to do.

This paper has carefully examined the structure of Malta's revised curriculum document to enable the change agents in Nigeria such as educational administrators charged by the political sectors with the task of reform to visualize the application of the Malta method to the process of curriculum revision and related education system reform in schools. For Nigeria to tap fully the benefit of the method as is done in Malta, the following steps for curriculum review and education system reform are suggested (Rassekh, S.; Vaideanu, G. (1987):

1. **Stakeholder analysis for curriculum reform and education system reform:** This step aims to obtain a list of stakeholders and their interests in relation to the envisaged process of curriculum change and in education delivery systems. In this step, the planning team aims to involve, and where possible to bring together, representatives of as many of these stakeholders as possible.

The importance of this step is that it ensures that all persons with a stake in the result will be involved, if possible, in the process leading to that result. It has been found in many politically and developmentally diverse countries that a sense of ownership in curriculum change processes is critical to the success of the reforms.

2. **Problem analysis for curriculum reform and education system reform:** An overview of the undesirable aspects of the present situation should now be undertaken. The existence of these undesirable elements in the curriculum and in the education delivery system is the justification for carrying out curriculum review and education system reform. Problems may include difficulties faced by stakeholders, unfulfilled potentials and unfulfilled opportunities-all, of course, related either to the teaching and learning process or to the education delivery systems.

3. **Linked objectives analysis for curriculum reform and education system reform:** The aim in this step is to develop a vision that would solve the problems indicated in the problems analysis just undertaken. To be more exact, what we need to develop at this point is two visions: one for what the future completed curriculum document should look like; and secondly, a view of what the education delivery systems should look like.

4. **The new curriculum documents:** What is a curriculum document? Here we use this phrase to refer to the various kinds of document that formally guide the manner in which education and training is to proceed. The document may be a complete set of objectives or guidelines, with some indications of the outcomes desired in the students. Or, it may be a formal list of educational outcome standards, the standards being written in such a manner as to facilitate legal enforcement and to permit straightforward monitoring and evaluation of progress to be achieved. The document may be complete in itself, or it may consist of additions to, or revisions of, an existing curriculum.



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