
CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND THE TEACHER: CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

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Abstract

Curriculum implementation is the act of translating the curriculum document into action in the classroom by the teacher and so concluding any issue on curriculum implementation without mentioning the teacher will be like one going for cry and leaving his/her eyes behind, like an Igbo adage will say. This is to say that curriculum implementation is the arduous work of the teacher. The teacher's duty as a curriculum implementer can not be over emphasized and so the paper on curriculum implementation and the teacher: challenges and way forward. The paper examines the concept of curriculum, the concept of curriculum implementation, curriculum implementation and the effective teacher, challenges of the teacher as a curriculum implementer which include: Non-involvement of teachers in curriculum planning and development processes, unconducive school environment among others were highlighted and discussed. Based on the findings, possible way forward were made which among others include: that teachers should be involved in curriculum planning; the school environment should be pupil/student-friendly.

Curriculum is the sum total of all learning experiences and the intended learning outcomes that are offered to the learners in an anspieces of a school. Curriculum is also the vehicle through which ~~Academic Excellence~~ ~~educational objectives/aims are being achieved. A countries hopes and aspirations~~ are expected to be attained through the use of the school curriculum while also modifying and educating their youths. In view of the above explanations, school curriculum must be creatively and painstakingly incorporated or integrated (Ugwu, 2003), considering the identified needs of the industry and the globe at large.

It is the teacher that executes these curriculum activities/curriculum actions/documents and so the teacher and the curriculum moves side by side. This implies that one can not discuss elaborately on curriculum without the mention of the teacher who is the curriculum implementer. As a curriculum implementer it means that the teacher is the one who brings the curriculum documents to limelight and to reality. The work of the teacher in curriculum implementation can not be over-emphasized. Therefore, the paper will be discussed under the following sub-headings:

The Concept of Curriculum

The Concept of Curriculum Implementation.

Curriculum Implementation and the Effective Teacher
Challenges of the Teacher as a Curriculum Implementer
Recommendations

The Concept of Curriculum

Curriculum as viewed by Alebiosu (2005) is an instrument that dictates the affairs of every educational system. It is the vehicle through which knowledge and other learning activities are disseminated.

This indicates that the curriculum is a road map for learning and as such focuses on knowledge and skills that deemed fit for learning. Mkpa (1987) in Mkpa and Izuagba (2009:2) defined curriculum as:

The planned and guided learning experiences and intended learning outcomes, formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth and personal social competence.

The above definition by Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) is being termed “fairly comprehensive because it reflects the changing conceptions of curriculum, as it resolves the means-end distinction, the curriculum-instruction distinction, as well as precisely stating what a curriculum does not entail passing on from one generation to the other, static and stale knowledge, rather it recognizes the fact that what is learnt changes reflecting new needs, emergent problems, desires of learner; society and new subject matter. It went further to make distinction between the roles of the school and other socializing agencies in curriculum planning and development.

Adekole and Ajeyalemi (1994) in Ivowi (2009), defined curriculum as a systematic organization of a set of intentions about learning experiences for certain learners in certain justifiable arrangement of sequence and resources. They went further, to list the implications of this definition, among which are the following:

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- Curriculum is a set of deliberate intentions or plans;
- A curriculum is a blue print for activities, and
- A curriculum involves a highly technical and rational decision-making process.

The above definition and implication show that curriculum is a documentation, a blue print on which all the activities of the educational systems are based upon. It also means that curriculum is a frame work of action for the educational system. It Further went on to say that curriculum requires deliberate actions, technical and rational reasoning.

The Concept of Curriculum Implementation

What is curriculum implementation.

This involves the dissemination of the structured set of learning experiences, the provision of resources to effectively execute the plan, and the actual execution of the plan in the classroom setting where teacher-learner interactions take place (Ivowi, 2009). In curriculum implementation, the learner for whom the programme is being planned interacts with the contents and materials in order to acquire the necessary skills, attitudes and abilities (Mkpa and Izuagba) (2009). They went further to define curriculum implementation as the actual engagement of the learner with the planned learning opportunities. This means that curriculum implementation is that stage of the curriculum process where the learner through the guide of a teacher interacts with learning activities so as to maximize learning as will be noticed in the learners new behaviour/new approach to issues.

Curriculum Implementation and the Effective Teacher

Another name for the teacher is curriculum implementer. The teacher is one who translates the curriculum document into operating curriculum through a joint effort of hers/his, the learners and other interest groups as viewed by Mkpa (1987).

This implies that the task of implementing the curriculum lies on the teacher. The teacher does not just implement the content as it is, rather he breaks the content into teachable units. Precisely what comes to the teacher is not the curriculum plan rather the syllabus which he breaks down to get the scheme of work, down to the unit of plan and finally to the lesson plan which is being used daily in his/her teaching.

Who is an Effective Teacher

According to Hornby (2000), an effective teacher is one who teaches in order to achieve the desired objective. This implies that an effective teacher give all it takes, strives towards the achievement of that stated objective.

An effective teacher is one who is skillful. He/she is a teacher who is innovative in nature, a teacher who is resourceful. A teacher who knows the right approaches, techniques and methods appropriate for the dissemination of knowledge (learning) in his/her class (Obilo, 2010).

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According to Kanno (1997), it is a teacher who knows the right mode of communication to employ and when necessary to employ it. For instance, speaking/learning mode of communication should be employed in a face to face interaction in a classroom while visualizing/observing mode should be used when the teacher is not physically present since message could be transmitted through films, internet and television. It is a teacher who is not lackadaisical about his/her teaching, he/she plans his/her lesson note ahead and has the hunger and is always ready to read and improve professionally; he/she attends seminars, workshops and conferences to upgrade/ acquire more knowledge. It is a teacher who has job satisfaction (Obilo, 2010)

Challenges of the Teacher as a Curriculum Implementer

Due to the arduous nature of curriculum implementation the teacher encounters a lot of challenges as will be discussed below:

- a. **Non-Involvement of the Teachers in Curriculum Planning and Development Process:** The teacher takes the final decision as regards the actual learning experiences to be provided and so not incorporating him/her in the planning and development process is like separating the curriculum from instruction, Mkpa and Izuagba (2009). This implies that the teacher is not just a receiver of the curriculum but a modifier and transmitter. Also for him/her not to derail from the objectives, goals and aims of the curriculum planned, he/she must be part of the curriculum planning and development process.
- b. **Unconducive School Environment:** it is believed that learning can only take place in a conducive environment. By a conducive learning environment the paper meant spacious and well- ventilated class, seats. There should be no distraction of any kind or noise, no interference to disrupt the learning activities. A school environment where all these ingredients are found wanting, curriculum implementation will be hindered and the teacher in question will not be able to carryout his/ her duties effectively and efficiently. This implies that the school environment is not student/pupil-friendly.
- c. **Heavy Academic Load:** according to Afangideh (2009) in Obilo and sangoleye (2010), some global and emerging issues such as family life education, citizenship, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse among others are introduced as curriculum content to be learnt by students/pupils. This is in addition to the already existing school subjects. Infact, it should be noted that the time allotted for the implementation of these heavy academic load is not adequate considering the incessant unrest

which has now become a tradition in our educational system. again, teachers now combine normal class period with school lessons especially in the primary and secondary schools, whereas in the tertiary institutions they combine both sandwich, evening and regular programme with other programmes like distance and weekend programmes. All this poses big challenge for the teacher as a curriculum implementer.

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- d. **Teacher Factor:** Teachers are the determinant of effective and efficient curriculum implementation at every level, so they should be graded in their respective areas of specialization. This implies that the teacher should be competent, effective, always available, should have job satisfaction. The teacher should always be eager to read in order to update his/her knowledge, he should attend conferences and seminars so also to acquire new knowledge for he can not give what he/she has not, since what he/she transfers to the learners they will take. No wonder the National Policy on Education, FRN (2004), stated that no nation will rise above the qualities of its teachers. Teachers of today once they are employed, they feel they don't need education/learning again, they relax and become lazy and at the same time, obsolete. This poses a big challenge to them for they can no longer move along with the emergence of different teaching and learning innovations.
- e. **Student Factor:** Students practice examination malpractice, extortion of money, they threaten their teachers once they discipline/punish them for unruly behaviour in the school. This constitute a big challenge to the teacher as a curriculum implementer. This is due to the level of corruption and poverty in Nigeria and so every child wants to get money quick, either to cater for self or family need.
- f. **Parent Factor:** Most parents, especially the illiterate and ignorant ones do not know the value of education and so don't provide their children/wards with school materials like textbooks, writing materials. Most a times they threaten the teachers for punishing their children either due to truancy or any other form of indiscipline. The parents also see the teachers as poor people due to societal attitude towards them and so felt they should not be respected. All these mentioned above poses great challenges to the teachers.
- g. **Working Conditions:** Government do not take care of the teachers as should be. Teachers are being neglected by the government. Teachers' salaries are being delayed together with their allowances. They are not being properly placed in terms of salary structure. Due to this kind of working conditions, teachers have no job satisfaction and so their working condition poses a big challenge to them.

Conclusion

It is obvious that the work of the teacher as a curriculum implementer can not be over emphasized. As an effective curriculum implementer, he/she has to be innovative, resourceful and skillful among other qualities.

Again for the teacher as a curriculum implementer to function effectively and efficiently, the outlined challenges must be tackled.

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Recommendations

1. The teachers should be involved in curriculum planning and development processes.
2. The school environment should be pupil/ student friendly, with the effort of the school management and the government.
3. More teachers should be employed to help in teaching of this school subjects. Again, the curriculum content should be revisited to reduce the work load that are not necessary. Finally, adequate time

should be allotted to the teaching of these subjects and teachers being taken care of to minimize the incessant unrest that disrupts the academic calendar.

4. Teachers should have the zeal to always study and so grants should be given to them to further their studies. They should also be eager to attend conferences, seminars, workshops, and other in-service training programmes.
5. Teachers' salaries and other working conditions should be revisited by the government.
6. There should be a joint effort of the school teachers and parents (P.T.A- Parents Teachers Association) on how to better the students and the entire school.
7. Awareness should be created either by individuals, government or (NGOs) Non- Government Organizations on the need for education so that parents will hear and provide for their children's and wards school materials.

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