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## **POLITICIZING CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION AT THE SECONDARY EDUCATION LEVEL IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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### **Abstract**

*It has been widely accepted that a functional educational curriculum developed and implemented will lead to a remarkable national development. Also, development of the educational sector stems from the extent to which the learners in the school are equipped with the right knowledge and skills by qualified and competent instructors in order to produce functional citizens of the populace and as such, lead to national development. Recently, it has been observed that virtually all the sectors of the economy including education have been politicized leading to several issues that are faced by the nation, even the educational sector is not left out. The predominant result of politicizing curriculum development and implementation is that of producing half-baked graduates who are not armed with the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of survival in the global economy. This paper therefore attempts to discuss the concepts of curriculum development and implementation, effects of politics in curriculum development and implementation as well as its implications for national development. Some of the effects of politics on curriculum development and implementation can be observed in the following areas: policies, funding, resource personnel, resource materials, supervision amongst others. Having observed some of these areas of challenges, certain recommendations are made to help address these issues.*

**Keywords:** Education, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Implementation, Politics, Secondary School, National Development

### **Introduction**

Education is an important determinant factor in the development of any society. There is no doubt that it is an instrument for solving societal problems. It could be described as the total process of human learning by which knowledge is imparted, faculties trained and skills developed. In the actual sense, the society depends on education for developing and training her citizens. Education is a process by which society deliberately transmits its cultural heritage to generations through schools, colleges and other tertiary institutions through the instrumentality of curriculum.

Curriculum is a complex term that cannot be defined in a particular way. The amorphous nature of the word curriculum has given rise over the years to many definitions and conceptualizations influenced by different ideologies. Curriculum could be defined as the planned and guided learning experience under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth in personal-social competence. Ivowi (2009) viewed curriculum as a tool designed for educating a person in order to change the orientation, behaviour, action, and values to that of a good person whose concern is not only to

develop self but also the world around. Ekpo (2009) maintained that curriculum is all the learning activities that students undergo in an approved institution of learning under the supervision of professionally trained teachers. Umoh (2016) also defined curriculum as all the activities a learner is exposed to under the prescription and directives of the school. Therefore, curriculum is seen as a programme. These programmes include: programmes of study, programmes of activities and programmes of guidance. Therefore curriculum development and implementation must be carried out for effective national development.

Curriculum development in a broad sense involves making the curriculum available or actualizing the curriculum processes. Curriculum development is charged with responsibility of documenting and operationalizing the curriculum. In the view of Marsh and Wills (2007) curriculum development is a 'collective and intentional process or activity directed at beneficial curriculum change'. Curriculum development involves making basic decisions as to who will partake in the curriculum decision making process and how it will proceed (Adentini and Sarfo, 2009).

On the other hand, curriculum implementation refers to the various steps involved in achieving the desired objectives. It is the delivery stage in the curriculum process. It occupies a strategic position as it links the design with evaluation stages that is, the materials and methods used are put together to produce desirable learning activities and experiences. Therefore, curriculum implementation is usually done by teachers who have to interpret a curriculum and decide on how to select the contents of the subject matter, appropriate methods of teaching the contents to the learners, integrate instructional resources with the

teaching methods and evaluate the process and product of their functions in order to know whether or not the curriculum has been implemented in the right direction.

Curriculum development and implementation at the secondary education level in Nigeria is paramount to national development. National development as a concept is very comprehensive. It includes all aspects of the life of an individual and the nation. It is holistic in approach and involves a process of reconstruction and development in various dimensions of a nation. It also includes full growth and expansion of our cultural institutions.

To a large extent, politics has greatly influenced curriculum development and implementation. Given the fact that in a nation's cultures and values are inculcated through the curriculum, hence the school curriculum is planned and developed based on the needs of a given society. Therefore, politicizing curriculum development and implementation could lead to a total futility of educational goals. This paper therefore attempts to discuss the concepts of curriculum development and implementation in Nigerian secondary schools, effects of politics in curriculum development and implementation as well as its implications for national development. Some of the effects of politics on curriculum development and implementation can be observed in the following areas: policies, funding, resource personnel, resource materials, supervision amongst others. Having observed some of these areas of challenges, certain recommendations are made to help address these issues.

### **Concepts of Curriculum Development and Implementation**

Curriculum development is the formulation of materials and its use for educative process. Curriculum development focuses on materials to be taught; in order to

reconstruct the materials and to properly ascertain the value claims attributable to the materials when it undergoes educative processes. Usually in curriculum development consideration is also given to the use of the materials. Curriculum development aims at closing the gap between curriculum theory and practice by ensuring the workability of the curriculum "document".

Steps involved in curriculum development include:

- i) Formulation of curriculum team
- ii) Stating of objectives
- iii) Determination of contentment
- iv) Instructional material development
- v) Personnel development
- vi) Trial-testing the materials (formative evaluation)
- vii) Modification of materials
- viii) Installation of materials
- ix) Summative evaluation
- x) Renewals (revisionary cycle). Ivowi, 2014 pp. 93-114.

Therefore, curriculum development involves planning, construction and logical step- by-step procedures used to produce written documents, as well as print and non-print resource materials. These documents may include vision statements, goals, standards, performance, benchmarks, learning activities and instructional strategies.

On the other hand, curriculum implementation could be defined as the interaction that takes place between the teacher and the learner in the classroom. It involves the conscious effort of the teacher towards the attainment of educational goals and objectives. Umoh (2017) viewed curriculum implementation as the interaction between the teacher, the students and the contents of the curriculum which embodies structure, organization, methods and evaluation.

Mkpa (2012) maintained that curriculum implementation is the task of translating the curriculum document into the operating curriculum by combined efforts of students, teachers and other concerned stakeholders. Ekpo and Osam (2009) noted that the curriculum content and the instructional material need to be introduced to the classroom teachers who are the major implementers of the curriculum.

### **Effects of Politics on Curriculum Development and Implementation at Secondary Education Level**

Politics has greatly influenced curriculum development and implementation in secondary schools. This is evident in the following areas:

#### **1. Curriculum Policies**

Nigeria's first formulated National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1977 to serve as a blueprint for implementing educational aims and goals. This policy appeared to proffer solutions to virtually all core educational problems. Over the years, Nigeria has been unable to successfully implement the National Policy on Education. Failure to properly implement these policies and also offer solutions has led to continuous review of educational policies in the country. To a greater extent, politics has affected the curriculum policies both at the development and implementation levels. This can be seen in the areas of incessant changes in curriculum policies and non-involvement of curriculum experts and implementers during policy formulation and change. As such, not incorporating teachers in policy development process is like separating the curriculum from instruction, making curriculum policy formulation as a mere activism.

It is in view of this, that Mosuro Bola (2018) noted that our problem in this country is that we often pick and drop policies as we want, whereas, the actual problem is implementation. For instance, there was

nothing wrong with the 6-3-3-4 system of education when it was dropped for the 9-3-4 system. Therefore, it is apparent that every new government wants to create new curricula policies without considering the needs of the people and society at large. In a bid to stabilizing the old policy, new ones arise and completely disorganize the entire curricula system. This has not only resulted in confusion in the educational system but has affected the entire country as the products of our schools who are expected to contribute to national development are confused themselves. Also, non-involvement of curriculum experts and implementers during policy formulation and change has become a norm in Nigeria. (Odukoya, Bowale & Okunlola 2018).

The major problem here has to do with paucity of technocrats within the government. The reality is that most of the curriculum policy makers are government officials who have little or no knowledge of the curriculum development and implementation process (Ivowi 2012). So they tend to formulate policies that are not feasible in our schools. There is a dire need for curriculum experts, implementers and educational psychologist to be part of the policy makers and changers as they are vested in the relevant knowledge and experience needed in this sector.

## **2. Educational Budget and Curriculum Funding**

Budget gives a detailed spending plan on financial activities, especially on goods and services like education, healthcare, power, roads and security of life. Despite the humongous size and rapid increase in the annual budget, the allocation to the educational sector has steadily been depreciating over the years. Nigeria being one of the signatories to the global goals is not doing enough in funding education which is a human right for all.

Shuaib (2019) noted that the meager allocation for education in proposed 2020 budget presented is alarming. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, recommended that 15 to 20 percent should be allocated to education in the national budgets of developing countries. Despite this recommendation by UNESCO, the education sector in 2019 got N620.5bn (about 7.05 percent) of the Federal budget not reaching the 15 to 20 percent benchmark. Over the years, Nigeria's educational budget allocation has been hovering between 5 and 7 percent which is not inadequate enough to curb the menace of low level of education, large percentage of out-of-school children, dilapidating infrastructures and poor teaching staff.

The financial standing of any country to a great extent influences the curriculum. This is because it is the economic situation and interest of the government that determines the provision of teaching materials, facilities and quality infrastructure for the implementation of the curriculum. Where a country is financially buoyant and the government shows interest in education, then curriculum funding will be one of its top priorities; but the opposite, is the situation in Nigeria. One of the most frequently cited default in curriculum funding is lack of sufficient will of the government in the implementation of curriculum. Government formulate policies and go the long way of approving strategies for the execution of the strategies to ensure meeting the set target for national development. But curiously, the same government pays lip service to such apparently good gesture by failing to release sufficient funds for the various projects in a particular programme (Ivowi 2012).

At the end of the day, the input variables do not meet the expectation of the programme. In many cases, there is a glaring mismatch

between the supply and the demands. For example, the number of teachers needed for effective implementation of secondary school subjects was far short of expectations as revealed in a study by NERDC 1997.

### **3. Curriculum Materials**

During the development of curriculum, materials that would facilitate its successful implementation are identified and proposed to be made available for use by teachers and students (Ivowi, 2012). Unfortunately, these materials which include equipment, tools, textbooks, workbooks, teachers' guides and charts are not in adequate supply in schools by the government. Some government provide textbooks in the core subjects and neglect others especially in subjects that are perceived to be less important or optional. In most cases, it is only selected schools that are within the constituency of an influential politician are supplied these books provided by the government. Other politicians resort to providing necessary laboratories with equipment while canvassing for votes. There is no equal distribution ratio of the curriculum materials such that schools without any influential politician or activist are the ones that may not get any of these.

### **4. Curriculum Personnel**

The teacher is a key factor in curriculum planning, development and implementation. It is the teacher who interprets and implements the curriculum as well as takes the final decision as regards the actual learning experiences to be provided. Therefore, the onus of curriculum implementation rests solely on the teacher (Mkpa & Izuagba 2012). This will require the recruitment of qualified teachers in order for the goals and objectives of the curriculum to be realized. Often times, the recruitment process of teachers into our secondary schools have been highly politicized to the extent that those selected to handle curriculum development and

implementations are not professional teachers. Hence, they lack the expertise and technicalities required many claim to be teachers when in actual fact they are not. They go into teaching as a stop gap rather than with the interest and the ability to teach.

The proper teacher by requirement must have a minimum qualification of Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and must have undergone the rigorous training in a college of education; and if a graduate in education and obtained B.Ed or /B.Sc (Ed), must have done the same in the university or affiliated institution. At the end of their training, they should have been pronounced qualified and certified to teach at the level of their preparation (Ivowi 2012). In reality, this is not the case especially in public secondary schools, teachers are rather recruited based on their relationship with top government officials, that is based on tribalism and favoritism, while the qualified ones comb the streets in search of teaching jobs that have been hijacked by government officials.

Apart from having the right qualification to teach, teachers should be competent in their various teaching subjects by participating in in-service training to brush their skills and also to acquire knowledge updates to teach the 21St century learner. Most times, the selection process for teachers who should undergo this training is not fair enough. Some school principals prefer to select their "favourite staff" to attend such training whether qualified or not rather than the actual certified staff for the specific discipline in question.

### **5. Curriculum Supervision**

Politics has indeed eaten deep into the inspectorate division of both Federal and State Ministries of Education who have the sole responsibility of ensuring quality control and supervision of secondary schools (Ivowi, 2012). The major problem

here is that the personnel from this unit hardly move out of their offices to carry out inspections. When they finally do, the quality of supervision cannot be guaranteed. A typical instance is having a team of supervisors who merely end their supervision in schools located in the urban areas, while those in the rural areas are rarely visited. This explains why some lazy teachers prefer to be deployed to schools in rural areas where there is little or no supervision by the inspectorate unit.

### **Implications for National Development**

The importance of curriculum development and implementation to national development is no longer in doubt. The issue that agitates the mind is the effect of poor implementation of curricula policies on the development of Nigeria. The euphoria with which Nigeria welcomed the National Policy on Education has died down and has been replaced with despondency due to politicization of curriculum development and implementation.

In the present circumstance, the dream of Nigeria to move to a state of parity with the advanced world appears to be a mirage. There was hope that the newly formulated policies which led to new system will produce new individuals and a brighter future. Many years later, the system has not produced new individuals and the future appears hopeless than when the policy commenced (Okoroma, 2006). If Nigeria continues to hide under the umbrella of the National Policy on Education without giving proper solutions to a educational problems, our national aspirations will suffer greater impediments and our national development will only rely on miracles, if any.

The implication of low budget and poor funding of education has been captured by the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, UNICEF, which in one of

its reports disclosed that Nigeria has the highest number of children out of school in the world with 10.5 million children not being educated. Also, the best University in Nigeria only ranks "401" in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (Shuaib, 2019).

Also, the importance of science and technology and functional teaching and learning through students' activity-oriented method of delivery is greatly recognized. Yet, there are insufficient laboratories and workshops with equally inadequate equipment, tools and materials to effect policy implementation. Thus, the good intention of offering science and technology has not been matched with the supply of resources; this results in the faulty implementation of the associated good curriculum and expectations cannot be met.

The recruitment of non professionals as teachers will always poor development and implementation of curriculum. This implies that, our secondary schools will produce graduates who are not well taught to be able to contribute positively to national development; while poor supervision of curriculum implementation will lead to lack of commitment on the part of teachers leading to poor performance of students; hence, non-realisation of educational and national goals.

### **Conclusion**

Curriculum is the map that guides education in realizing national objectives. This makes curriculum development and implementation a vital issue in any enduring political dispensation. The approach adopted by any political dispensation therefore reflects also in its curriculum and instructional programme. The unstable political system that characterized Nigerian politics has not been favourable to its curriculum. Developing a good curriculum to some extent has not been the problem of Nigeria, rather

implementing the curriculum adequately during the instructional process. Corruption has eaten deep into the Nigerian societal policies and has been a major challenge to effective curriculum implementation. Therefore, corruption needs to be addressed if the envisioned development must come to light.

Some impediments to curriculum development and implementation in Nigeria can be traced to lack of sufficient political will on the part of the government. Teachers who are the key players in curriculum implementation are in short supply and even those in the field are not even regular and sufficient capacity development in content delivery to enhance their effectiveness in the classroom.

Also lack of sufficient political will of the government in providing adequate curriculum materials proposed at the development stage for the actual implementation. This arises from insufficient funds released to execute educational programmes. Again, the incessant formulation of educational policies that are not feasible also affects the implementation process. While the supervision of curriculum implementation in secondary schools is highly a political affair.

### Recommendations

In order to move forward, it is important that:

1. Government should cultivate strong political will to implement all approved curricula.
2. Government should implement the national Policy on Teacher Education to produce the crop of teachers needed to competently implement approved curricula in the education system.
3. Government should involve curriculum experts and implementers

during the formulation of educational policies to ensure its feasibility.

4. Government should release sufficient funds to schools for curriculum materials to be acquired as well as overseeing special curricular activities.
5. Government should also provide relevant curriculum materials and facilities in schools. These equipment should be evenly distributed to schools without bias.
6. Government should ensure that teachers are exposed to the necessary in-service training with respect to their teaching subjects or areas of discipline.
7. Government should ensure that the supervision and monitoring unit of the ministries of education actually perform their statutory mandate of quality control and supervision, irrespective of the school's location (whether rural or urban).
8. Finally, it is important that teachers who are recruited to teach respective subjects have undergone the mandatory education programme and not those who are not qualified to be in the classroom.

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