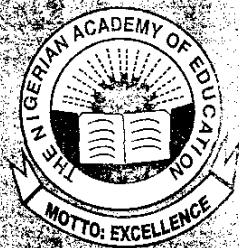


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# HUMAN CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT FOR VISION 20-2020



**THE NIGERIAN ACADEMY OF EDUCATION**

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**IMPLEMENTATION OF SCHOOL CURRICULA IN NIGERIA:  
THE PATHWAYS, CONTOURS AND INTERVENTION  
STRATEGY**

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***Abstract***

*Implementation is a crucial stage in curriculum development process. An articulate design of a curriculum is not enough to produce desired impact without proper implementation. This paper examined the pathways and challenges to curriculum development with special focus on implementation. To achieve this, the paper traced the steps employed in curriculum implementation in Nigeria using the Skilbeck model of curriculum development. Discrepancies between the intended and observed curriculum were identified. These led to suggesting an appropriate intervention strategy.*

**Introduction**

The Nigerian school system has witnessed several plans of actions which centered on learning opportunities offered to the students in schools. Several scholars (Okebukola, 1998; Odubunmi, 2001 and Ajeyalemi, 2002) had lauded the efforts of the curriculum developers for envisioning a plan that took into cognizance societal needs and aspirations. It was hoped that these curricula would offer a new beginning for economic emancipation, enduring learning enabled environment and produce competent manpower. The present

realization revealed that students who had been exposed to these curricula lack the needed knowledge and skills inbuilt into these curricula. External examination results (WAEC; 2006, 2007, 2008) had shown recurring poor performances. These occurred because curricula in schools are bedeviled by differences in conceptualization by different users of the same curriculum (Ivowi, 1987). Studies (Adamu, 1990; Okwonkwo, 2000; Owolabi, 2006) had revealed significant discrepancies in terms of curriculum interpretation and use between developers, teachers and teacher-trainer and between developers and teachers.

Effectiveness of the curriculum depends largely on the success of its implementation. Implementation is a very crucial stage of curriculum development process. It requires prior trial-testing, modification before actual implementation; participation of the curriculum developers; orientation of teachers who are to administer the curriculum in the classroom and efficient feedback mechanism for future curriculum review. Articulate design of the curriculum may not give the desired result without the involvement of these important variables. It is necessary to beam searchlight on the efforts already made thus far. Hence, this paper examined the pathways in curriculum development process with special focus on implementation in Nigeria. It identified the contours and provided intervention strategy that will improve the existing situation.

#### **The pathways**

The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is the body responsible for the development of curriculum in Nigeria. This body has several functions aimed at ensuring proper curriculum development. That is, the various stages involved in curriculum development should be followed systematically. NERDC adopts the process models (Ivowi, 1990) in the development of the curriculum. The type of process model employed is the skilbeck five-stage framework of:

#### ***Situational analysis***

This involves problem identification and formulation of curriculum team. The problem identified in Nigeria is that the syllabuses in use were

initially designed to meet the requirements of a public examination body. Reports of committees, communiqué of conferences and research findings before independence according to Adeyemi (1995) also expressed complete dissatisfaction with the content of the school curricula. It was noted that the content had not expressed the societal needs and aspirations. Consequently, a national curriculum conference was convened in 1969. This conference attracted people from all walks of life. Professional bodies and governmental parastatals participated actively. Several issues were discussed and these gave birth to the 6-3-3-4 system of education, National Policy on Education and the present school curricula among several other products. The 1969 curriculum conference (Adaralegbe, 1972) recommended that the country's education should be geared towards self-realization, better human relationships, scientific and technological progress.

#### *Goals formulation*

This involves stating the objectives. The National Policy on Education (NPE 1977, 1988, 2004) still remains the reference point for all educational objectives in Nigeria. The main objective of education in Nigeria is to provide an educational system in which there would be an academic curriculum, a technical curriculum and a vocational curriculum. This provided a wide spectrum of options for students in accordance with their ability, aptitudes and interest.

#### *Determination of curriculum content and development of instructional materials and personnel*

Curriculum contents are the knowledge, skills, perceptions and attitudes to be learned (Busari, 1996). The content of the school curricula in Nigeria was structured on the conceptual approach. Ivowi (1993) noted that the use of the conceptual approach to content selection is advantageous because topics have been brought together under broad generalizations to show relevance and inter-relationship. In merging the content into a teaching scheme, the spiral or concentric approach was adopted. The various skills to be developed in the students are highlighted. The content is grouped into sections with each section occurring every year of the three year programme. Learning activities are provided on each of the concepts to be taught. This arrangement is logical, developmental and sequential. The method of delivery of

content is the guided discovery. This method encourages students' activity and inquisitiveness. It relates the learner, the teacher and the subject-matter effectively. This triadic relationship promotes genuine interactions among students, teachers and resource materials.

The type of instructional materials ranges from textual (print) materials (textbooks, journals, monographs etc) to non-textual materials (audio, visuals and audio-visual aids). The NERDC and some professional associations developed some textbooks in selected school subjects. Publishing outfits have hijacked this aspect of curriculum development process. Several of them produced books of various types. The production of other teaching-learning resources has been neglected. It is not surprising that the school system still witnessed severe lack of these resources (Owolabi, 2006).

Several steps have been taken to bridge the yearning gap between needs and available personnel, these included following short-term measures:

- (i) Training of teachers by National Teachers Institutes
- (ii) Running of postgraduate diploma courses
- (iii) Running of part-time programmes
- (iv) Running of distance learning institutes
- (v) Establishment of Nigerian Open University

It is doubtful whether these efforts have made any significant impact because a yearning gap is yet to be filled in teachers supply (Owolabi, 2006).

#### *Interpretation and implementation*

This involves the trial-testing, modification and installation of materials. Research findings (Odubunmi and Salawu, 1994; Ajeyalemi, 2002) noted that most curriculum programmes and projects were not trial-tested. No orientation of teachers took place and basic infrastructure and facilities were not installed before the curriculum was foisted on the school system. Modification stage was not noticed since proper trial-testing did not take place. At this stage, any deficiencies observed in the curriculum would usually have been corrected, adjusted or expunged before actual implementation. Installation stage involves actual implementation of the curriculum. It differs from the trial-testing phase because the entire population would be involved and not a sub-set

of the population. The school curricula were introduced (installed) in the schools in 1985 and are still in use till date.

*Contours*

Plethora of studies (Ivowi, 1987; Nwaobasi, 1990; Robinson, 1991; Okebukola, 1998) had observed a serious mismatch between the curriculum as intended and the curriculum as observed. This was attributed to the problems in converting educational policies into reality through appropriate action. A major source of this problem is that the curriculum developers are usually not in a position to administer the use in the classroom. Teachers who are the implementers of this curriculum are not privy to the design and have not acquired the requisite training and experience to implement the curriculum as desired. This degenerated into several other problems which are summarized as follows:

Teacher	Shallow knowledge of subject matter
	Poor knowledge of how to teach
	Low level of motivation; heavy work load.
	Unaware of the existence of the school curricula
Student	Low content knowledge
	Poor attitudes to studies
	Indiscipline in school
Government	Poor funding
	Inadequate teacher supply
	Lack of provision of facilities
	Lack of training opportunities for teachers
	Lack of circulation of curriculum
Society	Lack of monitoring
	Witnessed incompetent graduates
	Lack of quality teachers
	Non-conducive learning environment
	Dwindling confidence in the school system

Source: Adapted from Okebukola (1998)

#### *Teacher*

Studies (Okebukola, 1998; Odubunmi, 2001; Owolabi, 2006; Okebukola, 2010) have revealed that the gap in knowledge between the teacher and students is narrow. This has resulted in poor pedagogical know-how and students' lack of confidence of their teachers' capability. The common method employed is the lecture method where teacher talks and students listen. This contradicts the globally acceptable view that teaching should be activity based, participatory and inquiry oriented. The increasing workload of teachers occasioned by increasing enrolment and shortage of teachers has not helped the situation (Ogunleye, 1999). The lack of awareness and non-availability of curriculum document (Owolabi, 2006) have compounded the problem. The curriculum plays dual role of a teaching syllabus and provided a guide for the teacher in his teaching.

#### *Student*

The popular computer acronym: "garbage in garbage out" is applicable to the Nigerian students. They are taught by teachers who possess shallow content and pedagogical knowledge (Okebukola, 2010). Since no education can rise above the quality of its teachers (FRN, 2004) what we witness today are students with low content knowledge, poor attitudes to studies and indiscipline personified (Okebukola, 2010).

#### *Government*

Prompt release and judicious utilization of fund is sine-qua non for effectiveness of the school system. The present poor funding experienced in the education industry (Olaniyonu and Gbenu, 2009) has debilitating impact on adequate provision of facilities, training of teachers and motivation of personnel.

#### *Society*

The society is the consumer of the final product of implementation. Society has witnessed today incompetent graduates who lack the needed quality to excel in teaching profession (Okebukola, 2010). These poor quality teachers worked in non-conducive learning environment and are not challenged to give their optimum best (Okebukola, 2010).

### **Intervention strategy**

The loopholes observed in the implementation of school curricula can be plugged using this Venn diagram.

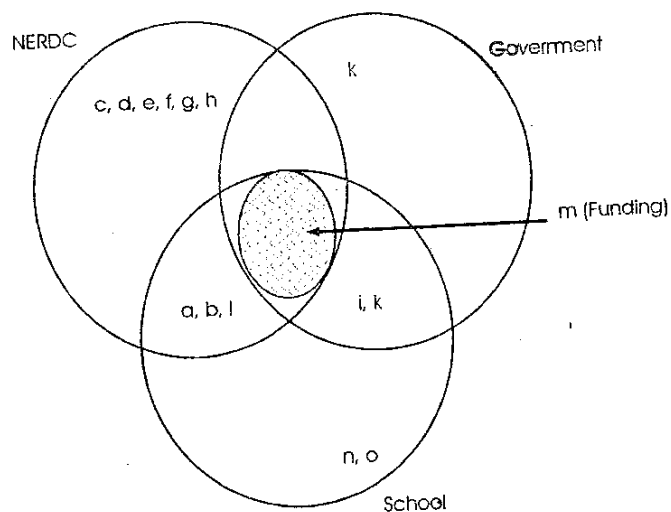


Figure A: Venn diagram showing the roles of government, NERDC and the school

- Key:
- a - circulation of curriculum materials among teachers
  - b - monitoring of teachers on usage of the curriculum
  - c - research activities on usage of the curriculum
  - d - feedback mechanism
  - e - review of the curriculum
  - F - trial testing the new curriculum
  - g - modification of the new curriculum
  - h - installing the new curriculum
  - i - provision of infrastructure
  - j - provision of facilities

- k - granting political will
- l - training of teachers
- m - funding
- n - train the trainer strategy
- o - effective supervision of instruction

Figure A depicts the roles of three principal players (government, NERDC, school) in ensuring smooth implementation of the curriculum. The shaded region represents the area of overlaps (funding) of the key players (government, NERDC and school). It implies that fund is required by the NERDC to carry out its functions. The school requires fund to update facilities and for expansion of infrastructural facilities. The government full financial support and commitment (political will) is necessary just like it was done with Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme. Government commitment on funding is non negotiable in order to achieve success in the implementation of any programme.

The second key player (NERDC), as shown in the Venn diagram (c,d,e,f,g and h) requires to overhaul its responsibilities in the following activities:

- a) Research activities on usage of the curriculum, this will assist in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of current practice and provide platform for effective feedback mechanism.
- b) Organize periodic review of the curriculum and ensures that implementation process follows due process (trial-testing and modification) before installation. Classroom teachers should be involved in their numbers as their classroom experience is indispensable.

NERDC responsibilities that intersect with the school include:

- a) training of teachers on use
- b) circulation of the new modified curriculum materials to the teachers

- c) make it bountifully available in ministries, schools and bookshops;
- d) effective monitoring of teachers' usage of the curriculum

Regular training is inevitable and should be accorded the priority it deserves. The curriculum developers are not in a position to administer use in the classroom. Teachers who are the implementers and who may not be privy to the design of the curriculum can do no more without training xxxxx mis-interpretation of the curriculum.

The role of the school is to ensure effective supervision of instruction and implementation of the curriculum. The lesson plan and instruction should be in accordance with the intention of the curriculum document. To fast track this, teachers who have been trained should train others (train the trainers).

#### **Conclusion**

Implementation of school curricula was not properly done; hence, it was fraught with problems which reside at the corridor of the school, government and NERDC. Improvement would be achieved where these key players carried out their individual and collective responsibilities. A review of any curriculum should be carried out in accordance with laid down stage (trial-testing, modification and then installation). Teachers in the classroom are key players and should participate in their numbers and be allowed to play prominent roles in future review exercise. By so doing, the yearning gap existing between the intended curriculum and implemented curriculum would be plugged. The curriculum then will make desirable impact and results in positive changes in the school system.

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