

FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND QUALITATIVE EDUCATION FOR VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The curriculum is the operational medium that enables the school to fulfill the various expectation of the society. It is the planned and unplanned learning experiences in or outside the school for which the school accepts responsibility. The curriculum gives direction and guidance to all activities carried out in the educational system. Today, more than ever, before, society seeks accountability from the educational system. This paper therefore examines the concept of curriculum, brief history of curriculum development, quantitative education, sources of influence on curriculum, models patterns of curriculum, and the cyclical nature of curriculum for values, knowledge, skills and national development.

The quality of education in any country cannot be higher than the process involved in determining the content of what should be learnt and how it should be learnt. The instructional content, materials used for learning, methods employed in teaching and evaluating tools, have an interactive effect in determining the quality of education. Furthermore, the size of the class, the classroom space, the general learning environment including the teachers' conditions of service jointly influence the quality of education.

Since curriculum serves as a basic starting point for the educational enterprise, its scope stretches beyond the school to embrace the socio-culture, philosophical, moral, political and ideological issues. It is this comprehensive scope that makes the definition of curriculum rather difficult and imprecise.

Curriculum Defined

It is not the author's intension to present a plethora of definitions of curriculum here since such an exercise develops little knowledge but adds to the confusion that already exists about a myriad of definitions of curriculum. Just one of such definitions will be presented.

Bishop (1985:1) defines curriculum as "the sum total of all the experiences a pupil undergoes". Such a definition holds the school responsible form the experiences organized by the school and those that "intrude" from outside the school but influence learning. Some authors argue that a correct definition of curriculum should exclude the experiences over which the school has no control. Such authors prefer to define curriculum as the totality of the teaching/learning experiences organized and directed by the school. There is much to recommend in the above view except that the school operates in an open environment that is subject to intrusions by the forces of society. Media (print and electronic)casual guest speakers and politics. It will therefore, be chicanery and remiss if the school will ignore these influences which could be harnesses in the planned curriculum.

Denga (2000), defines curriculum as a programme of activities comprising what to learn, how it should be learnt, why it should be learnt as well as co-curricula activities including guidance services planned under the auspices of the school, but may also include unplanned experiences within and outside the school which can be utilized in the total teaching-learning situation.

What to learn refers to the content, "how to learn" refers to the process of organizing the learning experiences and delivering them, including the methods and strategies adopted in the teaching-learning situation. "Why it should be learnt" implies that there are too many things to learn

at any given period, and that knowledge is too vast to attempt to teach everything at the same time. The reasons and purposes for selecting relevant and appropriate aspects of the vast knowledge are expressed in the statement of goals and behavioural objectives.

Co-curricula activities encompass games, sports, clubs and societies. These co-curricular activities are planned under the guidance of the school. Guidance services which always form an integral part of any adequate curriculum are ancillary educational services aimed at helping children to understand the complex nature of their educational, vocational and personal-social problems so that they may work out solutions with the assistance of the school counselor. The incidental experiences which come either from within or without the planned experiences are part of the definition. They may otherwise be called "the Hidden Curriculum". Thus the definition of curriculum has been stated and analyzed here to facilitate its digestion.

History of Curriculum Development

The systematic study of curriculum is a twentieth century phenomenon. In the past, concerns about what happened in schools were mostly limited to descriptions of what courses or subjects ought to be studied. Curriculum as a field of study started at about 1981 out of the practical managerial necessity for solving technical and practical school's problems. This was as a result of an essay written by Franklin Bobbit in 1913 which drew an analogy between curriculum making and industrial processes. He published his first work on curriculum in 1918.

The field of curriculum unlike other areas in education like: Educational psychology, philosophy of Education and Sociology of Education, emerged without any mother discipline. These other areas mentioned here are applications of the various areas to the field of education.

Curriculum derives its name from Latin word meaning 'a running course', race, running on a wager, a race ground or a career. In its original Latin usage, it means a 'runway or a course which one runs to reach a goal. In time, the meaning of the word came to denote more than a race-course to mean a course which students pursue and complete for targets defined in terms of high grade, passes, certificates or other forms of academic awards.

Qualitative Education Defined

Qualitative education is a relative expression defining the extent to which learners are able to acquire knowledge and skills and use them to accomplish their developmental tasks. Education is thus deemed qualitative if learners exhibit the expected competence to solve relevant problems and carry out tasks that are designed for their educational and age levels. Qualitative education is also evident if the teaching-learning resources are available in the right quantity at the right time for the right caliber of children and are used correctly by teachers. Qualitative education is evident when teachers are qualified to teach and are competent and efficient in the delivery system generally. Education is also deemed qualitative if the societal problems are effectively addressed and tackled by the school.

Finally, qualitative education manifests itself in the efficient performance of school children in continuous and final assessments with little or no recourse on the part of both students and teachers to some form of cheating behavior or examination malpractice to make up for deficiencies in learning and teaching.

It was not the author's intention originally to define qualitative education because of its self-explanatory connotation. But some dust has been raised in some quarters, even among eminent educationists regarding the question of falling standards. Some people do not believe that standards have fallen in view of some structural differences in the children's age when they go to school now compared to the age of children who went to school many years ago. In short, one can use different criteria and measurement indices to determine whether or not the standard or quality of education has

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in fact fallen. But take a look again at the author's definition of qualitative education – its characteristics. Anything short of these characteristics spells out non-qualitative education in the author's view. If one takes a global view of the present educational system. The balance sheet with arguments for and against the proposition will reveal a fall definitely. Even the fact that the teachers' conditions of service are still yawning for improvement will give an implicit clue that there is nothing like total self-investment by teachers even when teaching tools are abundant. The low morale of teachers alone can thus account significantly for failing standards.

Sources of Influence on Curriculum

Curriculum is influenced (some authors state that it is determined) by the following sources or factors:

- 1. The Needs of the society:** The philosophy of the society that has to be reflected in society and other purposes which the society wants education to serve. For example, a nation that regards technological advancement, food production, free education for all, and the production of science teachers as top priorities will deliberately bias or veer her effort towards the realization of these goals. The award of scholarships and the offer of additional incentives for students will deliberately lure them towards the national manpower targets. The issue of the national language may be deemed critical. The schools will then be used to ferret out a solution of this problem. The nation or society may decide to use the schools to achieve a political ideology through instruction. The society may ideology through introduction. The society may place a high premium on some religious tenets and moral issues which the schools will have to incorporate and transmit.
- 2. Needs of the learner:** The learner is the major recipient of instructions. The physiological needs of the learner such as exercise, rest, food, water, shelter, air, and the psychological needs such as love, belongingness, self-esteem, approval, self-actualization among others must be met for learning to flourish. The interest, age and educational level of the learner should be considered.
- 3. The psychology of learning influences the curriculum:** This subsumes learning theories, principles of effective teaching and learning, the psychology of individual differences, rules of forgetting and remembering, methods of teaching and so on.
- 4. The knowledge of subject matter:** This item refers to the intellectual tools which have been tried and proved reliable, valid, usable, and relevant. Knowledge develops and changes. Any curriculum that pays scant attention to the current status and the dynamics of the subject matter is faulty. Obsolete knowledge must not be perpetuated. New developments in the subject matter should influence the curriculum.
- 5.** The national constraints such as manpower, financial and natural resources influence the curriculum. Scarce resources cannot be relegated to the whims and caprices of uninformed youths. Guidance services are needed to forestall wastage and eventual reallocation of talents in educational programmes. Schools cannot foster what the nation cannot afford. Manpower and financial limitations should influence what goes on in school.

Models (Patterns) of Curriculum

There are different types of curriculum designs which were developed at different times in educational history in accordance with societal conceptions of the role of education, the nature of the learner and of the learning and of the learning process as well as societal needs. In designing each of them, consideration was given to continuity, sequence and integration. We will first consider three of these major variations: Subject-centered curriculum, Activity/Experience-centered curriculum and Child-centered curriculum.

Subject-Centered Curriculum

This type of curriculum is concerned with the collection and arrangement of school subjects which are generally studied separately or sometimes in relation to each-other. For instance, in our secondary schools, subjects in the curriculum include: English, mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Economics Geography, Home Economics, Agricultural Science, Government, Social Studies and Integrated Science (in Junior Secondary School). The subjects are sometimes subdivided into divisions. English for instance is subdivided into composition, grammar, spelling, dictation, writing, literature, essay, lexis and structure and comprehension.

In this type of curriculum, mastery of the subject matter is usually the basis through which educational outcomes are achieved. Its scope, however, is determined by the quantity of subject matter existing within each subject as well as the range of subjects to be included in the school timetable.

The characteristic feature of this type of curriculum is orderliness. If learners follow the bodies of subject matter, they build their store of knowledge. They can readily make use of such store of knowledge when needed. This type of curriculum is convenient to teachers since they were trained in subject areas. They can easily plan, organize and teach their areas of specialization. Examination which is the yardstick for admission and selection of candidates into schools, colleges and universities appear in subject areas. Employment in some cases is done on the basis of the subjects candidate studied.

Activity/Experience-Centered Curriculum

This type of curriculum is learner-centered. Consideration in this type of curriculum is given to learners' interest, needs and motivation. It is also regarded as problem solving. To channel learners into the learning experiences in order to make learning purposeful, stimulating and rewarding for them, teachers must try to discover their interests and needs. In other words, one can say that activity curriculum is an approach with very flexible ideas and adaptation of curriculum to the needs of children in the natural setting of human growth and development.

One characteristic of the activity curriculum is that children's interests determine the content and structure of learning. As they select and work in any task, skills and knowledge are acquired as they are needed and subject matters from many fields are used according to the requirements of the task (Yaba, 1962:401).

Within the activity-centered curriculum tradition, the role of the teacher is that of an instructor and work supervisor while their students are learners as well as productive workers. In other words, his role is seen as that of a more mature member in the problem-solving situation to provide advice or help, direct or guide.

Child-Centered Curriculum

When the claim of a curriculum approach is that a worthwhile curriculum is solely constructed by reference to needs, wants and interests of the child, it becomes a child-centered curriculum. Curriculum developers in this type of curriculum should be very careful when exploring children's needs, wants and interests in curriculum matters to make children do what they want with qualification. When this is done, the curriculum could be regarded as a worthwhile school curriculum. Barrow (1976:59) observed that by concentrating on children's actual wants or interests, it is possible for the teacher to help them find aspects of value in those wants and interests.

There are other Variant Curricula Approaches apart from these main ones. These three variations are as follows:

- i. The broad field Curriculum
- ii. The Hidden curriculum and
- iii. The Core-curriculum
- iv. The Broad field curriculum

This type of curriculum is an attempt at inter disciplinarily. The purpose is to integrate the subject-matter of closely related disciplines or school subjects such that learners will see the relationships between different subject areas. In this type of curriculum, children are introduced to methods of inquiry and generalizations through the approach of curriculum synthesis. It is an attempt to overcome the compartmentalization and fragmentation of subjects. This is done by putting together several specific areas into larger field. In this regard, chemistry, physics and biology were studied together at the Junior Secondary School level as 'Integrated Science, Social Studies incorporated history, geography, economics and government.

One major advantage of this type of curriculum is that, it facilitates the integration of subject-matter. One shortcoming of this type of curriculum is that in many cases 'broad fields' is broad only in name; the integration is only formal. Where teachers teaching the integrated subjects are not specifically trained for the broad fields curriculum, they tend to emphasize or stick to their respective subject areas instead of doing justice to the integrated subject.

The Hidden Curriculum

Hidden curriculum refers to the unofficial, unwritten curriculum of the school or that which is not ordinarily addresses through regular curriculum planning but which nevertheless influences what and how students learn. The hidden curriculum has been regarded as a powerful detrimental force that undermines the professed commitment of the school to foster intellectual development.

The school as an agent of socialization of the young, has its rules and regulations governing social conduct of students within the context of the educational programmes, and a system of procedures that make it an acceptable institution in the large society. What is, however, learnt from the hidden or subtle curriculum is frequently more powerful and lasting than that which is learnt from the more obvious planned curriculum.

For instance, a teacher decided to teach a topic not using the traditional lecture method but the group investigation model where learners are grouped to work on the topic. The group will select a leader from among themselves while others will play the led. Apart from the content of the topic which they will work at in group, the leader will learn to lead, coordinate the affairs of the group while carrying out the task; learn to respect the views of others by being receptive to them while other

members of the group will learn to follow for the success of the group. The nurturing values here can be group regarded as the hidden curriculum. The method nurtured was not planned by the teacher.

Since the hidden curriculum is just as much as part of the school programme as any course or subject or unit that is offered, it should be considered as a powerful and pervasive source of learning. For this reason, there is a need to subject it to the same policies and procedures for curriculum planning as any other part of the programme.

In schools, learners offered opportunities to learn about themselves and their relationship with others. These learning are not always planned or intended in curriculum plans. They instead grow out of the day-to-day life of the school and its organization. Because such learning's are embedded in features of the school rather than in curriculum, they are often referred to as the hidden curriculum.

Core-Curriculum

Core is used to describe a portion of the curriculum, usually those courses prescribed for all. The identification of the required portion of the school programme is a crucial issue in curriculum planning. Whatever is chosen to be included will normally be required of all students regardless of their background characteristics. Essentially, core curriculum is meant to develop unified studies based upon common needs of the learners and organized without restriction by subject-matter.

This type of curriculum organization was designed as a synthesis of all other apparatus and to specifically integrate all subject areas, serve the needs of the students, promote actual learning and enhance the relationship between life and learning.

Core-curriculum is used variously to designate basic studies, General Studies, general Education and indeed all subjects and courses (or part of the curriculum) which educational authorities consider necessary for all students. Such subjects are of interest to all in a social group no matter how typical or a typically such individuals may be within the group. A typical example of core curriculum could be seen in what constitute teachers' Grade 11 Certificate in Nigeria. In the teacher training program, English Language, Mathematics, Principle and Practice of Education and Teaching Practice are the core course/curriculum.

The Cyclical Nature of Curriculum for Values, Knowledge, Skills and National Development

The interrelated nature of curriculum content, objectives, learning experience, and evaluation is so important that awareness of it will help the students of curriculum and teachers to better appreciate the unity in curriculum.

1. The Objectives

The needs are identified, and the objectives are specially and clearly stated to guide the action. The needs of the learner and those of the society, to mention a few, should dictate what education should aim to achieve.

Special objectives are also known as behaviourally stated objectives. These objectives which are learner-originated indicate what students should be able to achieve at the end of a given period of time.

This period may range from a class period of 40 minutes to a period of 3 months or more.

Examples:

- i. By the end of the lesson (40 minutes) students should be able to draw a relief map of Nigeria with at 70% accuracy.
- ii. At the end of the semester, students should be able to differentiate between vocational and educational needs of Nigerian Secondary school students.

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- iii. At the end of the lesson, students should be able to describe the adverse influence of juvenile delinquency on the society.

From the above three examples, it can be seen that behavioural objectives are specific, relevant to the needs of the learner or society and operational. The action or behavioural verbs used include: Describe, differentiate, draw, list, enumerate, identify, read, calculate, summarize and so on. The non-behavioural or non-action words which should be avoided in stating behavioural objectives include: Discuss, appreciate, understand, and know.

As the reader can see, the non-behavioural terms are nebulous and tenuous. They are not easily measurable. Students may discuss, but how does the teacher measure the accuracy of the discussion operationally? How can he measure appreciation? Is it by watching the smiles on the faces of students or their head-nods? How can the teacher measure “understanding” and “knowledge” within 40 minutes? May be he can do it at the end of a semester or a year.

Some educationists have criticized behavioural objectives on the ground that they try to break down knowledge into atomistic cafeteria table of topics, trying to measure the achievement of microscopic units. But those who are worried about the small specific topics or units measured at a time can list several behavioural objects to measure the achievement of children.

2. Selection of Content

The content, no doubt influences the objectives, logically, the aims, goals and objectives come before the selection of content, concepts and principles. The content must be valid, reliable, relevant to the needs age level and readiness of children for whom the content is intended. Content must be comprehensive and challenging to students.

3. Selection and Organization of Learning

The selection and organization of learning experiences follows content selection. This is logical because the nature of the content needs to be known before appropriate learning experiences can be selected. These again need to be relevant to the needs, interest, readiness and age of children.

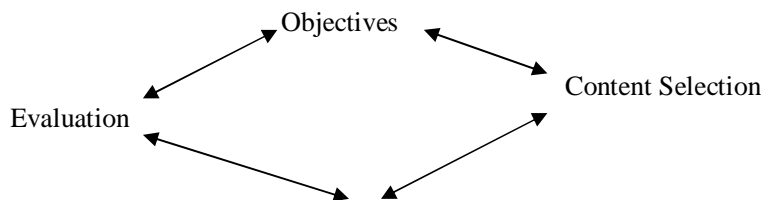
Two organizational modalities can be identified. The first is the Vertical organization which assumes a spiral approach. The teacher starts from the simple to the complex and from the known to the unknown. The knowledge that is acquired from the lower classes is carried forward to higher classes while new knowledge is added to the old.

The second approach is the horizontal method in which subjects are correlated. English and French for example are correlated in order to achieve integration.

4. Evaluation

This looks like the final phase of the unit of teaching but in fact takes place throughout the presentation. A good teacher retains students’ attention throughout the lesson by evaluating their knowledge with occasional questions throughout the lesson, though the major evaluation session is at the end of the class. Evaluation takes the form of questions but may include summaries and observations by students. An adroit teacher employs a variety of ways to evaluate a lesson. Assignments are one of the evaluation ways.

The interrelated nature of objectives, content, learning experiences and evaluation can be presented diagrammatically as follows:



Selection and Organization of Learning Experiences

Some authors sub-divided these stages into five namely: Formation of Goals/Objective, Selection of Content, Selection of Learning Experiences, Organization and integration of learning experiences, and Evaluation. These above steps are logically thought out, but they are interdependent and overlap.

Conclusion and Recommendations

For qualitative education, the Nigerian schools curriculum should aim at promoting the following educational priorities:

1. Scientific and technical manpower to foster a technological development.
2. Production of vocationally competent citizens who will participate effectively in the economic development of Nigeria. Vocational guidance must be emphasized in the curriculum.
3. The huge wastage (drop-outs) which hides behind the impressive enrolment figures must be checked through good curriculum and a teaching outfit.
4. Since the country's resources will hardly keep pace with the bulging enrolment figures, a shift system could be adopted whereby the same classroom space could be used by the two shifts of students the morning shifts from 7.30 a.m. to 12 noon and afternoon shift from 12.30 p.m. to 5.30 separate sets of teachers could be used.
5. To facilitate the movement of most Nigerian through qualitative education to the year 2000, the principle of egalitarianism needs to be taken seriously. We need not ape the democratic need to even up the disadvantages of rural children; citizens in the northern parts of Nigeria must be assisted with some crash programmes to speed up their educational development.
6. Occupational restrictions imposed on the mobility of teachers in their country through contractual appointments must be lifted so that competent teachers can circulate properly in the country.

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