

TEACHER FACTOR AS AN IMPEDIMENT TO PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

This paper examined the concepts of Primary Education, curriculum implementation as well as looked into who a teacher is. The teacher as an impediment to curriculum implementation is also discussed under the extent of the teacher's mastery of the content, conversion of classrooms into shopping centres, poor administration of instructional methods and strategies, problem of inadequate evaluation and lack of dedication to duty. Suggestions for the way forward are made which among others, include training and retraining of teachers as well as regular organization of workshops and seminars on improved instructional strategies and utilization of evaluation data for effective curriculum implementation.

Introduction

Effective implementation of school curricula within any given society greatly paves way for its development. In the school, most of the things the learners are exposed to are contained in the curriculum and they are organised, controlled and supervised by the teacher.

The teacher, who is seen as the resource person, has the duty of implementing curriculum at the classroom level. Effective implementation of curriculum manifests positively in the learners' behaviour and performance.

Poor implementation results in the collapse of programmes. Mkpa (2005:9), observes that programmes such as universal primary education of 1976, the policy on the implementation of introductory technology programme at junior secondary school level, the language policy of our school system... collapsed at the implementation stage. These failures are caused by certain factors which can be regarded as impediments to curriculum implementation. In the Primary education sector, the teacher who is at the centre of curriculum implementation is one of the factors.

This paper on: The teacher factor, as an, impediment to Primary school curriculum implementation: The way forward for the 21st century is discussed under the following sub-headings:

- The concept of primary Education
- The concept of curriculum implementation.
- Who is a teacher?
- The teacher as an impediment to curriculum implementation
- The way forward.

The Concept of Primary Education

Primary education is referred to as the education given in institutions for children aged 6 to 11 plus. Since the rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system. The duration shall be six years, (FRN 2004:14).

Supporting this, Okoro (2006:189), opined that, primary education is the education children receive between the ages of 6 to 12 years before entering into Secondary School. It is the foundation of all other levels of education. It is important to note that strong foundation of any organization results in adequate development of that organization. This therefore, makes it clear that adequate implementation of primary education curriculum results in the achievement of the goals of primary education as well as successful growth at all other educational levels. The goals of primary education as advocated by Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004:14), among others include;

- (a) Inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability to communicate, effectively;
- (b) Lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking.
- (c) Give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society.
- (d) Mould the character and develop sound attribute and morals in the child, among others.

Effective Implementation of primary school curriculum will result in the acquisition of appropriate

skills and competencies from the above goals. These make the child to integrate well into his family in particular and the society in general. These, thus, constitute the outcome of curriculum implementation. What then is Curriculum Implementation?

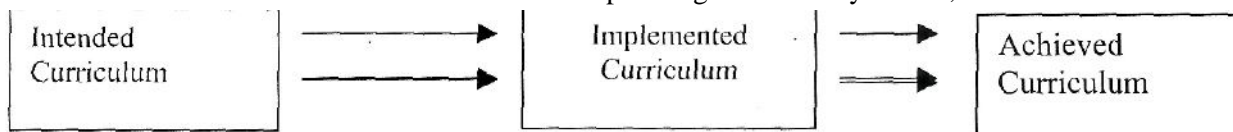
The Concept of Curriculum Implementation

To implement simply means to carry out or to execute. Therefore, curriculum implementation can be referred to as the execution of organised planned educational experiences. In attempt to bring clarification to the concept of curriculum implementation. Mkpa (1987:258), points out that educational experiences when still on paper in the planning stage, can best be called the curriculum document, but the actual execution of the curriculum document is referred to as curriculum implementation". Furthermore, Mkpa added that,

Curriculum implementation is thus largely (he classroom efforts of the staff and students of a school in putting into operation the curriculum document. Put more precisely, it is the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by the combined effort of students, teachers and others concerned.

Okebukola (2005:2), sees curriculum implementation as, the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. The process begins when the teacher is handed over the curriculum and ends when the learners have been exposed to the learning experiences prescribed. The activities of the curriculum implementation include instruction with practical work including experiments, interactions (student-teacher, student-student, student-materials), workshops evaluation which is followed by feedback,

To ascertain the extent or how well curriculum has been implemented depends on the degree of its manifestation in both the behaviour and performance of the learners. It is the components of the intended curriculum which the teacher works through that are manifesting in the performance and behaviour of the learners. The development of the learners which manifests in skills, knowledge, and attitude are therefore referred to as achieved curriculum. The relationship is diagrammatically shown;



Adapted from Okebukola (2004:3)

In Nwosu (1995), Curriculum implementation is seen as an aspect of curriculum development, which concerns materials and ideas being put into practice on a large scale.

Purpose of curriculum implementation according to Ivowi (2004:12), among others aims at;

- i. translating a policy or idea into workable blueprint and developing programs that will make possible to realize the objectives of the curriculum.
- ii. coordinating and monitoring the implementation of programs developed under the policy;
- iii. advising on how to provide the needed infrastructure on a program; iv. providing a continuous review of the policy and assessing the objectives of the program with a view to ensuring their accuracy, relevance and further development.
- v. making sure that the program being carried out is fully sustained by continuously reinforcing the provision of personnel and material; vi. ascertaining the likely weakness of the different stages of implementation as well as the overall achievement recorded in the implementation process.

The above are all centred on the primary school teacher who implements the curriculum in the classroom. Who is the classroom teacher in question? This, therefore is discussed below:

Who is a Teacher?

Our past experiences with teachers usually create different impressions, thoughts and interpretations whenever we hear the word "Teacher" being mentioned.

Parents see the teacher as one who causes others to learn. This is why parents send their children to school believing that they would learn useful and desirable skills, habits and ideas. The society sees the teacher as one who imparts the necessary skills, knowledge and attitude to the children in the society for them to be able to carry out those activities that will sustain, as well as improve the community in future. A layman's view of the teacher is a

person who can teach or extend child's knowledge of the outside world. To Mkpá (1987),

A trained teacher is someone who underwent and completed in a formal teacher training institution, a planned programme of training, among other areas, in the principles and practice of education and was exposed to an observed period of internship or as part of the period of training.

This signifies among others, that the formal training of the teacher exposes him to the classroom activities and principles. Clark (1977), in Nneji (2005:203), observes that, three important actions for becoming a professional teacher are developing teaching, building teaching repertoire and selecting the right strategies. Nneji, adds that, the most effective teachers are those who can vary their styles or whose styles are so flexible that they encompass a great number of strategies and are therefore readily adaptable to situations. This tends to point out how active and effective teacher is in the teaching-learning situations. It should be pointed out here that some teachers sometimes are seen as being inactive and ineffective in the teaching learning situation due to some problems confronting them. This situation makes the teacher to be seen as an impediment to curriculum implementation as seen below.

The teacher as an Impediment to Curriculum Implementation

The problems of curriculum Implementation as they concern the teacher could be reasoned along these lines:

The Extent of Teacher's Mastery of the Content

Some teachers have shallow knowledge of the relevant contents of the school subjects especially in our primary schools today and this poses worries to most Nigerians. It is clearly seen that most of the primary school teachers we have in the school system are products of crash programme of Universal Primary Education that lacks essential teaching ingredients. These teachers performed poorly in their secondary school certificate and General Certificate in Education, which did not qualify them for any advanced studies. Their spoken and written English are highly surprising. It is these teachers that the Nigerians have succeeded to give their children for their academic development. "It is easy to guess the quality of curriculum delivery tasks such a group would be capable of undertaking (Mkpá 2005:15). Some well-to-do parents have lost confidence in the public school and so resorted to sending their children to private schools irrespective of how exorbitant they are. The teachers are deficient in certain areas which results in keeping some aspects of the curriculum unimplemented.

Conversion of Classrooms into Shopping Centres

It is worthy to mention here that several school classrooms today have been turned into shopping centres by some teachers. These teachers carry their market wares to schools and sell them to other teachers and members of staff. It is disheartening to note that these teachers after the first and second periods each school day display their wares for sale in their classrooms. As they are teaching their pupils, they are also attending to their customers. These sales encroach into break periods and continue after break each day.

On finishing the sale of these products, they feign ill giving lame excuses for their inability to report for work only to use that opportunity to visit major markets in the country to purchase materials for sale. Within this period, the children in the classes will be left without lessons being taught to them by their legitimate class teachers.

It is important to mention that these teachers rarely have time to prepare their lessons effectively what more imparting the necessary and much desired knowledge the way it should be done. Consequently, this dereliction of duty and unethical behaviour greatly affect the Primary School Curriculum Implementation.

Poor Administration of Instructional Methods and Strategies

The impact of instructional methods and strategies is inevitable in curriculum implementation. The success of a well-planned lesson by a teacher depends on how effectively the teacher executes it in the classroom. Teachers' proficiency in the use of instructional strategies determines to a large extent the realization of the instructional objectives. In observing the effectiveness of instructional strategies in curriculum implementation, Ekpo (2005:6), said that,

When implementation is embarked upon without proper instructional strategies, the result is usually failure. This was the case with elementary school science in Nigeria, in the 70's. The 2004 National Policy on Education outlined the goals of primary education. Some of them were considered best fulfilled through science teaching.

Continuing, Ekpo added

Take the case of the primary science earlier mentioned, most of the teachers who were to teach science did not receive basic training in science and therefore, did not have sufficient knowledge of the content of what they were expected to teach. Besides, they lacked the skills and understanding of instructional strategies and could convert principles and outcomes specifications into appropriate instructional strategies for implementation.

Still on teacher's mode of using instructional strategies, Mkpá (2005:15), pointed out that, The trend the world over, in today's primary and junior secondary schools is in favour of the application of learner centred method of instruction. However, in actual practice in Nigeria, most teachers will adopt the teacher-centred approaches. This is understandable since many teachers were trained using the teacher-centred approach.

This tends to point out that one cannot give what one does not have. Instructional strategies that will involve the learners in individual tasks, paired work, whole class tasks, group tasks among others, cannot be adapted by our teachers because they have not learnt them what more being retrained on them. All these pose challenges to our primary school teachers in curriculum implementation.

Problem of Inadequate Evaluation

The strength and weaknesses of curriculum implementation are identified through evaluation, which takes the form of diagnostic, formative and summative, taking place before during and after the implementation respectively.

One of the school tasks taken frequently is instructional evaluation. Promotion examination is undertaken yearly and it forms the basis of promoting the pupils/students to new classes. The result of promotion examination has continuous assessment as its component and it is administered frequently before the promotion examination and in the end, it forms the part of its grading.

The problem under evaluation mostly lies on lack of effective utilization of evaluation data and not being able to integrate effectively the three domains of educational objective into assessment. For instance, affective domain is poorly assessed and most times, it is not assessed at all. Supporting this, Mkpá (2005:16), observed that, the affective domain is hardly properly assessed by teachers. Quite often, in stating objectives in lesson plan, teachers state affective objectives. However, in evaluating learning outcomes, not much is done to reflect the emphasized affective objectives. Objectives if not properly assessed, affect curriculum implementation negatively.

Lack of Dedication to Duty

Dedication to duty refers to hard work or maximum effort put in for the realization of the objective of a programme. Nneji (2005:203), outlined teachers' responsibilities as follows;

1. Planning (course, unit lesson and extra curriculum activities);
2. Control of pupils (motivation and discipline);
3. Imparting knowledge (effectively and appropriately);
4. Assessing pupils progress (knowledge, skill and attitude);
5. Sourcing instructional materials;
6. Being a professional all the time.

For effective curriculum implementation, teachers are supposed to carry out the above listed functions appropriately but most times, you see that some of them come very late to school, and the above functions are poorly or not carried out at all. In relation to the behaviour of some professional teachers who are not committed to duty, Ezewu (1987), in Okoro (2005:3), observed that

- Some teachers skip certain areas of the subjects they teach;
- They are highly deficient in the subjects they teach;
- They prepare their lesson notes poorly while some do not prepare their lesson notes at all; they teach the learners using only textbooks.

The above behaviours show that some trained teachers lack knowledge of not only the subjects they are teaching but also pedagogical skills required for effective impartation of intended learning experiences. This condition is enhanced by these teachers poor attitude to work, which are bound to create problem for curriculum

implementation.

The Way Forward

The above findings call for the following suggestions for the way forward.

There should be retraining of teachers already in the field and building of competent teacher education. This will lead to the production of effective teachers for effective curriculum implementation.

The Government should release enough funds for the payment of teacher's salaries, and as when due. Head teachers should ensure that teachers do not come to school with their market wares what more selling them in the schools. These will make teachers stop converting classrooms into money making and shopping centres as allowing them to continue the unethical act is antithetical to the teaching profession.

Parents, organisations, community, P.T.A, Government, Philanthropists, etc should regularly organize workshops and seminars on instructional strategies for teachers with more emphasis on the newly improved ones for effective curriculum delivery. This will proffer solution to the problem of poor administration of methods and strategies.

The need for appropriate use of evaluation data should be made known to teachers through research findings and in-service training as well as incorporating wisely the assessment of affective domain in the course of their curriculum implementation.

There should be periodic counselling of teachers on the need for them to be dedicated to duty. This will make them not only identify the goals of curriculum implementation but also to be dedicated in carrying out those activities that will lead to effective curriculum implementation,

Conclusion

Effective curriculum implementation brings improvement on not only the individual but also the society. Other countries are effectively implementing their curricula quite unlike Nigeria Impediments to effective curriculum implementation should be identified and handled immediately for a positive change to surface thereby, making Nigeria reap the benefits of sound educational innovations,

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