

SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM: ISSUES AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

¹Sangoleye, Solomon A.; ²Adedapo, Adeyemi & ³Olajo, Babajide O.

¹Alvan Iko College of Education, Owerri

²National Open University of Nigeria, Abuja

³Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku, Rivers State

Corresponding Author's Email: aadedapo@gmail.com

Abstract

Curriculum and education have been described as Siamese twins. The importance of curriculum in any educational enterprise cannot be over-emphasized. The Nigerian educational sector has been experiencing various challenges in terms of the output of its graduates. This is as a result of the fact that students are fallen short of the standards in skills acquisition and understanding needed to participate effectively in the economic, scientific and political environment later in life, despite government interventions in terms of curriculum development and review. This paper, therefore, attempted to explore reforms in implementation processes of the senior secondary schools curriculum. It started with the concept of curriculum, curriculum implementation, issues and strategies for enhancing effective implementation of senior secondary schools curriculum in Nigeria. It was concluded that funding of secondary education should not be the sole responsibility of the government but a synergy of efforts between the government and other stakeholders in the education sector to achieve effective implementation of the policy.

Keywords: Curriculum, Curriculum Implementation, Education and Senior Secondary School

Introduction

Curriculum and education have been described as Siamese twins (Kolawale, 2006) and any business in the field of education must involve a curriculum. In other words, everything about schooling and

certification is associated with the curriculum. More importantly, the adequacy, suitability, relevance and functionality of a curriculum can only be determined through curriculum evaluation, which is usually conducted when such curriculum has been implemented. Little wonder Mkpá (2005) posited that it is the stage of implementation that many excellent curriculum plans and other educational policies are buried without a trace. Kolawole (2006) asserted that the problem with Nigeria is not the curriculum making or policy formulation because many experts abound, but that of curriculum or policy implementation. Hence, this paper discussed the concept of curriculum, curriculum implementation, senior secondary school curriculum, issues and strategies for enhancing effective implementation of the curriculum.

The Concept of Curriculum and Curriculum Implementation

The term “curriculum” has been defined in various ways by different scholars in the field of education and specifically in the sub-field of study (curriculum). According to Dada (1999) curriculum is defined as a programme of learning planned for a target group of learners for a specific period of time in order to achieve certain predetermined educational goals. An embodiment of all knowledge, skills and attitude, which a nation, through her schools, impacts to her citizens (Dike and Eze, 2009). In his exposition, Ogunyemi (2009) concluded that curriculum is the planned and unplanned experiences that learners receive in the process of their formal or semi-formal education to become rounded person, who can make a meaningful contribution to the betterment of their society and the world. To Kathryn, Nora and Clifton in Ogunlade and Ahmed (2011), curriculum includes goals set for learning (which includes skills, knowledge and attitudes), the content in learning, the sequence or process followed, learner’s instructional methods and activities, instructional resources (materials), evaluation and adjustments to teaching. Curriculum can be seen as a planned programme of learning (programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance), a proposal or statement of intent, which has a time frame for its implementation and evaluation designed purposely for the all-round development of the (target) learners. It is the roadmap in education delivery in which syllabus, scheme of work; unit plan and lesson plan are derived (Sangoleye and Akaraonye, 2019).

On the other hand, curriculum implementation refers to the actual use of the curriculum document in the classroom. That is the actual engagement of the learners with the planned learning. According to Offorma (2005), curriculum implementation is the transmission of the planned curriculum into the operational curriculum. The art of executing or putting into action proposals and suggestions made during the planning stage (Obiefuna, 2005). Obanya (2004) defined curriculum implementation as day-to-day activities that school management and classroom teachers undertake in the pursuit of the objectives of any given curriculum. It means the processes involved in translating the educational plan into action to bring about change in learner's behaviour as they acquire the planned experiences, skills, and knowledge that are aimed at enabling the learners to function effectively in society. It is a process where through teaching; the teachers bring the curriculum into contact with the students to encourage the students to learn in the best possible ways (Kolawole, 2006). Mkpa and Izuagba (2012) described curriculum implementation as the stage in the curriculum process where the learners through the mediation of the teacher, interact with learning activities so that learning is maximized as reflected in the new behaviour acquired by the learners.

In other words, curriculum implementation means making the learners interact with planned learning opportunities for learning. It is a stage of translating theory into practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers, students and others. Hence, the teacher becomes a key factor in this process as the onus of implementing the curriculum rests on him. In classroom encounters, the teacher is expected to adopt good and appropriate teaching methods and strategies, with varieties of teaching skills, curriculum materials and a good lesson plan to guide the learners, while ensuring learners' active participation in the teaching-learning process. Teachers' competence, personality, availability and utilization of learning resources, conducive learning environment or otherwise can enhance or affect adversely the implementation process of the curriculum at any level.

The Senior Secondary School Curriculum

It is common knowledge that curriculum is the vehicle through which education transacts its businesses. The essence of any functional

education is the production of a “rounded person”, “whole child”. “the whole person” (Ali and Ajibola, 2015). Corroborating the deplorable state of the education system and the inability of the system to adequately prepare learners to contribute towards the development of their communities. Offorma (2005) therefore, advised that for Nigeria to become a key player in the world economy of the 21st century, the education system should provide an opportunity for job creating and not job seeking and this can only be achieved by introducing entrepreneurial education at all levels of the education system. Hence, the need for a new senior secondary school curriculum.

In the light of the above, the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed a new secondary school curriculum. The restructuring of the senior secondary school curriculum resulted in the development of 42 subjects and 34 vocational trade/entrepreneurship subjects. The National Council of Education approved the curriculum in 2009 (Ali and Ajibola, 2015).

Given this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014) in Section 3; sub-section 35 and 36 classified senior secondary education under section A of the Post-Basic Education and Career Development, whose objectives are to:

- i. Provide holders of the Basic Education Certificate and Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate with opportunity for education of a higher level irrespective of gender, social status, religious or ethnic background;
- ii. Offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, dispositions, opportunities and future roles;
- iii. Provide trained manpower in the applied sciences, technology and commerce at sub-professional grades;
- iv. Provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance, and agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development;
- v. Develop and promote Nigerian language, art and culture in the context of the world's cultural heritage;
- vi. Inspire students with a desire for self-improvement and achievement of excellence;
- vii. Foster patriotism, national unity and security education with an emphasis on the common ties despite our diversity; and

- viii. Raise morally upright and well-adjusted individuals who can think independently and rationally, respect the views and feelings of others and appreciate the dignity of labour.

By implication, the curriculum is designed to prepare senior secondary school leavers to be patriotic, nationally conscious, united, morally upright and well adjusted, who will be useful in their society and for higher education. To realize these lofty objectives, the curriculum for senior secondary education consists of four broad fields of studies:

1. Science and Mathematics
2. Technology
3. Humanities
4. Business Studies.

Fields of studies have specific subjects subsumed under each of them as follows:

1. Science and Mathematics: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Mathematics, Health Education, and Computer Studies
2. Technology: Technical drawing, General metalwork, Basic Electricity, Electronics, Auto mechanics, Building construction, Woodwork, Home management and Food and nutrition.
3. Humanities: Christian religious studies, Islamic studies, Visual arts, Music, History, Geography, Government, Economics, Literature-in-English, French, Arabic and Any Nigerian language – (that has curriculum)
4. Business Studies: Stores Management, Accounting, Commerce, Office Practice and Insurance. Likewise, compulsory crosscutting subjects are as follows:
 - (i) English Language
 - (ii) General Mathematics
 - (iii) Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects (provide requires skills for job creation and poverty eradication)
 - (iv) Civic Education

The curriculum also reflects the following Trade/Entrepreneurship Subjects:

- i. Auto body repair and spray painting
- ii. Auto Electrical work
- iii. Auto Mechanical Work
- iv. Auto Parts Merchandising
- v. Air Conditioning and Refrigeration
- vi. Welding and Fabrication Engineering, Craft Practice
- vii. Electrical Installation and Maintenance Work
- viii. Radio, TV and Electronic Servicing
- ix. Block Laying, Brick Laying and Concrete Work
- x. Painting and Decorating
- xi. Plumbing and Pipefitting
- xii. Machine Woodworking
- xiii. Carpentry and Joinery
- xiv. Furniture Making
- xv. Printing Craft Practice
- xvi. Cosmetology
- xvii. Catering Craft Practice
- xviii. Garment Making
- xix. Clothing and Textile
- xx. Dyeing and Bleaching
- xxi. Photography
- xxii. Mining
- xxiii. Tourism
- xxiv. Leather Goods Manufacturing
- xxv. Stenography
- xxvi. Data Processing
- xxvii. Store Keeping
- xxviii. Book Keeping
- xxix. GSM Maintenance and Repairs
- xxx. Animal Husbandry
- xxxi. Fishery
- xxxii. Marketing Salesmanship

Source: FRN, 2014

Little wonder Obioma (2010), Ali and Ajibola (2015) observed that the curriculum is structured in a way that will ensure that senior secondary

school graduates are well prepared for higher education and that they had acquired relevant and functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation. That the graduates would have also acquired skills with the capacity to set up their businesses as a fall-out of the skills they acquired from the 34 trade subjects. This functional education will make them job creators instead of job seekers, thereby banishing poverty from their lives (NERDC, 2004).

In short, a candidate in senior secondary school is expected to offer the four compulsory subjects, that is, English language, mathematics, civic education and one trade/entrepreneurship subjects from the list of 34 trade/entrepreneurship subjects and a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 5 subjects from their preferred fields of studies. In all, a candidate is expected to select or offer a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 9 subjects. As well packaged as this curriculum is, with lofty objectives, the fundamental questions are: Is this curriculum functional? Are the objectives achieved? Is there a reduction in school leavers' unemployment rate? Are secondary school leavers job creators? Among other questions and answering these questions would lead us to issues hindering the realization of the lofty objectives of the curriculum.

Issues in the Implementation of Senior Secondary School Curriculum

Effective implementation of the senior secondary school curriculum has been greeted with many setbacks which include personnel, funding, learning resources, political, attitudinal among others as being discussed hereunder:

Personnel factor: Teachers are the key factor in effective curriculum implementation. This is because it is the teacher that breaks the planned curriculum into teachable units and turns the curriculum into a teaching plan. The teacher's role in the implementation of the senior secondary school curriculum cannot be treated with levity because a good curriculum can be marred at the implementation stage by classroom teachers who are not well informed (Ekpo and Osam, 2009). Little wonder the Federal Republic of Nigeria states that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. In recognition of this pivotal role of quality teachers in the provision of quality education at

all levels, the policy reiterated that teacher education should continue to be emphasized in educational planning and development and that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained (FRN, 2004; 2014). However, in Nigeria, the reality on the ground is that most secondary schools suffer inadequate personnel (teaching and non-teaching staff). Teacher factor in terms of quality, quantity and varieties of teachers to handle various entrepreneurship trade subjects are grossly inadequate. In some schools, teachers as observed by Sangoleye (2008), Ali and Ajibola (2015) are compelled to teach subjects that are not their area of specialization.

In the like manner, the Federal Ministry of Education (FME) after the conduct of Operation Reach All Schools (ORAS) revealed that 56,294 (27.0%) secondary school teachers are not qualified to teach out of a total population of 208,497 secondary school teachers (The Guardian, May 20, 2007). By implications, the numerical strength of secondary school teachers has increased to the detriment of their pedagogical and technical qualification, with a negative impact on the quality of teaching and invariably on effective curriculum implementation. Hence, Yobe and Owusu in Ayandele (2016) asserted that teacher qualification is the best predictor of their ability to implement the curriculum. To Kolawole (2006), personnel is a very crucial factor. Teachers are at the heart of curriculum implementation because they are the people who implement the curriculum. He further said that teachers need to be sufficiently available, motivated, equipped with appropriate materials in a conducive environment. Regardless of the ingenuity of the curriculum developers, curriculum implementation can fail or succeed by the actions and/or reactions of the teachers in their classrooms or laboratories. In other words, when these teachers lack mastery of the needed skills to function, it affects effective curriculum implementation. Many of these trade/entrepreneurship subjects (e.g. mining) were not taught due to staff inadequacy.

Funding: The issue of inadequate funding of the education sector is obvious and this is manifested in the government's inability to pay teachers' salaries as at when due, inadequate infrastructures in schools, overcrowded classrooms, among other manifestations. Ekpo (2009) stated that the economy of a nation would determine the success of curriculum implementation because if the sector has limited funding

capacities, it would be difficult to implement a curriculum successfully. According to Kolawole (2006), it is the finance that determines the quality and quantity of teachers available and how they can be recruited or trained. It also determines the availability of materials, classroom space, books in the libraries, chemicals and reagents in the laboratories as well as consumables in the process of teaching and learning. In addition, it is a fact that most of the materials, equipment, workshops and incubation centres needed for most of these entrepreneurship/trade subjects require huge capital outlay, which is not forthcoming from the government. In most of the developing countries, the budgetary allocation for education is less and the number of students and teachers that kept on rising (Sibluwa, 1996 cited in Yaomi, 2017). No educational programme can be successfully implemented without adequate funding, it, therefore, implies that inadequate funding and consequently the realization of its objectives would hinder the implementation of the curriculum.

Learning Resources: Implementing the senior secondary school curriculum requires adequate learning resources/instructional materials. Tools, equipment, machines, textbooks, incubation centres, and so on are needed for practical. Non-teaching staff like artisans and other technical personnel are also needed. Therefore, the lack or inadequacy of these materials may spell doom to the intention of the curriculum.

Curriculum Itself: A cursory look at the senior secondary school curriculum in terms of its contents, specification of compulsory subjects, the minimum and maximum number of subjects a candidate must offer and the available teaching time coupled with a lot of uncertainties and other forms of disruption that characterize Nigerian educational system, one would realize that the curriculum is well overloaded. Ivowi (2005) noted that the content of our curriculum is satisfactory, though overloaded. Ivowi asserted further that the issue is not only a large amount of content presented to the learners but also the availability of adequate time and resources for the implementation of these content areas.

Societal Attitude: This means how people feel or see the new curriculum. Is the society a conservative/pessimistic or optimistic one? What do they understand by trade/entrepreneurship subjects, do they accept it and ready to make it work and produce a result? Societal favourable disposition will enhance effective implementation of such curriculum while its negative disposition hinders the realization of the curriculum objective. Or society may even criticize and demand scrapping such a programme. One major issue to note here is that adequate pilot testing was not carried out to determine the acceptability and reaction of the people, determine the likely hindrance and its workability/applicability in schools before its adoption, implementation, and sensitization of the people on the need for the new curriculum.

Technology: The use of technology in all human endeavour cannot be jettisoned. The development on use of technology posed a question of whether or not the Nigerian educational system has embraced modern information and communication technology (ICT) in teaching and learning. Nwosu and Adedapo (2014) observed that the poor socio-economic condition in most developing countries of the world including Nigeria has compelled the government and institutions to show little concern for the application of information and communication technology. Virtual learning during the lockdown period due to the COVID-19 pandemic shows that the educational systems in Nigeria are far behind when it comes to the use of technology in teaching and learning.

Conclusion

If the lofty objectives of the senior secondary schools will not be a mirage and if school leavers will be self-reliant, job providers and not job seekers, then it was concluded that government and other stakeholders should have a synergy of efforts in funding education adequately, while the adequate provision of facilities should be provided to make teaching-learning environment conducive for learners.

Recommendations for Enhancing Effective Implementation of Secondary School Curriculum

The secondary school curriculum is relevant, adequate and suitable for Nigerian secondary school students. However, if the lofty objectives of the curriculum will not be a mirage and the resources invested in the curriculum will not end up being a colossal waste, the following strategies should be employed:

- Adequate recruitment of both teaching and non-teaching staff. Also, varieties of personnel who can handle various trade/entrepreneurship subjects should be recruited into the system.
- Training and retraining of such personnel to keep them abreast of innovations in their respective subject areas.
- No educational programme can succeed without adequate funding. So government at all levels is required to come alive to their responsibility and make adequate funding available to the education sector (Kolawole, 2006). Also, timely release of funds and proper monitoring of such funds to ensure fiscal discipline should be ensured.
- Overhauling the curriculum to reduce overload in terms of contents and too many trade subjects.
- The synergy of efforts among stakeholders in the education industry in providing required facilities for effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum. A situation where students supply facilities to schools should be stopped.
- Adequate sensitization/orientation of the public on the needs and benefits of such a curriculum. The government must be reminded that for curriculum to be successfully implemented, the process of implementation must be negotiated and not forced or imposed by fiat (Kolawole, 2006).
- Provision of a conducive learning environment to encourage learning. The government and the society should be reminded that they owe the student the responsibility of providing an adequate environment necessary to promote learning (Oviawe, 2017)
- Prompt payment of teachers' salaries and allowances to get and retain the best teacher at this level of education.

- Involvement of seasoned/experienced classroom teachers in curriculum planning and development.
- Adequate instructional supervision and monitoring by the required agencies of the government with sincerity of purpose.

References

- Ali, A.A. & Ajibola, A.L. (2015). Issues and prospect of effective implementation of new secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. *Journal of Education and practice*, 6(34), 29-35.
- Ayandele, A. A. (2016). *Evaluation of curriculum implementation Bachelor of Education Degree in Social Studies in Colleges of Education and Universities of Affiliation in Southwestern Nigeria*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
- Dada, A. (1999). *The teacher and curriculum*. Ibadan: Tejana General Enterprises
- Dike, N. I. & Eze, R.O. (2009). Designing a curriculum. In U.M.O. Ivowi, K. Nwanto, C. Nwagabara, T. Ukwungwu, I.E. Emeli and V. Grace (Eds.) *Curriculum Theory and Practice. A Text of Curriculum Organisation of Nigeria*.
- Ekpo, K. & Osam, O. (2009). Curriculum implementation in senior secondary education. In U. M. O. Ivowi, K. Nwanto (Eds.) *All curriculum theory and practice*. (pp. 180 – 185) Abuja: Top Goody Nig. Ltd.
- Ekpo, K. (2014). Issues of impacting the senior secondary school curriculum in Nigeria. *Multidisciplinary Journal of Research Development*, 22(1), 1-8.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004). *National policy on education 4th edition*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2014). *National policy on education 6th edition*. Abuja: NERDC Press.
- Ivowi, U.M.O. (2005). Curriculum implementation: Implication for school administration. In A. O. K. Noah, D. O. Shonibare, A. A. Ojo and T. Olajuwon (Eds). *Curriculum implementation and professionalizing teaching in Nigeria*. Lagos: Central Education Secondary schools
- Kolawole, C.O.O. (2006). *Curriculum design, implementation and innovation*. Ibadan: Ibadan, Cultural Studies Group.

- Mkpa, M. A. (2005). Challenges of implementing the school curriculum in Nigeria. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 12(1), 9-17.
- Mkpa, M.A. & Izuagba, A.C. (2012). *Curriculum studies and innovations*. Owerri: Mercy Divine Publishers.
- Nwosu, L. U. & Adedapo, A. (2014). Optimising educational technology approach for effective teaching-learning process. *International Journal of Special and General Education*, 12, 102-108.
- Obanya, P. A. I. (2004). *The dilemma of education in Africa*. Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books Nigeria Plc.
- Obiefuna, C.A. (2005). Basic curriculum concepts. In R.N Amadi, A.C. Izuagba, J.N. Mbakwem and C.A. Obiefuna (Eds.) *Understanding curriculum concepts*. Owerri: Versatile Publishers.
- Obioma, G. (2010). *The new 9-year basic education curriculum and the newly approved senior secondary school curriculum structure*. Being a speech delivered as Executive Secretary, Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) at the Sensitization and Advocacy Workshop organized for civil society organisation and the media. Lagos: March 9.
- Offorma, D. (2005). A critical appraisal of the mode of implementation of Nigerian secondary school curriculum towards socio-economic empowerment of youths. Retrieved from <https://www.grossarchive.com/project/1341> on 24th April, 2021.
- Ogunlade, O. O. & Ahmed, A. M. (2011). Higher education and curriculum innovation in Nigeria. In D. O. Durosaro and A.A. Adegoke (Eds.) *Higher education and globalisation*. Ibadan: Stirling Horden Publishers Limited.
- Ogunyemi, A. (2009). Some key concepts for understanding curriculum. In U.M.O. Ivomi, K. Nwanto, C. Nwagabara, T. Ukwungwu, I.E. Emeli and V. Grace (Eds.) *Curriculum theory and practice. A Text of Curriculum Organisation of Nigeria*. Lagos: Foremost Educational Service Limited.
- Oviawe, J. I. (2017). Strategies for enhancing the implementation of prevocational education curriculum in Nigeria. *International Journal of Secondary Education*. 5(4), 42-46.
- Sangoleye, S.A. & Akaraonye, J. (2019). Implementing innovations in senior secondary schools economics curriculum: Challenges and

way forward. *International Journal of Arts and Social Science Education*, 4(1), 36-41.

Sibulwa, C.M. (1996). Selected reading materials in curriculum studies. Lusaka: Directorate of Distance Education.

The Guardian (2007). Unqualified hands in our schools. May 20.

Yaomi, C. (2017). Improvement in implementation processes of senior secondary school curriculum: Challenges and solution. *International Journal of Special and General Solution*, 12(1), 123-131.