

IN THE NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL SYSTEM: WHICH WAY FORWARD?

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ABSTRACT

The Nigerian secondary school system has been oscillating between models of curriculum so much so that it is almost always difficult to ascertain its indigenous character. Sometimes, the curriculum mirrors the British tradition, perhaps in response to our Colonial past, and at some other times it takes on features which are American, with some Japanese variants. In such circumstances the judicious implementation of the curriculum in the manner of achieving its objectives becomes rather difficult. If some measure of stability is to be achieved, it becomes necessary that we critically examine the prevailing tradition of curriculum implementation in the Nigerian secondary school system with a view to identifying problems hindering it. The discussion winds up by suggesting mitigations for the successful implementation of the said curriculum for effective programming for national development.

INTRODUCTION:

The present educational system, the 6-3-3-4 was conceived out of the general complaints of the people that the existing curriculum was no longer adequate and no longer catered for the needs of the contemporary Nigerian society. The aims of the 6-3-3-4 system include, the production of self-reliant citizens, thereby decongesting the unemployment "stalls" in our labour market and ultimately the realization of our dreams of a technological society.

According to the National Policy on Education (1978) the scheme involves a six year primary school, a three-year junior secondary school, another three-year senior secondary and a four-year university education. This system took effect in September, 1978. Many notable Nigerians before that September expressed concern about the successful implementation of the scheme. One of such Nigerians is Nzeribe (1978) who questioned the rationale in hurrying into the implementation of the system without sufficient planning.

Others are Nwobodo (1978), Ogunpola (1978) Tai Solann (1978) who also expressed doubts and uncertainties about successful implementation of the system. The question that now arises is whether those factors that led to their fear, doubts and uncertainties in the 70s have now been removed.

The focus of this presentation is:

1. to briefly examine the meaning of curriculum,
2. to analyze the factors militating against effective curriculum implementation,
3. to propose some recommendation for effective curriculum implementation.
4. conclusion.

MEANING OF CURRICULUM:

Curriculum according to Tyler, (1949) is concerned with all the learning of students which is planned and directed by the school to attain its education goals. To him, curriculum embraces educational objectives; all planned learning experiences (including extra-class and learning activities at home in so far as they are planned and directed by the school) and finally, the appraisal of students learning. This is supported by Smith Stanley and Shore's (1974), definition which states that the curriculum of any school in any society consists of a set of educational objectives, a body of subject matter, a list of exercises or activities to be performed and a way of determining whether or not the objectives have been reached by students.

Fafunwa < 1969) defines curriculum as the total environment in education takes place that is, the child, the teacher, the subject, the method, the physical and psychological CMHMMIH. He emphasized that the curriculum should be flexible and adaptable, that the education of the teacher who is the key in the entire educational programme as curriculum is the key to all education. Its flexibility is to enable it cope with the changing needs of the people and the country. This is an all embracing yet precise and comprehensive definition.

Similarly, Wheeler, (1967) also defines curriculum as planned educational experiences offered by not just the teacher but also under the guidance of the school. Saylor et al (1980), is concerned with a plan for providing sets of learning opportunities for persons to be educated.

The curriculum *is* a combination of objectives, of instruction, the materials of instruction, the various learning experiences offered to the learner and the evaluation of everything involved in the planning and execution of school program (Gbenedio, 1983).

It can be concluded from the various definitions that the purpose of all curriculum planning is to provide opportunities for an individual student or a group of students to benefit maximally from participation in selected learning activities. This participation of students and teachers is know as instruction. Instruction is thus the implementation of curriculum plan. The curriculum plan suggests or specifies activities to be carried out by students as well as materials to be used. Teachers who implement this plan also carry out pre-instructional plan which includes activities and preparation and selection of teaching materials.

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST MEANINGFUL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Level of Teachers Involvement

A major factor which affects curriculum in Nigeria especially at the secondary school Levels is the fact teachers who are curriculum implemenlers are less involved in the process of curriculum planning. The planned curriculum is usually handed over to the classroom teacher for implementation. If a teacher neither understands nor accepts the basic assumptions of a curriculum plan, the teacher's pre-instructional plan and the curriculum plan may have no relationship. Once this happens, what is implemented by the teacher may not help to achieve the curriculum objectives.

The school teachers have been teaching on the field and as a result have acquired various experiences which will be helpful in curriculum planning. They will add a touch of the practical to the theory that the others will contribute. They are familiar with the problems encountered in the process **of implementation** and will be able to proffer meaningful solutions if allowed to contribute. They will also feel committed to the curriculum **they** are expected to implement.

INADEQUATE TEACHERS IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The problem of inadequate teachers is especially pronounced in certain areas such as the technical and vocational subjects. Even before the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education, u had been difficult getting sufficient teachers to teach the regular school subjects. With the introduction of the system, technical! and vocational courses become part of the programme Even a subject such as Home Economics was no longer a special subject for girls only but boys were included thus increasing the number of teachers that were needed This made it mane tedious to provide the needed staff to implement the curriculum content. This is in spite of the efforts made Nigerian Educational Research Council (NERC) to produce more teachers especially technical instructors. The COMBO! arranged for about 600 teachers to be trained in such subjects as electronics, woodwork, metal work to name a few; Thus supplemented those already in the existing secondary schools. In spite of all these efforts, quite a number of the secondary schools are yet to take off fully in the practical aspects of electronics and mechanics. In some schools the equipment is not there while in other schools, the equipment are lying wasted rusty because of lack of use. THIS IS partly because there are no teachers with the technical know-how who could mount the equipment and use if Effectively. In some other schools, the equipment has either been vandalized or stolen.

Lack of Qualified Teachers:

The vast majority of the teachers found in both rural and urban schools have not got the requisite qualifications needed for proper performance of their duties as teachers. Owie (1981), believes that this nagging problem of unqualified teachers is responsible for teachers in the profession who lack dedication, respect for values, and objectives of pedagogy and hence constitute a clog in the channelling of ideas for authentic professional development. Similarly, Aghenta (1981) thinks that the rapid education expansion is responsible for a large number of unqualified teachers to sustain the expanding system, He believes that quality education can only be achieved through qualified teachers.

Good teaching on the part of the teacher is a fine blend of knowledge, subject methodology, psychology of learning and the learner; and a socially relevant and creative attitudinal orientation on the part of the teacher. In order for the teacher to be able to implement the content of the secondary school curriculum effectively, the teacher must be given the appropriate or relevant training. It is not enough to have a degree in a particular subject; the knowledge of pedagogy is essential to make a qualified or professional teacher.

Even the qualified teachers have professional training problem which inhibit effective curriculum implementation. It is observed that the structure in our universities where the various categories of lecturers educating the teachers in training is not good enough. For example, in most of our Nigerian universities, the various faculties teach the subject in their faculties to the students reading such courses but are Education students. The faculty of Education in turn teaches the education and methodology courses. More often than not, there is no relationship between what the student learns in their subject areas and the methodology class. This will definitely lead to problems of ineffective curriculum implementation

Problem of Infrastructure:

In most secondary schools, the needed infrastructures are not there. Many schools have no workshop and the number of classrooms are too few to accommodate the number of students. Many have no science laboratories, language laboratories are not in existence in many and library facilities are poor. Where there are laboratories, financial constraints have, made it impossible for them to provide chemicals and materials for the workshops and laboratories. Where classrooms exist, the buildings are dilapidated with leaking roofs. This contributes immensely to an uncomfortable learning situation for both the teachers and learners. Hence there is also a poor output in the final analysis. This is to say that even if the teachers are qualified and are there, without the facilities to work with there is little or nothing they can do to ensure successful curriculum implementation, even with their efforts to improvise.

It is a matter of fact that some of the students have no seats especially in the primary school even though in certain cases the teachers are there. Two or three arms are merged together into one class where the students are able to get seats, the benches are overcrowded and not conducive for effective classroom management. In such cases, the benches are touching each other with no room for the teachers to move round the class which is a condition necessary for effective classroom, interaction. It can then be better imagined what the students at the back, out of the reach of the teachers would be doing

Lack of Adequate Funding and Effective Remuneration of Teachers

Inadequate funding of schools has created a multiplicity of problems such as late payment of salaries to teachers and lack of incentives and dew .1 to work on the part of the teachers. Many schools no longer get subventions. Curriculum implementation under such conditions is near impossible. The resultant effect of the twin problems mentioned is frequent strikes and teachers looking elsewhere for means of livelihood, instead of showing devotion to their primary assignment.

Since the teachers are not well paid, they lack job satisfaction. This is why teachers jump out at the slightest opportunities. Their colleagues that they graduated together at the same time who took up appointment with the civil twice are much better off than those who went to banks, private sectors and other government parastatals. As at the writing of this paper, some of the teachers have already gone on strike. Those who do not go out of teaching are

busy with business of their own, mainly buying and selling.

Lack of Effective Principals' Leadership Role in Curriculum Implementation:

Many Principals are not alive to their most important function which is curriculum and instructional leadership. They are so engrossed in their administrative functions that they either delegate or abandon this all important task to their subordinates.

Ajayi (1982) in his investigation into the competence displayed by secondary school principals in curriculum and Instructional tasks, finds that:

- (a) Principals are not able to devote enough time to the most crucial aspect of their task i.e curriculum implementation (Instruction).
- (b) Many have not realised that what gives education its spirit and efficiency is the manner of teaching.
- (c) Many principals spend their time in the office doing routine administrative work and little caring about what goes on in the classroom: whether the students are learning, whether the teachers are teaching the right thing or whether objectives of the school are been pursued vigorously as expected.
- (d) Many Principals have little knowledge about the curriculum.

Inconsistencies in Government Policies

In so far as Educational Administration is concerned, inconsistencies in government policies affect curriculum implementation. For example, the hue and cry about the inadequacies of the former policy of 6-5-4 led to the introduction of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Right now government is thinking of transferring Primary Education to Local Governments. This will further affect the funding of primary education which will in turn greatly affect the quality of instructions in the schools. The Draft Constitution is toying with the idea of transferring Federal universities to become the responsibility of the states in which they are located or the catchment area There is no way that the states can adequately fund such universities.

Political Instabilities:

The disturbances in the country within the last one year led to the closure of schools which include primary, secondary and the universities, especially in the South West. Some of these schools were closed for several months, There is no magic teachers in such states will perform to effectively implement the content of the school curriculum. A good example, is the case of Edo State where primary, secondary and universities were closed for a very long time. As a result of the situation in the public schools, many of the students moved en masse to the private secondary schools which have become a flourishing industry. One good thing in these private schools is the fact that there is no break in teaching as a result of strikes which have become the hallmark of the public schools

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Teachers who are the implementers of curriculum should take part in curriculum planning. Since every teacher can not take part in the national curriculum planning, there should be seminars and conference organizes at the state and national levels for teachers input. At the state or local government level, every school should be represented by a teacher who will bring in the contributions from the whole school including the prevailing, peculiarities in the area which will be useful at the national level.

The participants will nib their minds together and come up with their suggestions and recommendations. Two people representing each state will now meet at the national level and their contributions will be taken by the people representing the national teachers who are equipped with the suggestions and *recommendation* from the various levels to the national Curriculum Planning Committee. This will better represent the view of teachers from all the schools in the curriculum. The teachers will also

feel a part of the planning, of the CURRICULUM and will be better committed to its implementation.

2. The teachers who are on the field and are not professionals should be encouraged to take the post Graduate Diploma in Education. They should further be helped by series of seminars and conferences to understand the

content of the curriculum and the various methods which help them in the implementation of the curriculum.

Talmage and Hash (1980) opined that an effective programme could be developed when there is a concerted effort to improve on currently mutually supporting curriculum, instruction, and instructional materials. A teacher who has a good knowledge and understanding of a curriculum plan, will also be in a better position to have effective pre-instructional plan which will lead to effective implementation of (he curriculum plan, In this regard, curriculum planners should ensure that the curriculum plan contains enough details, directions for implementation.

3. Most Principals have allowed administrative duties to weigh them down so much so that they no longer perform their most important function.

Harris (1964) identifies the task the principal must perform to be an effective curriculum and instructional leader. He has to engage in developing curriculum, providing facilities and materials, evaluating orienting new staff members, arranging for inservice education, and organising for instruction. Similarly, Bradfield (1964) identified the Principals function as helping the beginning teachers and learning situation improving leadership in continuous evaluation classroom visitation, teacher orientation, experimenting with new teaching material and procedures, encouraging teachers to read and use educational research, arranging a series of demonstration lessons by different teachers, organising groups on curriculum and teaching and providing for stimulation and helpful staff meetings.

Any principal that performs the above functions effectively will no doubt help in the effective curriculum implementation. Such a principal must be conversant with education in particular. Therefore, principals should be more committed to the above functions so that the curriculum will be better implemented by the teachers. Nothing can be given in exchange for the supervisory role of the principal in the teaching and learning process.

4. Educational is an expensive social service and requires adequate financial provision from all tiers of government

for successful implementation of the educational programmes - National Policy on Education (1981).

Federal and State Governments have been the sole financiers of education in an effort to provide and sustain educational opportunities for all.

However, it is now obvious that this burden has become too heavy for the government to continue to shoulder alone. AH hands have to be on deck to fund secondary education. Funding education especially secondary education requires collaboration between the government on the one hand and the private sector, parents and students on the other hand. A law should be enacted to get the private sector to contribute a certain percentage of their profit for the development of education. The private sector should be obliged to make meaningful and tangible contribution to the funding of education. After all. the education institutions train the labour recruited by the private sector.

Money realised from the private sector could be used to purchase laboratory equipment, improve the school facilities and above all lead to the successful implementation of the school curriculum.

Money is required to enable them to organize orientation and refresher courses, workshops, seminars and conferences to refresh and update their knowledge for more effectiveness in the classroom.

School fees should be introduced but the fees should be such that will not discourage parents from sending their children to school. Government should ensure that every kobo collected as school fees is used for the funding of education and nothing else.

All registered companies operating in each state should be categorized and they should be made to

pay 5% of their net profit every year to government as education fund.

5. It is time those who use teaching as a stepping stone be discouraged. To reduce the incidences of movement from the profession, a law should be enacted whereby those who read education should teach for five years before they can

do any other thing. In this regard many more will stay in the profession.

6. Government should endeavour to employ more teachers. A situation where one teacher teaches a class of 60-80

students does not encourage effective work. If the ratio of teachers to students is not too high there is the likelihood

that teachers will perform better.

Teachers who read the core subjects without education background should not be employed to teach. Those currently teaching should be encouraged to go for diploma courses in Education where they will be exposed to methodology courses especially in the core subject areas.

Lecturers teaching Education students should be professional teachers so they can marry subjects with methods.

CONCLUSION:

The importance of education in any society can not be overemphasised- Education is the vehicle through which the development of any nation especially technological development will be brought within the reach of any society. No price is too much to pay for this education as the benefits are immense and will be enjoyed by generations yet unborn- The implementation of the curriculum which is the plan for the education of the students is very important and has to be viewed with all seriousness. Every effort must be made to successfully implement the laudable goals and ideals that the government has for the people. On the long-run everybody will be happy, the teachers, students, parents, government and the society at large. Then all the efforts put in would have been well worth it.

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