

# CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS OF CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

**DR. C. N. NWADIOKWU**

*Department of Curriculum Studies and Educational Technology,  
College of Education, Agbor,  
Delta State.*

## **Abstract**

*The Relevance of education in Nigeria cannot be overemphasized. Globally, education is considered as a human right that should be accorded to all. This is the reason why a lot of international human right bodies consider education as a fundamental human right. This work covers the various challenges faced by the education sector of the economy and prospects in relation to curriculum development. The causes of this challenges, effects on the nation and the prospects has also been studied. Lack of governmental support, lack of knowledge and other similar factors have been known to pose a major problem to curriculum development. Effective strategies have been outlined to ensure long lasting prospects in the educational sector as curriculum is being developed.*

**Key words:** Curriculum development, Education, Challenges.

The importance of Curriculum development in Nigeria cannot be over emphasized. There are several controversies of curriculum development process. Tanner and Tanner (1975) definition of curriculum has been generally accepted as it relates to curriculum development processes. They defined curriculum as the planned and guided experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experiences under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and wilful growth in personal and social competence. Curriculum development has helped tremendously in solving issues and also render solution to learners.

Curriculum existed with the advent of western civilization from the colonial administration of the country. In Nigeria, the school curriculum in the past was designed to train professionals in the field of medicine, engineering, law and accountancy.

However, over the years, new occupations have emerged that has led to the expansion of curriculum to provide wider interest.

After Independence, remarkable changes were made such as the establishment of West African Examination Council (WAEC) to replace the London matriculation board, the introduction of General Studies (GS) and the introduction of Unity School otherwise known as federal government colleges. Also in 1977, Universal Primary Education (UPE) scheme was introduced for all children of school age in the country and to guide all educational practices in the country. This however, was revised in 1981 leading to the establishment of a new educational system known as the 6-3-3-4 system. This gained full implementation within 1984 - 1986 (Esu, Enkoha and Umoren, 2009).

### **Challenges of Curriculum Development in Nigeria**

This has been split into three broad areas namely;

1. Curriculum planning and development
2. Curriculum implementation
3. Evaluation and supervision

**1. Curriculum planning and development:** According to (Ivowi 2009), the following are the major challenges faced in curriculum planning and development.

i. **Non participation of teachers in curriculum planning:** Edem and Okon (2008) stated that a teacher takes part in the interaction with one or more students for the purpose of affecting the students positively. The teacher plays a special role in the progress educational planning in the nation and should actively partake in the planning and development of the curriculum. According to (Afe et al, 2008) “the teacher is an invariable resource in the school system. Furthermore, (Esu et al, 2006), “it should be noted that until teachers are allowed to fully participate in the curriculum development process, the curriculum, no matter how planned, is likely to be misinterpreted” (Esu et al, 2006).

ii. **Lack of money:** Money is highly needed in the curriculum development process. It is capital intensive when assembling a curriculum change team, to produce a draft of curriculum content and process it through all the stages for final approval by the NCE. Organising workshops, seminars for teachers who are the pioneers of any curriculum development process needs funding.

Furthermore, budgetary allocation to education falls below the 26% as recommended by United Nations Education scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) standard. According to (Sturvus, 2012), budgetary sum of N295.3 billion representing 6.4% of the budget was allocated to education in 2010.

iii. **Non completion of curriculum development stages:** These are lapses on the part of the government in completing the required stages of curriculum development.

(Ivowi 2009) stated that the massive testing of curriculum materials before being developed were abandoned from 1985 till date. By this act, the essence of pilot schools for testing of curriculum materials was lost thus causing a major setback to curriculum development.

- iv. **Lack of support from the government:** Many times, Government take decisions without involving teachers and curriculum experts, this has affected the standards, in form of existing know ledge, values, attitudes and skills.

#### **Other Challenges of Curriculum Development**

Below are some other challenges of curriculum development

- i. **Divided definitions of curriculum development:** Curriculum development has divided definitions. Various schools of thought view curriculum in different ways. They are; (i).The traditionalists and (ii) The progressive

The traditionalists view the curriculum as a body of subjects planned for students while the progressive view curriculum as the sum total of all the planned and guided learning experience an individual encounters under the guidance of a school. From the above, it shows that when the curriculum development is to take place, there will be two dimensions. Furthermore, there are still divisions with these schools of thoughts. For instance, the traditionalist believe that knowledge is the truth and truth is universal, therefore, the curriculum should be same everywhere. Their curriculum consisted of studies such as reading grammar, logic and mathematics. The essentialists there are certain essential that all men should know if they are to be considered educated. Their curriculum consists of the mother tongue, study of grammar, literature, writing, mathematics and foreign language. The discipline doctrine advocates believe that curriculum is a guided process of inquiry that gives right to established discipline. The various views on the definition of curriculum poses a problem for curriculum development as there is no consensus in the definition of curriculum.

- ii. **No clear philosophy:** Nigeria as a country lacks a clear cut philosophy of education because it lacks political ideology, this then makes it difficult for a national philosophy to be formulated that would give direction to education. The curriculum developed is not relevant to Nigeria as it does not relate with works and life in the society as students still come to schools looking for employment, because the education given to them is not useful to Nigerian environment (Mango, 2008).

iii.

- iv. **Change in policies:** Another factor that affects curriculum development is the frequent changes in educational policies. We had the Universal Primary Education (UPE) which was launched in 1976 to ensure that every child of school age was enrolled in school. The scheme estimated a teacher- pupil ratio of 1:35. Provisions were made for

60,000 teachers but this fell below the target because pupil enrolment increased tremendously. The number of teachers and pupils in Nigeria that year (1976) was 194,000 and 3.2 million respectively (Odigie, 2006).

The 6-3-3-4 system of education whose objective was to ensure that students who are not capable of going to senior secondary branched off for vocational and technical education did not achieve its stated objectives as all students moved on to the senior secondary schools. Rather than evaluate to find out possible causes of failure of the system, there was another change in policy which brought about the Universal Basic Education that was launched in September 1999 by General Olusegun Obasanjo. Over the years, Nigeria had several changes ranging from the 6-5-4 system to the 6-3-3-4 system and presently 9-3-4 system. These numerous programs have not fully achieved their set objectives and when a shortfall is discovered instead of evolving the curriculum process to ensure it works, a new curriculum rather developed.

v. **Knowledge depreciation:** Due to the development of science and technology, it become more tasking for the curriculum development process as knowledge becomes obsolete quickly hence the need for constant review for the curriculum, the method and materials of instruction. Emergent health issues and peace issues respectively.

vi. **Notion of crisis:** Most curriculum development process do not occur until there are problems in educational system. People now become sensitized that the educational system is no longer meeting the needs of individual and the society at large (Esu *etal*, 2009).

vii. **Curriculum development time frame:** It is difficult to develop curriculum document in a school district due to limited time available to the teachers. You can work with a number of teachers during the summer and you can develop a quality curriculum but you can only have input of limited number of teachers. Lack of time to work with teachers passes a problem to curriculum development (Wiles, 2009).

2. **Problems of Curriculum Implementation:** There is a great disparity between policies formulated by government and the actual implementation of these policies. Policy makers often vary from policy implementers, hence, this gap becomes a problem in course of implementation. This stage can be referred to as activation/delivery stage in curriculum process. With the introduction of the Universal Basic Education, education is said to be free and compulsory. At present in Rivers State, students are still made to pay registration fees before being admitted. There are also payment of examination fees and purchase of workbooks from teachers, if the Universal Basic Education (UBE) is not closely monitored it might go the way of other policies in the past.

i. **Lack of trained facilitators:** It is a waste of time and resources to develop curriculum materials, if adequate training is not provided for the facilitators, in this case the teachers who are to implement it. Hence, the process of curriculum development will be hampered.

ii. **Lack of instructional materials:** This is another implementation issue in Nigeria education curriculum Oneachu (2011) describes instructional materials as alternative channels of communication which a teacher can use to compress information and make them more vivid to his learners. This is seriously lacking in our school system.

iii. **Non-application of information and communication technology (ICT) in Learning:** Inability to apply ICT in learning school subjects is one of the problems militating against effective implementation of curriculum in Nigeria. The inability of the government to develop special kits that would aid the content delivery process, tools and apparatus for teaching and learning of science and technology were not developed to the prototype stage and this led to the failure of tools being produced massively to enhance the teaching and learning process.

### **3. Problems of Evaluation and Supervision:**

i. The greatest problem of education the world over is that of responsibility and control. According to Adeyinka (2008), “As a result of the prevalence of multiple system of education in the country, there is the problem of diversification and control. Who controls what levels of education? Most times, people do not have the requisite skills to ensure that activities in schools are carried out in the most effective and efficient way possible. Some of which are the ability to find and interpret information and also communicate with people. Furthermore, people do shy away from evaluation because it exposes the weakness of the organization.

ii. **Unstable subject syllabuses:** There are many examination bodies in Nigeria and there is need for schools and colleges to meet the requirement of the examining bodies. The school subject syllabuses are changed or modified regularly. This poses a major problem to curriculum evaluation and supervision.

### **Prospect for Curriculum Development**

1. The use of mind mapping strategy as a brain storming exercise to enable students, teachers and curriculum experts to adopt a deeper level of learning. (Ferson, 2004 :

2. It will be good for curriculum developers to have an overview or overall picture of the curriculum process so they can develop the curriculum effectively.

3. The numbers of pilot schools should be increased and fully utilized in order for the trial testing in curriculum development that has been abandoned for a long period to be reactivated.

4. For any new change in curriculum development, there should be regular annual long vacation courses for school teachers to get them acquainted to the philosophy, objectives, content and delivery method of project materials and also expose them to new techniques in education.

5. Benchmark minimum Academic standards should be used to grade educational institutions and foster cooperation among them to ensure quality assurance all the time.

6. Mandatory continuing professional development (MCPD). There is provision in the National Policy on Education (2004) relating to the continuous training of teachers and instructors. This will avail the teachers the opportunity to develop and demonstrate their profound competence against set standards.

7. Use of information technology for teaching and learning: ICT programmes have been incorporated in all teachers training programmes. These will boost the curriculum implementation when fully harnessed. Furthermore, technology should be used in the curriculum development process to reduce the time taken to develop the curriculum. In using the electronic process, materials are developed and distributed on an information data base and made accessible to stakeholders to go through and make inputs. This reduces the meeting times and stakeholders. Grey areas are also involved using conference call.

### **Conclusion**

This paper highlighted the challenges of curriculum development in Nigeria and its prospects. Having known some of these challenges associated with curriculum development, there is need for stakeholders to play their part in order to have functional educational system that will meet the needs of the society.

### **Recommendations**

1. Government and other private sectors should put in more effort and resources towards the development of curriculum education;

2. Education and the re-orientation of teachers, parents and students on the need to be acquainted with the knowledge of curriculum studies and development;

3. More vocational and technical education centres where curriculum is taught should be established and the few existing ones should be equipped and staffed;

4. An independent inspectorate committee should be put in place to regularly monitor curriculum development activities in schools as the existing inspectorate unit is ineffective and

5. Qualitative and affordable education should be made available for all.

### References

- Adeyinka, A. A. (2011): Current problems of educational development in Nigeria. A paper presented at 2011 International Conference Teaching, Learning and Change.
- Edem & Okon (2008): *Universal Educational in Nigeria*. Uyo: Bricks Com. International Ltd.
- Esu, A. E. O., Enuokoha, O. & Umoren, G. U. (2009): *Curriculum development in Nigeria for Colleges and Universities*. Calabar: Stiffaith Print.
- Ferson, P. & Bunyamin, M, (2004): What are the major curriculum issues? The use of mind mapping as a Brain Storming Exercise. In Canas, A. J., Novak, J. D. & Gonzalez, F. M. (eds). *Concepts maps, Theory, Methodology and Technology*. A paper presented at the First International Conference on concept mapping, Pamplona, Spain.
- Ivowi, U. M. O. (2009): The struggle for Nigerian curriculum. In Ivowi, U. M. O. (eds). *Curriculum Theory and Practice: Curriculum Organization of Nigeria*.
- Leh, A., Sleezer, C. & Anderson, V. (1998): Measuring the value of Educational Technology in different contexts.
- Lounsbury, J.(1996): Curriculum Integration. Problems and Prospect. Middle School Journal September, Volume.28.No.1 pg3-4.[www. used, ors/vublications/educational/archivesissues. Asp](http://www.used.org/vublications/educational/archivesissues)
- Mango,H.(2008): philosophy and Goals of Educational: *The challenges of primary education in Nigeria*. Volume 4, No. 1 Marion Brady (2000). Reality-based learn ing. [www. marionbrady. com/curriculumproblem...](http://www.marionbrady.com/curriculumproblem...)
- Odigie, V. O. (2006): *A philosophical approach to nursery and primary education*. Port Harcourt: Okoga Publishers.
- Onyeachu, J. A. E. (2008): *International Journal of Research Development* (unpublished).
- Ornstein, A. C. &Hunkins, F. P. (1998)\ *Curriculum Foundations, Principles and Issues*. Boston: Allyn& Bacon.

Wiles, J. (2009): *Leading Curriculum Development*. Thousand Oaks, C. A: Corwin Press. [www.actionresearch.net/living/punia...www.sturus.comm/tag/nigeria-2012-budgetretrieved](http://www.actionresearch.net/living/punia...www.sturus.comm/tag/nigeria-2012-budgetretrieved) 9th August, 2012.[www.horizon.unc.edu/ts/editor/182.html](http://www.horizon.unc.edu/ts/editor/182.html)