

ISSN 1118 - 5481

NIGERIAN
JOURNAL
of
Curriculum
and
Instruction

Volume 10 No.1, December, 2001

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING SCHOOL CURRICULUM AND RESOURCES FOR NATION BUILDING

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Abstract

One of the factors that constitute a set back to educational process in Nigeria is the poor management of her resources. The extension of this poor management strategies to other fields has caused Nigeria to be described as under-developed or developing nation for too long. Management of school curriculum and resources especially the human resources is one task that is so significant in the development of the school system and in the nation building, yet it has received so poor an attention. There is dearth of resources in the system and calls for proper management. This paper took a cursory look at five strategies a head-teacher could adopt to manage the school curriculum and the available human and material resources for rapid nation building.

Introduction

The aggregate of courses of study offered in an institution and the available resources to support such courses distinguish one school or institution from the other. It is often said that no two schools are similar in terms of available material resources for teaching learning events. Moreso, in Nigeria, education at every level spells out its curriculum and the curriculum developers in turn endeavour to outline the relevant resources to help education meet the requirement of such curricula. Every designed curriculum is also informed by the educational goals at that particular level.

There is need for an indepth understanding of the concepts of curriculum and resources. The concept curriculum is used for an organized course of study undertaken by a student in or under the aegis of a college, school, university or other institute of learning. More commonly, it is the set of studies organized for a particular group of students by a particular school, college, etc. It may be further seen as denoting variously the set of desired learning outcomes or the structured set of learning experiences aimed at achieving those learning outcomes.

Resources on the other hand are major components of instructional technology. In a school, they may signify its source of supply, support or aid. It may be used to refer to the collective wealth of that particular institution or its means of producing that wealth.

More explicitly, the material resources are the teaching-learning materials available to the teachers for planning and executing of their teaching functions. Human resources in an educational system include teachers, learners, curriculum developers, parents, professionals and resource persons within the communities. Teachers occupy a focal position in this list.

A teacher is a facilitator of learning and therefore plays a strategic role in all institutional situations either directly or indirectly. By implication one can say that of all the factors that affect learning within the classroom the teacher as a human resource occupies a central position. Ekpo (1996) outlined teachers' functions to include:

- The development and selection of material resources to be used in all teaching/learning events;
- Selection of the presentation strategies;
- Physical presentation of the learning tasks and experiences to the learners;
- Regulation of the level and extent of learner's participation;
- Preparation and management of the learning environment;
- Monitoring of the intellectual growth of the learners as well as their socio-emotional development.
- Presentation of himself as a role model to the learners, etc.

These multiple functions of a teacher make him/her a unique component in the school system and calls for proper monitoring of his tasks for effective national development.

Overview of School Curriculum in Nigeria

A look at the overall school system reveals that at the Primary Education level its curriculum for instance includes:

- Languages of the environment (Igbo, Hausa, Yoruba, Ibibio etc.)
- Mathematics
- Science
- Physical and Health Education
- Religious Knowledge
- Agriculture
- Home Economics
- Social Studies and Citizen Education
- Culture and Creative Arts (Drawing, Handicraft, Music and Cultural Activities) (NPE, 1998: 13-14).

The significant feature of the curriculum at that level is foundation building. It is envisaged that if the learners have this exposure early, then at subsequent levels of their education the desired transformation would be achieved. At the secondary school level the junior school curriculum is specifically designed to further provide a diversified curriculum that can cater for the differences in learners' talents, opportunities and future roles. The courses offered are therefore both pre-vocational and academic in nature. The senior secondary school curriculum on the other hand is comprehensive, comprising the core subjects and electives designed to broaden the learners' knowledge and outlook.

At the tertiary level there is much more academic freedom for each institution. Universities, Colleges of Education, Polytechnics, Monotechnics including those institutions offering correspondence courses are all free to not just to select their students and staff but to determine their specific course contents. At this level the government's involvement is minimal. Nigerian government has promised to respect this freedom as long as they are in consonance with national goals.

Available Resources: Field Experience

At each of these identified levels there must be resources to assist the educators achieve the pre-determined educational objectives. Without these materials it is foolhardy to think that education as it is being provided presently can be an instrument "per excellence" for affecting development in Nigeria.

In reality, of all the problems that plague education in Nigeria, the most intractable of them all is the dearth of relevant learning resources and inadequate physical facilities. Some schools even lack facilities for staff convenience. This problem is evident at all levels of education though much more at the public primary and secondary schools. A few years ago, Dr. Iyorchia Ayu, a former Honourable Minister of Education gave the first hand information during his states-tour in 1994:

Down in Enugu and Abia States, we encountered a very strange phenomenon. We observed fourteen classes holding simultaneously in one open hall, with two teachers sharing one blackboard.

Classrooms, laboratories, libraries and hostels, where they exist at all, are so grossly inadequate. The classrooms are so overcrowded that at times pupils sit as many as 70 in a small classroom and the structures are dilapidated. Majority of the students lack the basic textbooks, at times even the teachers do not have personal copies of the prescribed texts in their subject areas. Basic items of furniture such as chairs, desks and tables are even not there in most schools yet the demand for places in schools continues to increase and pressure mounts from all quarters for pupils' placement.

Consequently, the pressure on the few facilities becomes great making the available resources and facilities to be over-stretched. This of course has an adverse effect on the quality of education. The focus of this paper therefore is to critically look at possible management strategies of curriculum and resources to bring about development and nation building.

Possible Strategies For Managing The School Curriculum And Available Resources

It is a truism that no nation can rise above the quality of its educational system. Education is the tool for nation building. It is essential for educators and educationists to employ collective wisdom in managing the complex problems in contemporary Nigerian education system, and be very optimistic in their effort to forge ahead. Management of school curriculum and resources requires progressive strategies. Such strategies include:

- i School level supervision and periodic external inspection;
- ii Timetable and subject blocking;
- iii Pedagogical methods demanding use of resources;
- iv Resources sharing and networking.

i School – Level Supervision and Periodic External Inspection

The need for school inspections is often not immediately obvious as a significant strategy because people tend to see inspectors as infringing on the professional independence of teachers. To some teachers inspectors are nothing but snoopers especially if at the end of the inspection they make unreasonable demand on the school.

It is worth noting that schools being such complex social organizations with multi-faceted core activities, and teaching being equally demanding, teachers often lack the time for self-evaluation or self-training. There is therefore need for frequent school-level supervision and periodic external inspection. Such strategy will reinforce effective pedagogical methods and introduce appropriate remedial inputs if there is any professional lapse. Moreover, reports from inspection constitute another good resource material for teachers' self-training.

ii Time – Table And Subject Blocking

Administrative strategy like drawing up of school time-table and subject blocking is cost effective in managing the lean resources. Based on the National Policy on Education there are about seven core subjects at the senior secondary level and their choice is dictated by their relevance vis-à-vis the University or Polytechnic admission requirements. Where all existing and examinable subjects are taught at the JSS/SSS levels, (assuming they are) for ease of operation subject blocking is a management strategy for educational advancement.

iii Pedagogical Methods Demanding Use Of Resources

Innovative teaching strategies like the individualized learning, resources-based learning, inquiry and problem solving learning approaches are gaining popularity among educators because of their instructional values. These pedagogical methods do require adequate provision of a wide range of media resources, related facilities and media services. These are not commonly available though they play such significant role in the implementation of any curriculum. An Action Research Approach could be adopted to develop these material resources pleasurably without making the exercise any burden. Using such strategy to ensure availability of systematically developed resources could also act as catalysts stimulating other teachers in the field to work (Ekpo, 1998).

iv Resources – Sharing and Networking

Resources sharing and networking is another recent innovative strategy in the application of Educational Technology to curricular needs. It encourages rapid and direct exchange of ideas, information materials, personnel and services between corporating institutions.

The network concept functions better with institutions that have functional school library resource centres. As a starting point every institution of learning should have a school library resource centre. Resource sharing is one strategy that will promote resource creation and sourcing. There are structures for such networking already. At the secondary school level there is the association of all principals of schools (ANCOPSS). At the tertiary level there is the Committee of Vice Chancellors. These are all platforms to start the networking.

The most significant is the human resource. In educational system and for various reasons the teacher has continued to occupy a focal position whenever human resources in education are outlined. It takes both training and natural endowment to bring out the best in a teacher. Only teachers with this combination can actually be said to be desirable human resources in the school system. Thus every

teacher needs to be equipped with the essential professional knowledge and skills to enable him perform professionally. The most appropriate strategy to develop and retain high quality and dedicated teachers should be adopted. Such strategy should be one paralleled to the clinical training model. Initial teacher training exposure is never adequate to equip the teachers for the system. They need to be trained and retrained. The selection and arrangement for the retraining should not be sporadic, every teacher should be given an equal opportunity to have the exposure and this should be an award earning to encourage attendance. There is no denying the fact that recruitment of personnel into teachers' initial training programme remains an important factor in the professional development of teachers. The best brains should be encouraged into teacher training programme and not those rejected by all other facilities. Successful teacher education will continue to depend on the human qualities of the prospective student teacher selected. There is need therefore to keep the entrance requirement into ITT as high as it is obtained in other professions so that the products may be fit for the effective performance of their duties.

Conclusion

University education is a major tool for nation building. Its performance depends on how adequate the tool is kept. In Nigerian's philosophy of education, it is strongly believed that education is an instrument for national development. The interaction of persons and ideas are all aspects of education and this hopefully has been achieved through this medium.

The problems facing the educational system in Nigeria may be many but they are certainly not intractable. Appropriate steps from all stake holders will solve these problems. Strategies for managing the curriculum and resources as discussed in this paper refer especially to the skills for handling of both material and human resources, issues and situations within the system in order to obtain optimum achievement of the school objectives as outlined in the curriculum. It involves learners, teachers, curriculum developers and the government.

If the major stakeholders in education industry (the government) decisively shows commitment in the restoration of Nigerian Education there will be qualitative output. It is such output that can build a nation.

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