

A STRATEGIC CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS FOR FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIA SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES FOR TECHNOLOGY TEACHERS

By

Nwokoye S. K. and Onwubiko G.C.

ABSTRACT

Good educational philosophy, policies and strategies are not farfetched: but educational resources for functional implementation of such policies are never always easy to come-by. Functional implementation of the Nigerian technical school curriculum involves some major resources; both human and material, for effective implementation. This study x-rays some major obstacles to functional curriculum implementation of Nigerian technical schools, curriculum development and implementation in Nigeria educational system, some strategies for functional implementation of curriculum in Nigerian technical schools and the extent to which sustainable development goals could be fulfilled through functional curriculum implementation. It also stressed the point that technology teachers should make thrust into the organization and execution of functional curriculum implementation strategic programmes. The study also recommends that technology teachers should be able to improvise relevant resources for functional curriculum implementation leading to sustainable development of the child and the society in general.

Key Words: Curriculum, Curriculum Development, Curriculum Implementation, Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Functional curriculum involves a kind of continuous process of assessing regularly, the educational programme to meet the demands of the changing nature often referred to as the process of curriculum development and innovation.

However, achieving functional curriculum implementation strategies in Nigerian secondary schools poses a lot of challenges to technology teachers. This is because it has been observed that learners, subjects, schools and even teachers are variables that constitute changes in the curriculum, but not at the same rate. As such, any functional curriculum must give cognizance to the different geographical features, sociological and the cultural background of the environment that will use it.

Nigeria, being a developing and multilingual nation, with many states comprising different communities with different norms, customs and outlook; need some specific-implementation strategies that are well formulated by curriculum planners and technology teachers, to cater for the multilingual and different socio-cultural nature of the nation.

THE CONCEPT OF CURRICULUM

Knowledge, attitudes and skills which are imparted to the learners by the school are referred to as curriculum. This embraces what is to be taught and how it should be taught. Knowledge means facts, information and understanding which learners need to acquire through experience in the course of instruction. This requires the learner to be competent in his discipline. In the acquisition of attitude, the learners need to acquire a particular way of thinking or behaving which is initiated by feelings, interests, emotions, in the course of instruction. Again, curriculum products also have acquisition of skills. Skills refer to the ability to expertly use our hands, legs, entire body in combination with facts in our brains, in order to perform a task. It goes beyond mere recalls of facts to applying them along with body movement to perform a task, (Eze, 2009). Deducing from the above definitions, instances can be given with dancers, drummers, typists etc as they perform their tasks dancing, drumming, typing by coordinating the movements of the eyes, "hands/legs, body movements, among others. Take for instance, a computer operator coordinates the activities of the fingers, eyes, reading ability and speed in typing and his competency is recognized with his efficiency on the above qualities.

It could be seen here that curriculum is visualized as a force that produces change, action or effects. To this, Agusiobo (2009) in Okoro (2007) considers curriculum as an organized framework that sets out the content that children are to learn; the processes through which children achieve goals which the curriculum sets for them; what educators do to help children to achieve these goals and the contexts in which teaching and learning occur. In addition to this, Ivowi (2010) opined that curriculum is a tool designed for educating a person in order to change the orientation, behaviour, actions and values of that person whose concern is not only to develop self but also the world around him. It is an instructional guide which is documented to be utilized for teaching and learning for the realization of desirable changes in the learners under the guidance and supervision of the school. One may pose to know what is meant by the utilization of the mentioned document and this leads us to the concept of curriculum

implementation of which its effectiveness is highly desired at the primary and secondary school levels.

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Defining curriculum is complex. It has been defined by different educators to imply the totality of the learning experiences offered by an institution of learning. It includes subject for study and out-of-class activities, all of which are geared towards the physical, intellectual, emotional and effective development of the child (Dada, 2006). As teachers and parents are interested in the all round development of the child, through the curriculum, then it is a means of fulfilling the millennium development goals for the entire society. Igwe (2009) perceived curriculum as consisting of the continuous chain of activities necessary for translating educational goals into concrete activities, materials, and observable behavioral change. He further stressed the fact that it is the totality of activities carried out under the auspices of a school, in response to the societal demands. Curriculum also could be termed a programme of learning planned for a target group of learners for a specific period of time in order to achieve certain predetermined goals. Dada, (2006) further stressed the fact that one can identify a curriculum by its component elements, the aims, the content, the learning experiences and the evaluation. In other words, it is a tool for teacher's effective teaching activities; most especially when it is being broken down into syllabus, scheme of work and lesson note.

It is on this premise that Oyekan, (2008), opined that curriculum and instruction are dualistic and reciprocating concepts that should be well ingrained into the technology teacher-education and general training programmes of all the professionals concerned with human resources development. Hence, the functional strategy for implementing the curriculum is also relevant to any functional strategies that can improve the fulfillments of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is pertinent to note that, there is no institution such as primary, secondary, technical schools/ Colleges of Education, Polytechnics or University without an operational curriculum as the mainstay of classroom practices and instruction. As such, curriculum operates within the mainstream of a living society. The society is dynamic as well as the curriculum and when these changes are incorporated into learning activities and lesson plans for the students, curriculum implementation provides meaningful instruction for the realization of educational objectives through classroom practices.

Technology teachers have vital roles to play in the effective implementation of the secondary school curriculum. The presentation of learning activities drawn from the school curriculum shall make teaching-learning process a valid exercise through meaningful technical know-how and instructional methods by professional teachers in the field of technical education. It is the teachers' responsibility to synchronize both the students and the curriculum, so as to maximize efforts on effectiveness, organization, resource management, matching of task with the learners and building individual and group interaction patterns for a classroom and solid based foundations for effective instruction and functional implementation of curriculum (Hales, 2008).

On the other hand, development in everyday task refers to qualitative improvement. The search for improvement is a continuous activity among human beings. This is because conditions of things in the world are never static, they are dynamic and improvement and development is required in every area of life as changes occur Igwe (2009) defined curriculum development as a process of producing a comprehensive plan of studies for educating individuals in society. It consists of four interrelated stages;

- Specification of curriculum goals and objectives;

- Selection of learning experiences (content);

- Organization and integration of learning experiences (methods) and

- Evaluation (Oyekan, 2008)

Professional technology teachers have a greater challenge to fulfill by ensuring that there is adequate internalization of a coherent development of the curriculum which must be relevant to the needs of the learners and the society at large. These teachers as professional implementers of the curriculum, should ensure the correctness of the interpretation and implementation of the curriculum content in order to remove the drudgery teaching, stressful working conditions and painful learning failure from the classroom life (Laurel, 2009), Implementation in curriculum development could be properly defined as the execution of the plans and proposal made in a curriculum document by those who are directly involved in the education of the child with the formal school system (Dada, 2006). Curriculum implementation is the means of adopting necessary steps and actions in transmitting the learning contents of the curriculum development and improvement efforts designed to achieve the specific goals and objectives of the curriculum (Oyekan, 2008)

Curriculum implementation has therefore become a subject of professional work, study and innovation; of course, there should be a serious quest for curricular relevance to real life situations. Professional technology teachers are strategists and curriculum planners that are to map out a continuous process of study and improvement of curriculum implementation strategies to assist in redesigning of technical school educational programme through functional curriculum strategies.

FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND ITS OBSTACLES

The process of implementing the secondary school curriculum should involve keen examination and consideration of the curriculum content, the setting of the implementation (the school environment), the target population, the available tools for implementation and agents of implementation (the classroom teachers), (Dada, 2006), However, the process of functional implementation of curriculum involves the carrying out of the proposals in the curriculum through teaching and learning. As such, the curriculum usually suggests how to go about its execution through teachers' activities (methods) and learning activities by the learners. No matter how good an educational policy is, the successful implementation depends on the employment of the right type of teachers to teach and impart the skills (Osokoya, 1999).

Implementing the curriculum of technical schools effectively, is having a lot of obstacles. These obstacles however, formed the bulk of challenges for professional Technology teachers. It is believed that these obstacles could be resolved by the teachers and there can be functional implementation of Technical school curriculum in Nigeria. Some of these obstacles could be summarized as:

- i. unavailability of sufficient funds to provide extra classrooms to accommodate the increased enrolment of students, laboratories, pre-vocational workshops, fund to train teachers, and workshop facilities and equipment needed for functional implementation of the curriculum;
- ii. a major problem of functional implementation of the technical school curriculum is the inability to obtain detailed and up-to-date statistical data needed for effective educational planning. There is the lack of reliable and accurate statistics of the children that are of the school-going age for adequate planning (Laurel, 2010);

- iii. there is the problem of political discrepancies, because of the various political parties and different educational ideologies, the resultant effect is that most of the education programmes did not accord any regard to the structure and features of education anticipated by the National Policy on Education. (2004).

Be it as it may, functional curriculum implementation for the Nigerian technical schools is obtainable and achievable; it all depends on the academic concern of the Nigerian professional technology teachers for the technical students. It is time for all teachers in technology to come out boldly on the terms of achieving functional implementation strategies for the technical schools in Nigeria, Igwe, (2009), opined that these challenges perhaps may form part of the hindrances to the over-all advancement and development of technical education in Nigeria.

STRATEGIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE TECHNICAL SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

Curriculum as a document is a hypothesis which assumes certain conditions for the success of the curriculum in terms of achieving the objectives set out in the document. Implementation therefore, could be considered as the execution of the plans and proposal made in a curriculum document by those who are directly involved in the education of the child within a formal school system.

Teachers are however, faced with the challenges of finding means of proper dissemination of the curriculum document in the implementation stage. Effective and efficient strategies for functional curriculum implementation involve the following;

- i. The setting and implementation of the curriculum in the school environment should be incorporating; and as such, the environment must be conducive for learning and teaching. All necessary facilities must be provided, such as, well equipped workshops and laboratories, comfortable library, reasonable space for practical among others.
- ii. Conditions for service should also be good enough to motivate teachers to put in their best etc. In fact, the tone of the school and the efficiency of its organization will contribute immensely to how well a programme can be implemented,
- iii. Another important strategy is a serious consideration of the target population for the implementation of the programme. Students in rural areas, seem to differ from those in the urban areas, especially, considering learning opportunities

and learning rate at different academic levels. Therefore, successful strategic implementation in this condition will depend on how much the teacher is able to adapt the programme to varying situations and characteristics of learning. Teachers in these areas should be sensitized to perform such roles effectively.

- iv. Also the tools for implementation must be relevant, workable and sufficiently provided. The teacher is expected to look for appropriate textbooks that will currently interpret the programme; such tools may include pieces of apparatus and equipments in sciences and technology, graphic designs, charts and other relevant materials. It should be borne in mind that, the more these tools are available, the easier and more effective it will be to implement the programme (Laurel, 2009),
- v. The most important agent of implementation are the teachers, it is the teacher that handles the curriculum, interprets it and executes it in terms of organizing the teaching/learning situation. All these require certain level of knowledge, possession of skills and personality traits. He/she needs some basic education and training to equip him for this job. Hence, there must be constant pre-service training, in-service training, workshops, conferences, and seminars (Oyekan, 2008).
- vi. Another efficient and important strategy for functional implementation; is designing a very effective process of implementing the proposals in the curriculum through teaching and learning. It is pertinent to note that the teachers need a thorough understanding of the programme, to be able to perform their activities efficiently. It is very strategic to note also that teachers need a forum whereby they can exchange ideas and experiences and there should also be a system of coordinated monitoring to ensure quality. The product of implementation should be consistently examined; this will allow other strategic innovations into the programme. All evaluation instruments should be judiciously used through consistent continuous assessment and end of course summative evaluation. It is hoped that functional curriculum implementation would be effected attainable through these constructive strategies for a positive development of technical schools in Nigeria.

THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY TEACHERS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A FUNCTIONAL CURRICULUM FOR TECHNICAL SCHOOLS

Curriculum implementation is the execution of the plans and proposal made in a curriculum document by those who are directly involved in the education of the child within the formal school system; proper execution of such plans and proposal poses a lot of challenges to secondary school teachers (Dada, 2006).

The role of Technology teachers cannot be over-emphasized in the aspect of contributing to the implementation of an effective, efficient and functional curriculum. These teachers need sensitization programmes to raise their self-consciousness about the functionality, workability and the relevancy of secondary school curriculum. They are to form themselves into groups of implementation committee and to map out functional strategies and make provision for relevant materials for functional implementation of technical school curriculum in Nigeria.

Teachers should be able to challenge all participants in curriculum planning, to contribute their quota to the development and functional implementation of the Nigerian secondary school curriculum; since all sectors in the society are important in curriculum planning and development.

Professional technology teachers should help in the enhancement of functional education and curriculum implementation. They should be marked by a continuous search for functionality and excellence in everything concerning curriculum planning, development, implementation, evaluation and means of solving the problem of poor financial supply for the functional implementation of the curriculum.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Technical education curriculum, like any other field of study needs to be constantly reviewed to meet the reality and dynamics of the society (Ivowi, 2010), It is against this backdrop that the following suggestions are proffered:

1. Technology teachers should be given pedagogical training on how to use their competencies to achieve the set goals for Technical school curriculum as the government alone cannot achieve the goals,
2. They should engage in the improvisation of relevant resources that will enhance functional teaching and effective curriculum implementation.

3. An interest group where all the technology teachers will come together for interactive sessions, should be organized to create awareness of the fact that all teachers in the society are responsible for functional implementation of curriculum in their various areas of specialization.
4. The government should organize a cohesive national implementation training programme, involving all curriculum planners and curriculum development participants. This will articulate and inform all the implemented on the relevant process strategies of functional implementation.

It is hoped that, these suggestions will be used to forge a strong, effective, efficient and functional curriculum implementation strategies to technical school curriculum in Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

Achieving functional curriculum implementation in Nigeria is a great task and the challenges towards achieving such a national goal pose a lot of challenges to all technology teachers and professional teachers in general. These should be part of those responsible for the organization and execution of the curriculum as these will enhance efficient and functional curriculum implementation.

REFERENCES

- Agusiobo, K. C. (2006). Instructional .Strategies and challenge of implementing school curriculum in Nigerian. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 12 (1), 4 8.
- Dada, P.O. (2006). *The teacher and the curriculum*, Ibadan; Jema Publisher.
- Eze, R.O. (2009). *Designing a curriculum, Curriculum theory and practice*, U. M. O. Ivowi, K, I. Nwufo, O. Nwagbara, 1 Ukwungwu, I.E. Emahand G. Uya (eds). Nigeria: CON.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria, (2004). *National policy on education*. Lagos: NERDC Press.
- Hales, G.M. (2008), *Accommodating individual differences*, *Educational leadership*, 36 (2), 139-143.
- Igwe, C.C. (2009). *Fundamentals of curriculum and instruction*. Lagos; Sunshine Int. Publishers.
- Ivowi, U. M.O. (2010). *Curriculum and the total person*. Paper presented at 21st annual conference of curriculum organization of Nigeria Abuja, Sept 17 20th.
- Laurel, J. (2009). *Curriculum development theory into practice*. New Jersey Pearson Education Ltd. (Fourth Edition).
- Osokoya, P. O. (1999). *Ensuring gender equity in educational provisions: The case of science education*. A keynote address delivered at the inauguration of the national association of women in colleges of education in Nigeria, FCE (Technical), Lagos, Akoka Chapter.
- Oyekan, C. F. (2008). *Curriculum and instruction- Ibadan: Ren Quality Prints*.
- United Nations Development Programme. Retrieved 27/7/2011 from <http://www/undn/home/shtml>.