

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR VALUES, KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

The major determinant that sustained all the activities in the school system is the curriculum. It therefore implies that for it to be functional adequate care should be given in packaging and structuring of its content and implementation towards the achievement of the expected values, knowledge, skills and national development. This paper examines the language curriculum at the secondary school with a view to determining the processes of development and implementation. The paper looks at the National Policy on Education as it relates to language use at the secondary schools, and provides possible suggestions for a functional and qualitative language curriculum for the Nigerian secondary schools.

The trend in our society has opened, and it is still opening windows of challenges and opportunities for the various protagonists in the education industry of the country. There is the urgent call for a fundamental re-engineering, re-structuring and the re-packaging of educational contents made available to the various categories of learners. This is why Dave and Rajput (2008), described education as a process of human enlightenment and empowerment for the achievement of better and higher quality of life. This reality calls for a comprehensive and effective system of education that will involve a continuous development of the learners' potentialities, the strengthening of their skills and the fostering of positive interests, attitudes and values.

At the heart of all this lies curriculum development and implementation. Adekele (2002), stated that students go to school for the purpose of learning some intended experiences (curriculum), which success or otherwise is influenced by how the teachers in charge help the students to go through these experiences (implementation) and which are to be found out whether they are progressively being attained or not (evaluation). These activities are expected to be systematically and continuously organized in the school setup for maximum Productivity. This paper aims at evaluating the current language curriculum, its implementation processes with a view to providing values, knowledge, skills and National Development in the educative process at the secondary school. It is against this background that the paper is discussed under the following sub-headings.

1. The Language Development Process
2. Language Curriculum: Implementation Process
3. The Teachers' Factor
4. Evaluation of the Language Curriculum Process
5. Recommendations/Conclusion

The Language Curriculum Process

As expressed in the opening sentence of the introduction, Nigeria just like other countries of the world in recent times faces major challenges of developing an open, active, flexible and intercultural curriculum. Braslavsky (2000), itemized six trends that should be taken into cognizance for a curriculum to be functional and qualitative as:

- i. The changes in occupational profiles in the context of a world of work that is increasingly heterogeneous, in many cases, shrinking, swiftly changing and ever more globalized;
- ii. The need to counteract deepening social inequalities and increasing marginalization and violence;
- iii. The need to recognize the diversity between individuals and communities is a valuable resource that is different from social inequality;
- iv. The need to educate individuals so that they are able to satisfy their need for better forms of representation as citizens in society;
- v. The increasingly broader spectrum of issues arising, for example, from advances in biotechnology on which individuals may take decision; and
- vi. The co-existence of advantages and disadvantages resulting from the impact of technical progress on the environment and the quality of life of individuals and communities.

These trends bring different opportunities and new risks for education and education systems. For our purpose in this paper, two types of curriculum definitions will be projected within the context of the language curriculum.

Igwe (2000), stated that it consists of the continuous chain of activities necessary for translating educational goals into concrete activities, materials, and observable behavioural change. Here, the curriculum dictates the content of what is to be learnt in schools as well as the methods and processes. It is basically what happens to the learners in the school. (Aladejana, 2006).

Bude (2003), viewed the curriculum as an organized set of intentions, that articulates the relationship among its different elements (objectives, contents, evaluation, etc), integrating them into a coherent whole. It consists of a continuous chain of activities necessary for translating educational goals into concrete learning opportunities.

One thing is clear from this definition: functional curriculum must be responsive to various changes in the society in order to equip the learners to cope with and contribute to future societal development.

Curriculum development is thus a complicated, dynamic and continuous process. A permanent search for qualitative improvement in response to changes in society is what curriculum development is all about. (Bude, 1999; Braslavsky, 2000; Byron, 2000).

The basic philosophy of language curriculum development (LCD) is to design, implement and evaluate an instructional package in languages. Its major objective is the inculcation of basic skills of communication (Ihebuzor, 2008). An examination of the National Policy on Education, (NPE) (2004) shows the thinking of government as regards the language curriculum, as aspect of the philosophy and goals of education in Nigeria as documented in the NPE (2004). It states under the importance of language that:

- (a) Government appreciates the importance of language as a means of promoting social interaction and national cohesion and preserving cultures. Thus, every child shall learn the language of the immediate environment. Furthermore, in the interest of national unity, it is expedient that every child shall be required to learn one of the three Nigerian languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

In section 5 (20) of the same document, it refers to secondary education as the education received after primary education and before the tertiary stage. It added under its broad goals that individual shall be prepared for:

- (a) Useful living within the society; and
- (b) Higher education

- In specific terms, secondary education shall (in part)
- (a) provide all primary school leavers with the opportunity for education of a higher level, irrespective of sex, social status, religious or ethnic background;

- (b) offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles;
- (c) develop and promote Nigerian language, art and culture in the context of world's cultural heritage.

The language curriculum specified for secondary education is embedded in section 5 (24) as shown in group A as core subjects thus:

- (i) English
- (ii) French
- (iii) Language of environment to be taught L_1
- (iv) One major Nigerian language other than that of the environment.

It is further stated that the language of environment shall be taught as L_1 where it has orthography and literature. Where it does not have, it shall be taught with emphasis on orality as L_2 .

From the above document, the language policy at the secondary stage appears straightforward although prescription may not be practicable. The curriculum development efforts are more systematic. It is pertinent to point out that implementation of this policy is often hampered by non-availability of qualified language teachers and the overcrowding of the curriculum. For instance, at the JSS level, English continues as the sole language of education. Two Nigerian languages form part of the core-curriculum and students should study "the language of their own area in addition to anyone of the three main Nigerian languages, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba.

According to Marinho (2003), language has societal and educational functions. In the NPE, language policy at the primary stage emphasizes mother tongue education – that is, the maintenance of language as the principal medium for the maintenance of culture. At the JSS stage, language serves as an instrument to cultivate and maintain national unity. The policy requires that every child, in addition to perfecting his competence in his own language, must learn "any of the three main Nigerian languages. Finally, by the SSS level, all students must possess, adequate proficiency in a Nigerian language.

The reality on the ground is that no conscious effort is made either by the government or the so-called stakeholders to enforce the actual learning of any of the Nigerian languages at the secondary school level. These Nigerian languages specified to be learnt at the secondary schools are seen as mere subjects by students and teachers alike. This is due partly to the fact that the government lacks the political will to implement this aspect of the policy on the one hand, and the 'mad' rush for the use of

English language on the other hand. It has been discovered that many parents, policy makers and a large proportion of the society prefer schools where the major focus is not on the indigenous languages but on the use of English language. (Eyengho, 2007; Iruafemi, 2004).

A bilingual education is a national necessity. Nigerian languages and English are the means by which education content and social attitudes and values are transmitted. Language therefore, has a direct influence on curriculum and the language of the home must be allowed to perform some educational functions. (Marinho, 2003). If language curriculum, according to Jibowo and Adekola (2005), in secondary schools in Nigeria includes all those experiences which point towards the development of the communication skills, art of reading, writing, speaking and listening, then, there is need for it to be functional and qualitative. Recent trend points to a shift in fluency in the languages. Hence, the curriculum has been structured to help learners to acquire communication skills for survival as well as integrative and instrumental purpose (Marinho, 2003). From the foregoing, it is clear that the current language curriculum for secondary schools needs total re-oiling and re-packaging in order to meet the yearnings of the students in the twenty-first century. The broad goals of Nigerian language curriculum include: the inculcation of national consciousness and national unity, cultural reawakening, awareness and preservation. Irrespective of the languages, Nigerian or foreign, the central goal is that of linguistic competence through the demonstrated ability to communicate effectively in the language learned.

In line with the National Policy on Education NPE (2004) and in order to develop a functional and qualitative language curriculum, Ihebuzor's (2008), observations and recommendations are instructive. He stated as follows:

- i. There is the need to increase the literature component of the JSS curriculum.
- ii. There is need to expose teachers through a series of In-Service Teacher Education Programmes to the techniques of an integrated approach to language literature teaching;
- iii. Proficiency in spoken English should be tailored towards fluency, intelligibility, acceptability and coherence.
- iv. Manifest creativity in Nigerian language through composition of short stories, plays, news-sheets and
- v. Acquire the necessary tools to cope with further studies in Nigerian languages, if so desired.

A language curriculum development entails a systematic approach taking into cognizance the prevailing situation (situational analysis). Right from conception, the various stakeholders should be engaged. This will allow for a more realistic procedure,

to anticipate problems and to suggest possible solutions (Braslavsky, 2000, Byron, 2000, Jibowo and Adekola, 2005).

Language Curriculum: Implementation Process

Successful curriculum implementation lies at the heart of the curriculum development process. It is a continuous process that equips practicing language teachers in enhancing their skills in classroom interaction, providing opportunities to interpret the language curriculum against the backdrop of realities on the ground. According to Adeleke (2002), it is good implementation that can bring out the beauty of a good curriculum. Therefore, the role the language teacher cannot be undermined because his/her actions or inactions can make or mar the proper implementation of a pragmatic language curriculum.

Teachers are undoubtedly, the key actors in any educational system (Lassar, 2002, Bude, 2003; Hallack and Poisson, 2002).

The Teachers' Factor

For a smooth implementation of the language curriculum, the language teacher must be sensitive and innovative. This becomes pertinent because he/she has the vital function of enabling the students to become excellent communicators. In fact, all teachers are language teachers no matter what subject(s) they may teach. Each discipline uses the resources of language to impart knowledge. Therefore, it is incumbent on every teacher to become aware of the vast potential of a language. (Daswani 2000).

The following steps, as suggested by Daswani (2000) and Adeleke (2002), can be adopted by journal of Teacher Perspective.

Language teachers in order to have a successful implementation process:

- i. The teacher should have good knowledge of the curriculum by understanding clearly the national aims, goals and objectives;
- ii. The teacher should be able to understand that the four fundamental skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are merely teaching devices, and not ends in themselves;
- iii. That the goal of language education is to enlarge the natural resources of the mother-tongue that the student brings to school;
- iv. The teacher must ensure that the students are provided with sufficient opportunities to practice and sharpen their natural language skills in order to understand the world;

- v. He/she should be able to create workable and conducive classroom climate by marrying the knowledge of the child and his environment with his knowledge of the curriculum.

The ultimate aim of the language curriculum development should be the improvement of the quality of education through the provision of guidance and assistance to language teachers. Effective language curriculum materials have to be developed and implemented for and with the teachers. According to Hartwell and Vargas-Baron (2006), schools and classrooms are where the work of policy-makers, planners, curriculum developers, teacher-training institutions and administrators come together. If the reform or policies do not make a difference within the classroom, of what value are they?

Evaluation of the Language Curriculum Process

The main purpose of evaluation is to facilitate or improve programmes or projects, by judging them. Judgments are made mainly on the basis of what has been observed and this helps to modify or change a particular programme of curriculum. It should be pointed out that evaluation being referred to here takes place on a continuous basis during the implementation phases. Without learning, evaluation has relatively little value. In the same vein, without evaluation, the effectiveness of learning and the accountability of teaching cannot be adequately determined. Curriculum evaluation is very crucial in all aspects. This is because it would help to determine appropriateness and suitability which will ultimately help to identify its adequacy in fostering the development of communicative skills (Jibowo and Adekola 2005). For the purpose of this paper, some definitions of curriculum evaluation shall be examined in order to focus attention on what and how evaluation should be effected as regards language curriculum in secondary schools. Carroll (2005), says that evaluation is a process of assigning value to measured progress or lack thereof. This implies that evaluation determines the extent to which programme (curricular) objectives have been met and whether or not the curriculum or specific learning opportunities should be changed, expanded, continued or abandoned (Moronkola, Akinsola and Abe, 2000). Ajala (2000), looked at it from two directions namely:

- i. The process of evaluation is essential to the improvement of education, curriculum and instruction.
- ii. A curriculum should be re-evaluated and revised about every three to five years as the needs of the learners and the goals of society change. Curriculum changes based on data obtained should be made promptly.

The concern of evaluation at this level is to ascertain the suitability of the curriculum to the environment and draw the attention of the policy makers to the inevitable study of the various aspects of the social trends that may have impact on the

implementation of the curriculum. Within the context of language curriculum, some of the strategies a language teacher can employ are:

- i. Giving regular (formative) tests to the pupils;
- ii. Giving the pupils constant practice in form of asking questions, writing exercises;
- iii. Checking students' work, exercises, assignments as they carry out class exercises and taking the opportunity to mark students' books;
- iv. Checking students understanding as they work on a task by questioning, drilling (oral and written), and asking for explanations of the process involved in problem solving.
- v. Identifying structures, etc and developing general fluency through discussions and practice activities.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted an appraisal of the current language curriculum at the secondary school level as specified by the NPE and come to the conclusion that the intention of the policy makers are good but, the implementation and evaluation levels need to be improved upon. Whatsoever is done at the levels of developing, implementing and evaluating the language curriculum at the secondary school level, the learners should be the primary target. In order to achieve these lofty aims, language teachers should be given adequate reinforcement in terms of training, re-training and motivation.

Recommendations

For a functional and qualitative language curriculum for secondary schools students, Jibowo and Adekola's (2005) recommendations are applicable here. They are:

1. Relevant textbooks should be selected to suit a functional curriculum.
2. Enhancing the understanding of specific rules governing the use of language.
3. Development and enhancing the self-confidence of students concerning their fluency in one of the languages apart from their mother tongue;
4. Trial testing the materials to ensure their suitability at the stages of development;
5. Monitoring and handling of what is taught in the school by language experts;
6. Adequate training must be given to language teachers before the implementation of the language curriculum;
7. Workshop training and seminars are essential for experts after implementation;
8. Textbook should serve as a guide to both teachers and students.

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