

**CHALLENGES OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND THE REALIZATION OF
NATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study deals with the major challenges of curriculum implementation that militate against the realization of National Philosophy of Education in Nigeria. This paper discusses the concepts of curriculum, implementation, curriculum implementation and the set of beliefs of Nigeria's philosophy of education as contained in the National Policy on Education (NPE). The major challenges in the curriculum implementation in Nigeria as identified in this paper include shortage of specialized teachers, uncondusive learning environments, poor infrastructural facilities and lack of fund, among others. The researchers made the following valuable recommendations that adequate and qualified teachers should be recruited and posted to secondary schools. Practical teaching method should be adopted and infrastructure improved.

Keywords: Curriculum, Implementation, Curriculum Implementation, Philosophy of Education, Nigeria.

Introduction

Curriculum issues have always occupied the center stage in academic discourse in Nigeria. Beginning from the colonial period through the independence era, various opinions and views were expressed over what should constitute a functional utilitarian school curriculum. The deliberations at the 1969 national conference led to the adoption of a National Policy on Education in 1977 (NPE, 2013). The subsequent editions on the National Policy on Education integrated needs and aspirations of the Nigerian society towards developing the society and her citizens academically.

Curriculum development is not a new concept in our educational system today. However, issues of curriculum, either explicit or implicit are inextricably linked to current thinking and action on educational system around the world (Ajibola, 2008). In the view of Offorma (2005), curriculum is a planned learning experiences offered to a learner in school. It involves three components such as program of studies, programme of activities and program of guidance. In recent time, human activities and life have become highly industrialized and technical hence the meaning of the term curriculum has also been changed to meet the needs of society and different causes of studies. Curriculum in fact is an organized plan of course outlined with the objectives and learning experiences to be used for the achievement of the objectives of education.

The Concept of Curriculum

The word **curriculum** originated from a Latin word *currus* which means a race course or a race track through which people ran to reach a goal. The definition of the word curriculum lacked consensus. Scholars and Educators defined curriculum to suit the social needs prevalent at the time, dictated by the dynamic nature of knowledge, the learner and the learning process. Curriculum was originally defined as a course of study or training. It was seen as a list of topics to be taught (syllabus), a content of instruction or subject matter content embracing ways and means of instruction. Curriculum is a powerful tool used by the school to actualize the educational objectives of any nation. According to Esu and Emah (2014) curriculum consists of knowledge, skills, values, activities and many more, which students learn through various school subjects. Curriculum could also be defined as the document, plan or blue print for instructional guide, which is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable learner behavioural change (Offorma, 2014). In the view of Akudolu (2011), curriculum covers educational goals, the content or fact to be learnt, the learning experiences, outcome of learning encounters and the learning environment. Curriculum is also referred to as a systematic and organized body of knowledge through which the goals of education can be achieved for the fulfillment of the needs and aspirations of any given society (Igbokwe, 2009). Curriculum is also viewed as experiences children have under the guidance of the teacher (Caswell and Campbell, 1935). It is also seen as all the learning experiences which is planned and directed by the school to attain educational goals (Tyler, 1957). Another dimension of viewing curriculum is by studying its components. The components are related to the function of curriculum to learner. They represent basic areas of curriculum implementation. Onwuka (1981) noted that the three components of an Educational Programme that are regarded as the components of the curriculum are:

- i. Programme of studies
- ii. Programme of activities
- iii. Programme of Guidance

Programme of Studies is concerned with all school subjects which contain past experiences of man while **programme of activities** is concerned with all school organized activities that promote students' academic experiences (school club, sports, games etc), then **programme of guidance** has its aim as to help each student actualize himself, this is usually through guidance and counseling. From the definition of curriculum so far made, one understands that curriculum is an indispensable tool in educational system. It is a vehicle through which educational goals are attained. It guides and monitors learning experiences.

Curriculum Implementation

The word 'implementation' is the process through which a proposed concept, model, topic, theory etc. is taken up by some practice. **To implement** means to make something that has been officially decided on to be in use or to be put in motion or practice. It also refers to putting a plan, scheme, decision, proposal, intention, an agreement, policy or ideas into effect (Chukwuemeka, 2014). Implementation determines the success or failure of any plan, proposal, intention etc. In other words, it is the bedrock of any plan.

Curriculum implementation, therefore, is the disseminating of information on a wide basis, after pilot-test, on a newly designed curriculum or on a change or revised curriculum. It ascertains the feasibility, adequacy or relevance of curriculum plans towards the accomplishment of intended learning outcomes. Curriculum implementation could also be viewed as the various steps involved in achieving the derived curriculum objectives of educational programmes (Ekpo & Oka, 2009). Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study. The putting of the curriculum into practice requires an implementation agent. The teacher is identified as agent in the curriculum implementation process. Implementation takes place as the learner acquires the planned or intended experiences, skills, knowledge, ideas and attitude that are aimed at enabling the same learner to function effectively in the society. The teacher, the learner, teaching materials, and the teaching environment, the school management all constitute major players at the implementation stage. If a

curriculum is not implemented, all the efforts spent in the planning and development process will be a waste. Curriculum Implementation fosters curriculum Evaluation and this guides the learning outcomes. The major implementers of curriculum are the teachers. They set up learning opportunities aimed at enabling learners acquire the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through adoption of appropriate teaching methods and materials to guide students' learning. The curriculum planned and developed is implemented through the medium of instruction. This is why curriculum implementation is seen as the daily activities of school management and classroom teacher in the pursuit of the achievement of the objectives of the school curriculum, all in a bid to realize the national philosophy of education.

Philosophy and Philosophy of Education

The term **philosophy** in a lay man's understanding is "the love for wisdom". Philosophy defines the way of life, the values, ideals, habits, beliefs, attitudes, norms, aspirations and practices of the members of a society (Offorma, 2002). In planning curriculum for any given society, the philosophy of that society must be considered if not the curriculum will never stand the test of time. The social philosophy is normally reflected in the educational philosophy from where the educational goals are formulated.

Philosophy of education is then the application of philosophical principles in the solution of educational problem. Philosophy of education enables educators to understand what education means, its purpose and what type of education people and circumstances require. It is useful in determining the kind of educational practices that can mould individuals; young and old into the most constructive character (Obasi, 2009). The Nigeria's philosophy of education as enshrined in the National Policy of Education (NPE) 2016 is based on the following set of beliefs:

- a. Education is an instrument for national development and social change;
- b. Education is vital for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria;
- c. Education maximizes the creative potentials and skills of the individual for self-fulfillment and general development of the society;
- d. Education is compulsory and the right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion, colour, ethnic background and any peculiar individual challenges; and
- e. Education is to be qualitative, comprehensive, functional and relevant to the needs of the society.

A good look at the philosophy of education stated above, it is observable that the educational philosophy is all encompassing as it integrates or advocates the three domains of education as well as inclusive education (Education for all) that will help the citizens function effectively in the society. However, there are still challenges facing the successful implementation of the stated philosophy of education, thereby bringing retarded growth and development in the educational sector of the country.

Challenges Militating against Curriculum Implementation in Schools in Nigeria

The essence of planning any curriculum is its adequate implementation in schools. It is therefore unfortunate that in the schools of our nation, certain problems inhibit this implementation, and if a well-planned curriculum is not implemented, realization of the national philosophy of education will be marred. These problems, therefore, include:

Quality of Teachers

This has to do with professional qualifications of teachers. Teachers as the implementers of curriculum must possess the teaching qualifications to enhance their instructional delivery process. A major setback in effective curriculum implementation is the problem of unqualified teachers. Sofalaham (1992) noted that at junior secondary school level, due to shortage of teachers, the requirements of two Nigerian languages are no longer strictly observed. Again Ajibola (2008) opined that most of the teachers in the secondary schools are not qualified to teach the subjects introduced in the curriculum. Amuzo (1997) in his study on the relationship between availability of expert teachers and implementation of secondary school curriculum in Nigeria found that quality and quantity of teachers in Nigerian Schools significantly affect the implementation of curriculum in Nigeria schools, especially, at the secondary school level. Nwiyi & Uriah (2007) in their study also discovered that teachers in secondary schools are inadequate and unqualified in most cases and as such, implementation of the curriculum becomes difficult as some did not

go through teachers training institutions. They observed that most teachers came into the teaching profession as the last resort due to lack of job, and cannot render or offer quality services; hence implementation of the curriculum is hampered. Offorma (2005) opined that subjects are not effectively implemented as most of the subjects are not offered due to lack of teachers, workshops for practical work, and further noted that where there are teachers, the delivery is usually theorized because of lack of competence on the part of the teacher.

Learning Environment

Learning environment has been identified as one of the major players in curriculum implementation. A conducive learning environment must be created for the realization of the objectives of education in secondary schools. Good learning environment promotes quality education, which goes beyond good classroom, library, laboratories, hostels, and teachers' attendance to workshops and conferences. It includes adequate policies and practices, which prohibits students and teachers' harassment, examination malpractice, cultism and its associated violence. It connotes good academic culture (Ogbodo, 2006). It is also within the preview of the schools to engender a peaceful and conducive climate and academic culture so that the school curriculum would be implemented, which would guarantee excellence on the part of the students, (Nwiyi, 2009).

Infrastructural Facilities

Indeed, infrastructural facilities count as another problem that inhibit curriculum implementation and possible realization of the philosophy of education of our nation. A study was carried out by Ajayi in 1999 on the "relationship between infrastructure availability and curriculum implementation in Nigeria school". The result of the study showed that no significant relationship exists between school facilities availability in Nigeria secondary schools and curriculum implementation in those schools. However, Anyakogu (2002) in his study discovered that relationship exists between availability of school facilities and implementation of school curriculum. This result implies that without the availability of functional infrastructure in the school, the skilled-based curriculum will not be effectively implemented in Nigeria and the youths would lack skills and economic empowerment. Puyate, (2006) noted that most of the equipment, tools and workshop facilities in the secondary schools are either broken down, damaged or dilapidated and they are not replaced or renovated.

Funding

Education in Nigeria is associated with inadequate funding from the Federal, State and Local Governments (Nwiyi, 2009). The state of schools' lack of workshops, conferences etc. proves the fact that schools in terms of facilities, classrooms, equipment are inadequately funded far below the UNESCO estimate of 26% budgetary allocation to education. According to Ogbuikwe, Agunloye and Okebe (2003), in Nwiyi (2009), teachers are stagnated and denied promotion, hence some spend nearly eight years without promotion and those promoted are denied of full arrears of the promotion and placement on new wages. This situation is highly demoralizing and has negative impacts on the implementation of the curriculum in the schools.

Teaching Method

The primary goals of teaching is to teach the students both practical and theoretical aspects of the subject matter, but unfortunately, it is not so in schools. Omo-Ojugo & Oluwerei (2008) identified lack of adequate instructional materials and ineffective teaching method as factors responsible for poor implementation of the curriculum. Akuezilo (2007) stated that the basic science and technology curriculum including vocational/technical education is very practical in nature and should ideally be taught through methods that maximize the active participation of the learners, but lamented the lack of facilities in schools. It is therefore imperative to teach subjects in a more practical manner than theoretical.

Conclusion

For curriculum to be delivered or implemented to achieve the stated goals of education in schools, it is important that adequate and qualified teachers be recruited and posted to schools. The importance of philosophy of education to curriculum implementation in schools cannot be over emphasized, hence adequate funding, conducive environment and teaching methods that exhibit or expose practical skills and knowledge for self-reliance should be emphasized.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made:

1. Government at all levels should ensure that adequate and qualified subject teachers are recruited and posted to schools.
2. The government should provide equipment, workshop machines, and other facilities needed for effective implementation of educational curricular in schools.
3. Schools should deemphasize theoretical teaching and embrace practical method of teaching for skill acquisition, self-reliance and general development of the society.
4. Government at all levels should aim at creating an enabling environment to facilitate teaching and learning.

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