

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF CURRICULUM PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION IN THE NIGERIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract

Nigeria is facing a lot of challenges in her educational sector. Many of these problems are traceable to inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum. Teachers are the agents who implement the curriculum. No matter how well a curriculum is planned, if it is not properly implemented, the desired results cannot be achieved. The teachers in the past have been left out of the planning stage and are brought in during the implementation stage. This has not argued well for the country. It has been recommended that enough funds should be allocated to the educational sector through the upward review of yearly budget. Schools are to be properly equipped and renovated. Curriculum is to be reviewed to make school graduates become self-reliant rather than depending on government work which is not available and thus increasing the number on labour market. It is also recommended that teachers are to be motivated through prompt-payment of their salaries, remunerations and fringe benefits and in-service-training/workshops granted them as these will make them happy to carry out their duties effectively as should be down.

Key words: Education sector, curriculum, planning, curriculum implementation, teacher, policy, problems, prospects.

It is universally accepted that school curriculum should be so designed and implemented as it fulfills the needs of a changing society (Aggarwal, 2008). It must take note of new concerns in wake of revolution in Information Technology (IT) and other developments. Curriculum is a device to

translate national goals into educational experiences. The aims, objectives and outcomes of any educational level can only be achieved if the planned programme or curriculum is well implemented. No matter the amount of time spent on the planning, design and documentation of the curriculum, the most important factor in bringing out the desired objectives is through the implementation. The problems of programmes arise at the implementation stage. Hence Babalola (2004) and Mkpa (2005) remarked that it is at the

implementation stage that many excellent curriculum plans and other educational policies are marred without any trace. Thus, this paper defined what curriculum is, what curriculum planning and implementation involve, and problems that may arise from the planning and implementation of curriculum in Nigeria. It discussed the prospects and suggested ways by which the problems in planning and implementing curriculum can be tackled.

Curriculum Defined

Curriculum is seen as all the learning experiences which are planned and guided by the school whether carried out in groups or individually. It is the sum total of activities which is planned and directed by the school for the attainment of educational goals. Curriculum involves all the activities that a student has under the auspices or direction of the school (Olaitan and Alli, 1997). It comprises the sum total of the school's effort to influence learning, whether in the classroom, on the playground or out of school. Curriculum takes into cognizance the subject or courses and their contents taught by a school or college. The curriculum of a school is the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain understanding, develop skills, and alter attitudes, appreciations, and values under the auspices of that school (Doll, 1996). On its own, a curriculum is basically a lesson plan that functions as a map for learning (Wiseseek). When we talk about the objectives, aims,

subjects, evaluation, assessments, etc, of a curriculum, then reference is made to curriculum planning.

Curriculum Planning

Curriculum planning on the other hand involves the process of setting goals, developing strategies and outlining tasks and schedules for the setting of courses, coursework and course content (plqss:). In fact, curriculum planning refers to the creation of curriculum. Thus, a curriculum can help in the organization of various elements of curriculum, such as the core objectives (e.g. a competence to achieve), subjects, unit definitions, activities, assessments, and resources. Careful planning is required to ensure first, that the lessons actually touched on the required topic, and also that they meet school and governmental standards of basic education.

A curriculum plan is one of the best ways for teachers to look objectively at what needs to be taught over the course of a semester or term or year, then organize an effective way to get from beginning to end. For teachers to teach effectively, they must have a solid idea of what their courses are meant to achieve. Teachers work alongside many others who are covering similar ground. They do not work in isolation. Schools use curriculum plan to set overarching goals and basic requirements that teachers must follow to ensure at least some degree of uniformity (Wiisegeek). Teachers use

periods of long holidays to draw up their curriculum which range from basic outline to detailed charts and reports, and always include rough ideas of dates as well as topics to be covered. Anticipated exams, papers and other assessment mechanisms are usually included too. These plans are submitted to a curriculum reviewer to evaluate and make sure it meets the requirements. Most curriculum planning comes in five phases: framing the context, planning the lessons, implementing these lessons, monitoring progress and evaluating learning. Individual lesson planning and implementation is where instructors have the most flexibility. Teachers organize their lessons in ways they think most fit. Curriculum planning provides an easy way for teachers and school to monitor progress of the students and teachers as well. It helps to streamline students' assessment. Thus, it can be interpreted to mean plans teachers adopt in the classroom for organizing learning activities (Howell, 1995).

Curriculum planning that is guided or informed by some rational process would seem to merit the attention of all educators. Before curriculum can be formulated, the curriculum designer must take into account a combination of constituent needs of communities, schools, teachers and students. This is very important because communities and regions are very different, student groups vary, schools differ, and teachers are not alike. This makes the prescription, one

curriculum for everyone very limiting (Howell, 1995). With respect to the individual learner, one observation is central to curriculum planning – that is the fact that learning is an interactive process. Learning is best characterized as an adaptive process, which allows learners to interact with their environment. The role of an instructor is an intermediary one (Howell, 1995). It is when an instructor can interpret and perform tasks that will bring out the expected outcomes that one can talk of curriculum implementation.

Curriculum Implementation

This involves the task of translating the curriculum into operation by the combined effort of the teachers, students and others concerned. (Mkpa, 1987). According to Garba, 2004, curriculum implementation is the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. Ivowi (2004), viewed curriculum implementation as the translation of theory into practice, or proposal into action. The definition given by Onyeachu (2008), is more comprehensive. He viewed curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that has been planned as a curriculum process into practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers, learners, school administrators, parents, as well as the interaction with the physical facilities, instructional materials, the psychological and social environments. In a nut shell, these definition show that curriculum

implementation is the reaction between the teachers, learners, and other stakeholders in education geared towards achieving the objectives of education.

Kolawole (2011), making reference to work of Boyer (1995), in "Who plans the curriculum?" said each teacher working alone contributes 5%; local authorities similar to our local governments contribute 27%, state officials (ministry officials and other agencies) contribute 27%, national authorities (National Council on Education, Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council, Federal Ministry of Education, etc.) contribute 1%, while group of teachers working together contribute 40%, which is the lion share. This arrangement makes it possible to have a curriculum that is suitable, relevant and can easily be implemented. Teachers and agents of the government have to work hand-in-hand. If this is done, problems that may arise will become so glaring that the sources can be identified and proposals for solving the problems will be made.

Curriculum Implementation Problems and Prospects in the Nigerian Education System

The implementation issues border on the availability of funds, facilities, human resources (teachers and learners), instructional materials, application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT),

government's commitment, adequacy of well-trained teachers, motivation of teachers and participation of teachers in decision-making. These sub-topics are discussed below under the different sub-headings:

Funding

Funding refers to money. It affects implementation of curriculum at all levels of education.

This is the bedrock on which every project, management and planning including curriculum implementation is based. Every project requires financial support for effective implementation. Onyeachu (nd) noted that no organization functions well without money, and unfortunately, enough provision is not allocated to educational funding in the national budget every year. This affects the smooth implementation of a well-designed curriculum. Teachers' salaries cannot be paid, teachers cannot be properly trained, and books, instructional materials, laboratory equipment, furniture and other facilities cannot be purchased. Thus, even if a teacher is properly trained, he or she cannot perform efficiently because of the lack of these materials which are hindrance to good performance. The issue of funding needs to be addressed first before one can talk of implementation of curriculum at any level of education in Nigeria.

Facilities

Facilities according to Ehiamezor (2001) are those factors that make possible and aid workers to

achieve the goals of an organization. These facilities are plants, apparatus, equipment, buildings, furniture, etc. we find dilapidated buildings that need to be renovated, obsolete apparatus, leaking roofs, unkempt surroundings, public buildings without toilets. Ehiamekalor (2001) further remarked that the facilities in schools are the operational inputs of every instructional programme. Ivowi (2004) remarked that for effective implementation of curriculum, infrastructural materials, equipment and tools must be provided in adequate quantities.

Human Resources

As the title suggests, this involves human beings that are stakeholders in education. This involves mainly the learners, teachers and community members at large. For any educational system to work there must be learners, there must be teachers. Each of them cannot exist independently of the other. As a result of inadequacy in funding and lack of availability of materials/facilities, parents at times are reluctant in sending their wards to school. Some learners opt out of school for same reason. Poor conditions of service and infrastructure in schools prevent teachers from coming to take up teaching jobs. Even when it is glaring that staff are lacking in some schools, lack of funds prevent recruitment of staff. This is not too good for the education sector. For any programme to be successfully implemented, the implementer (Teachers) must be

adequate in number. This is a critical issue at all levels of education in Nigeria.

Instructional Materials

According to Dike (1987), as stated in the work of Onyeachu (nd:568), instructional materials are alternative channels of communication that a teacher can use to compress information and make them more vivid to his learners. They are necessary for effective teaching and learning. This results in active or meaningful learning. Curriculum materials are indispensable in teaching/learning process. Those materials are designed to promote learning. Their absence implies that learners cannot do well (Onyeachu, nd). Instructional materials are designed to promote and encourage effective teaching – learning experiences.

Participation of Teachers in Decision-Making

For the set objectives/goals in any educational system to be achieved, teachers must be involved in decision-making and planning of curriculum. Obinna (2007) observed that no government policy on education can be realized if problems and opportunities that may arise from such policies are not first perceived before making and taking decisions on them. In the education sector, the teachers are the most qualified resource personnel and in best positions to be consulted. Mpka (1987:345) emphatically remarked that: “as a most important person in the

programme of curriculum implementation, the teacher must be involved in all stages of curriculum process". If teachers who are key implementers of curriculum are not involved in decision-making and curriculum planning, effective implementation of the content and learning experiences will be very difficult.

Motivation of Teachers

Teachers who are stakeholders need to be motivated in terms of reward in cash or kind to encourage them to put in their best. Motivation, according to Ofoegbu (2001) should reduce tension, stress, worries and frustrations arising from problematic situation in a person's life especially if such are traceable to the work situation. These aids to motivation as stated by Ugwu (2005) include regular payment of salaries and entitlement, incentives and materials which will make his/her work easier and faster, regular promotion and payment of other allowances and remuneration.

Government's Commitment and Adequacy of Trained Teachers

The government through its ministries of education at local, state and federal levels at times does not monitor or supervise properly our schools. This gives room for laxities. Lack of funds hinders staff from going for retraining to improve upon their capabilities. Since teaching profession has not been fully professionalized, people not trained as

teachers find their ways into the noble profession. It has not helped the education system. Teachers' inadequacy is a matter of concern.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

ICT has become useful in the educational system. It aids learners in learning fast and helps teachers in planning their lessons and schemes. It is a recent development in Nigeria. Teachers and pupils need to be taught its application. A teacher is handicapped if he/she cannot apply ICT in teaching in schools. Hence the need for training of teachers. Computers are not available in schools, electricity supplies are either absent or inadequate or irregular in supply. There are no personnel to teach staff and students in many institutions.

Prospect in Curriculum Planning and Implementation

There are many prospects for the planning and implementation of the country's educational curriculum. They include the following:

1. The National Teachers' Institute (NTI) was co-opted by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development council (NERDC) as part of the team that developed the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC). The NERDC is the organ that is responsible mainly for the planning and development of curriculum for the nation.

2. The Parents Teachers Association (PTA), Petroleum Trust Development Fund (PTDF), Education Trust Fund (ETF) provide facilities and funds for all levels of education in the country
3. Provision of training and retraining programmes, workshops and conduction of seminars for teachers and lecturers. Teachers are encouraged to go for retraining. Since 2006, the National Teachers' Institute (NTI) and the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) in Nigeria have been involved in the retraining of teachers currently serving in primary schools. In 2008, Junior Secondary School (JSS) teachers joined. In 2011, NTI in conjunction with AXION Learning Consult started retraining teachers for learners that are challenged (handicapped) through this scheme – Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SENDS).
4. The Federal Government through the Federal Ministry of Education has decided that experienced teachers will be involved in the curriculum planning and development
5. Employment opportunities are given more to professional teachers in our schools now during recruitment
6. The state governments in conjunction with companies have stated supplying computers and computer facilities to schools and to teachers in need of them with agreement of instalmental payments.
7. Negotiations are on between the federal government and state governments on implementation of Teachers Salary Scale (TSS) and professionalization of teaching as a profession.
8. More attention is now paid to vocational, technological, technical and entrepreneurial subjects in schools now in line with the review of curriculum geared towards production of self-reliant or self-employed graduates, to reduce numbers of candidate in the labour market.

Conclusion

Funding and financing are two major factors facing the Nigerian nation educational system. Majority of the other problems are centered on funding and financing. Teachers are the agents to bring about curriculum implementation. Their expertise knowledge and advise are needed when curriculum are planned for the educational sector of the country. Bringing teachers and other stakeholders in education along during the planning stage make things easier and results are likely to come out positively.

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations are proffered:

1. It is advised that more teachers should be involved in decision making and curriculum planning in education.
2. Adequate and well qualified staffs are to be employed to teach in our schools.
3. Adequate facilities and materials should be provided in the schools through the joint efforts of the PTA, PTDF, ETF and other Non-Governmental-Organizations (NGOs). Institutional materials as well as teaching aids are to be made available at all levels of education
4. Allocation to the educational sector in the national budget should be reviewed upward. When grants are given to schools, they are to be monitored that such funds are used for due purpose to which they are meant.
5. Teachers should be motivated through prompt payment of their salaries and other remunerations. It is recommended that they be granted the payment of the TSS they have long been agitating for. This will rid the education sector of the constant strike (down-tools) action that always paralyze the system and has led to the proliferation of private schools and tertiary institutions in the country.
6. There should be a cordial relationship between governments, teachers, students and all stakeholders in the education industry.
7. Laboratories, technical workshops and farms are to be properly equipped and maintained with equipments and materials relevant for present day use.
8. Education should be a top priority of federal, states and local government. Education is not a tool any nation can afford to play with.
9. School libraries should be well equipped.

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