CURRICULUM REFORM IN TEACHER EDUCATION FROM GLOBAL AND NIGERIA PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

This paper focused on curriculum reform in teacher education from global and Nigeria perspective. The meaning of curriculum reform, educational policy and curriculum reform and a global trend towards competence-centred curriculum were presented. Curriculum in the Nigerian educational system-antecedents and precursors were discussed. Policy and practice vis-à-vis lifelong education and lifelong teacher education model was also mentioned. Some recommendations were made on harmonized integration, which means linking education and life. This integration involves bringing the society into the school and also bringing the school into the society.

Keywords: curriculum reform, teacher education, global perspective, Nigeria perspective.

Introduction

Teacher education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the need of a society at any point in time. It includes training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in service or on-the-job). As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, both formal and non-formal sub-systems.

Teacher education provides a platform to student teachers to acquire the required knowledge, skill and develop positive attitudes, values and beliefs. This can be done with the help of the provided curriculum and the quality of teachers produced in any institution invariably depends on the curriculum offered to them during their training period as curriculum is the best mean of overall development of students, and teacher is the mediator between curriculum and students. She/he knows various needs of students, educational institutions, industries, parents (stakeholders). The quality of teacher education is maintained by curriculum of teacher education. The curriculum development is dynamic process. A curriculum guides the instructional lessons that the teacher use. A curriculum defines what the learner will learn and can possibly guide when the learner learns the information from the lesson.

A curriculum offers teachers the ideas and strategies for assessing student progress. A student must meet certain academic requirements in order to go to the next level. Without the guidance of a curriculum, teachers cannot be certain that they have supplied the necessary knowledge or the opportunity for student success at the next level, whether that the levels involve a high school, college or career.

Attempt to review or update the "content" of knowledge, including its selection and organization, and associated issues concerning student learning, are thus "curriculum reforms" (Gilbert 2010). Recognizing the need for their curriculums to evolve with time, in resent years countries have engaged in curriculum reforms at various paces and methods in order to better prepare students for a fast-changing world. This interest in curriculum reforms has not only been sparked by the necessity to ensure that students have the skills and attitudes suited for the

21st century, but also by the potential impact of the adoption of a specific curriculum on students' learning outcomes (Chingos, Russ and Whitehurst 2012); Boser, Chingos and Straus, (2015); Steiner (2017).

However, curriculum reforms are demanding in terms of implementation, since the require changes in many aspects that might challenge the existing beliefs and subjective realities deeply embedded in individual and organizational context (Fullan 2015). Factors such as high cost, uncertainty of the outcomes, risk aversion of stakeholders etc. also create additional obstacles for initiating and materializing changes in curriculum. in addition, they may require high investments in training and capacity building for the teacher workforce and in schools to take up the new curriculum, the development of approaches to teaching and learning and new material resources. Consequently, as observed in several countries, there is often a tendency for individuals and institutions in education to prefer the status quo over changes (OECD, 2017).

Fullan (2015) argues that in order for a reform in education to be successfully implemented, at least three dimensions of changes should take place: materials, teaching approaches, and beliefs. Viennet and Pont (2017) analyse the reasons behind the challenges to the implementation of education reforms, and refers to changes in governance towards greater decentralisation, greater awareness and engagement by more stakeholders in shaping education policy, and an increased focus on education results. The nature of education reform implementation processes is changing in the 21st century, from top-down to bottom-up, and the traditional roles of education policy makers are evolving. This paper therefore examined curriculum reform in teacher education from global and Nigerian perspective under the following sub-headings: -what is curriculum reform?, educational policy and curriculum reform, a global trend towards competence-centred curriculum, curriculum in the Nigerian educational system-antecedents and precursors, policy and practice vis-à-vis lifelong education and lifelong teacher education model.

What is curriculum reform?

Curriculum reform specifically involve changes in the objectives of learning, namely which competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes should students acquire. Under this definition, curriculum is highly cultural and political, since it determines the vision of a society by deciding what kind of knowledge and skill are most valuable for its people and what knowledge is worth passing on. In other words, a curriculum reflects a broader social and political agreement (Amadio, 2016) and as the society evolves and changes, so should the curriculum. Curriculum -reform is therefore more far reaching than curriculum development. It agrees with curriculum review in that questions are asked which in essence is questioning the past and the present with a view to improving the future. Curriculum reform, like other reforms, involves serious, sometimes drastic and dramatic changes which would have nationwide and section-wide implications. Seen in this light, reform is not an ad-hoc exercise but one which requires the time and attention of experts who should use a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure success while also warding off negative, unintended consequences. It is evident therefore, that programmes such as universal primary education (UPE), Universal Basic Education (UBE), Nomadic Education and others are good examples of curriculum reform because they have socio-political, economic and cultural and cultural implications, and are not ad-hoc in nature but programmes with expected far reaching, sustainable and with enduring impact on the society.

Educational policy and curriculum reform

Any Educational policy and its curriculum must meet the emerging realities and needs of the society, so that it has relevance with societal changes. Major policy and curriculum provisions in the National Policy on Education of Nigeria focus on providing learners with abilities of learning new skills and knowledge for effective living in the midst of rapid economic and technological change. However, this has resulted in the newer curriculum trends that have significant implications on how teachers should teach. If the curriculum is effectively implemented, it would enhance the inculcation of the generic skills of creativity, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurship, inquiring, reasoning, conceptualizing, problem solving and communicating. As Awofala and Shophekeama (2013) rightly observed, by applying these skills, students are not only expected to construct their knowledge of subject matter but also to establish confidence and positive attitudes toward the subject matter.

Globally, there is constant change and this has increased the urgency to address the issues of policy and curriculum. For example, the curriculum comprises of three programmes: programme of studies (involving academic subjects and disciplines), programme of activities (involving experiential and incidental learning experiences) and programme of guidance (involving professional helping and advising offered to learners. These three programmes imply that an effective curriculum is founded in sensory rich experience, uses a concept to integrate content, knowledge and skills from multiple subject areas, offers students several activity choices, and extends relevant learning beyond the classroom into real-life situations. This implies that policy implementation through well-defined academic guidance and co-curricular activity programmes. The schools must strive to challenge students with a variety of experiences which will allow them to make appropriate decisions in their lives the programmes must suit the developmental needs of the students, so they may understand themselves as a unique individuals and develop their fullest potential through an enriching curriculum.

Moreover, secondary education students have some positive traits and characteristics which should be harnessed in promoting their educational development. They are curious, imaginative, sensitive and creative. Curriculum delivery will accommodate these and other social and psychological characteristics manifested by children. Suffice it to say that the wide range of ability levels of students creates the need for a variety of teaching methodologies and activities to match the needs and characteristics of the students. This should be taken to mean the engagement of innovative teaching strategies such as guided enquiry, problem-based learning, cooperative learning, and expository methods to empower the students and to make them more effective and efficient. The teaching methods will help students to move through the stages of planning, acting, observing, and evaluating. Such stages prepare students for tasks they will encounter during higher education and in the workplace.

Educators also need to know what kind of technology-enhanced intervention works best for their learners and what steps they need to take to implement change. There is a compelling evidence of the benefits technology-supported curriculum delivery can offer. These include:

- Greater choice and autonomy for learners
- More student engagement in school-sponsored technology activities and tasks
- More efficient working practices for learners and staffs
- Increased access through flexible or alternative modes of delivery
- More personalized, authentic and relevant learning experiences
- Enhanced assessment and feedback
- More timely and cost-effective administrative processes

The task of curriculum advocacy, sensitive and ultimate implementation should not be left in the hands of NERDC alone as critical stakeholders in the education industry should help in disseminating the necessary information and knowledge that would keep members of the public and end-users abreast of the changes in the new curriculum. It is not enough for the government to provide money for the review of the school curriculum and not provide the needed support for its eventual implementation in the classrooms.

A global trend towards competence-centred curriculum

The kind of vision curriculum aims to achieve determines which curriculum policy will be adopted. The vision, usually documented in a curriculum statement or an official document, depicts the desired results of an educational system or the knowledge and skills students should possess. It provides the guidelines for the reform as well as for curriculum materials such as textbooks or syllabus.

A clearly defined vision, agreed by multiple stakeholders, is pivotal to ensure a shared understanding of the policy objectives. Different interpretations of the curriculum vision would be translated into different education philosophy, pedagogical choices and eventually teaching materials. the absence of consensus on these underlying values concerning education would make systematic improvement of curriculum difficult (Benavot, 2011). For instance, in the Japanese curriculum reform of the early 2000s, different interpretations and understanding of the vision of reform have hindered the implementation efforts. Conversely, in Finland, a general bottom-up approach to decide on the vision of their curriculum reforms has helped to form consensus and reduce the gap between different understandings of the reform goals.

Countries have different visions for curriculum change that match their specific context. Nevertheless, there have been some broad global trends concerning curriculum design. The most recent one is probably the shift from a content-based curriculum to a competence-based curriculum. Despite the fact that there are different categories of ideology and philosophy of the purpose of curriculum, and that the names of these categories vary (Schiro, 2013). This shift in curriculum vision stresses the importance of cultivating in students certain competences that draw on multidisciplinary knowledge and stills. This opposed to focusing only on the mastery and memorization of knowledge structured by different subjects regardless of its "usefulness" and direct connection to the student's ability in problem-solving. This global shift towards a competence-centered curriculum implies an emphasis on "the integration of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable a person to perform a certain task in ill-defined and unique environments" (Wesselink 2010). In other words, competence-centered curriculum aims to provide students with an integrated performance-oriented capability to reach specific achievements that would allow them to navigate through a world that is constantly changing and full of uncertainty (Mulder, 2001).

Many countries have engaged in curriculum reforms that emphasize and incorporate competencies into the vision and design of their curriculum reforms. In countries like the United States, the the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia, such an approach have been popular since its inception in the 1960s. More recently, more countries have joined this trend. For instance, Iin South Korea, the curriculum revisions in 2009 and 2015 aimed to shift the role of schools from a centralized knowledge-delivery system to a competency-development one that gives local schools more autonomy. Competencies such as self-management, knowledge-information gathering ability, creative thinking, aesthetic-emotional capacity, communication skills, and civic competency were regarded as ways to cultivate young people that have individuality, creativity, dignity and the ability to engage with others (So and Kang 2014). At a global level, international organizations also analyse the shift towards

the competence centred curriculum. The OECD Future of Education and skills 2020 project that involves more than 40 countries aims to help education system determine the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values students need to thrive in and shape their future (OECD, 2018). According to Mulder (2007) there are several international examples such as the European Qualification Framework proposed by the European Union, which allows cross country comparison of skills; the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) led by OECD to assess selected competencies of students, and professional training programmes led by UNESCO.

Curriculum in the Nigerian Educational System-Antecedents and Precursors

Prior to British rule, the curriculum in the Nigerian education system was culture oriented and informal (Obomanu, 1999). The curriculum, (or rather curricular as different countries had theirs), though not documented, provided for the objectives of traditional education which include development of character and the latent physical and intellectual skills of the child as well as cultivation of vocational skill, community consciousness, respect for elders and cultural orientation. The curriculum of Nigerian educational system inevitably reflected that of the British following the commencement of colonialism. The curriculum of the colonial era according to Obomanu (ibid) had the following features:

- Lack of specific or general objectives
- Knowledge was for knowledge sake
- Content was pure theory, with little or no emphasis on practical application
- There was no emphasis on the sciences which meant a limitation on technological development.
- Emphasis was on priority areas of the colonialist. This included the 3Rs (Reading, Writing, Arithmetic) and Religion, the former, apparently to provide clerical manpower and to ease communication, the latter, probably to each control of the people and to develop morality.

Arguably, such inherited colonial curriculum failed to address the problem of our Nigerian-ness. It was more like jinx of puzzles that have failed to fall into their proper perspective. It only produced educated-colonized men who acquired the white man's way of life, his language, his religions and to a great extent, his culture. Most of what he received as education did not address the problems facing the Nigerian in his everyday life. The post-independence era saw the strident call for, and the urgent need for review of curriculum to suit the expectations of Nigerians and indeed the world. Based on the foregoing account, the disappointment of the inherited colonial curriculum necessitated Nigerian curriculum reforms.

The 6-3-3-4 system apparently borrowed from the United States of America and Japan (Ubong, 2000) is probably the most important in terms of direct reference to curriculum. Prior to its introduction, a system of 6-5-4 was in use, that is 6 years at the primary level, 5 years at the secondary, and 3-4 years at the university level. The extension of the secondary school to 6years of3 each at junior and senior secondary levels meant a change in curriculum. The curriculum is designed in such a way that those who stopped their education at the JSS111 can still live a good life. Unfortunately the implementation has not been in line with the plans, a classic example being that of the JSS certificate is virtually non-functional. This one case in which curriculum reform can be regarded as a myth, for the ideal remains imagery.

Below the federal level, it is necessary to mention the effort of the Western and Eastern regional governments in 1955 and 1957 respectively with respect to UPE. The efforts involved curriculum reform. The introduction at various times, of new subjects including Nigerian

languages, is an aspect of curriculum reform, Nigerian youths are for instance expected to learn their local languages as well as at least one of Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo. Again, whether this change, which has political and cultural undertones, has been practical puts it under the myth of reform. It is at the tertiary level that curriculum reform is most active. In universities, Polytechnics and colleges of education, curriculum reviews take place at least every 5 years after which it is formalized as minimum standard (eg, the NCCE had one in 1990 and another in 1996, a new one is currently processed).

At the secondary level, WAEC in particular at least until recently, had the monopoly of reviewing curriculum which is made public via the syllabus. The review by WAEC deserves some comment. At the secondary school level, the WAEC syllabus is virtually a bible. It circumscribes teaching and learning, including reading of books, as teachers and students appear to limit them to WAEC prescribed texts. If curriculum review is looked at from the point of view of radical change not just in principle or on paper but in actuality on the learner, curriculum reform becomes a myth in the WAEC case because the frequent reviews tend to limit the learning scope of the students.

To institute curriculum reform, the NPE (FRN, 2013) indicated that Federal and state government have to set up curriculum development centres with the NERDC performing a coordinating role. This is currently the case. Each state has a development centre which handles the matter like monitoring curriculum content in schools. Also, the centres review all texts recommended for use in primary and junior secondary schools so as to ensure that they are in line with the curriculum expectations.

Policy and Practice vis-à-vis Lifelong Education

In the teacher education section the purpose is stated to include production of highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of education system; production of teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment; and, to enhance teachers' commitment to the teaching profession. As a matter of fact, the essence of teacher education should be production of intellectually grounded and professionally committed teachers. It is very relevant that the policy realizes that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers (NPE, 2004).

However, the policy contains the phrase 'teacher training'. It should be realized that 'training' means acquisition of narrow mechanical skills. The concept 'teacher education' should be preferred because it reflects production of educators who are academically and professionally well groomed to be able to translate theory of teaching into practice and vice-versa. Hence it is also stated that the curriculum is structured on the components of general studies (basic academic subjects); Foundation studies (Principles and Practice of Education); studies related to the student teachers' subject of specialization or teaching subject and Teaching Practice.

Other relevant declarations include free in-service courses for upgrading untrained teachers which the NTI, Kaduna will have overall responsibility for; and that in-service training to be developed as an integral part of continuing teacher education. National Certificate of Education (NCE) which is awarded after a three year college of education has been declared to be the minimum qualification to teach in primary schools. Consequently, many colleges of education offer in-service courses towards up-grading grade 11 teachers to NCE for the primary schools. These courses are differently tagged sandwich or part-time programmes. The NTI has been alive to its responsibility over part-time or sandwich programmes. Its distance education programmes make use of the print (written text) and the electronic media (rdio, television and video tapes) towards successful offering of in-service teacher education in the country.

However, there is doubt over the successful use of the electronic media in the face of constant power failure all over the country. Teacher education, both pre-and in-service programmes are being offered in the universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics with different tags such as distance education, sandwich and part-time. Even the interest of the country over knowledge and skills of teachers could be seen through the Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (1993).

However, although commendable efforts are being made on teacher education in the country, both pre- and in-service, yet there are many problems. Fabinu (2014) and Adesina (2014), decry the non-cooperation of the government (Federal and States) with teachers undergoing in-service courses. Mkpa (2022) identify the shortcomings in the sandwich B.A. /BSc Education programmes versus the full-time programmes to include, entry qualification, course duration, reduction oin the scope of course content, commercialization of examination grades, and constraints of expensive handouts which must be bought by students. Based on the shortcomings of the sandwich programmes, for instance in the B.A/B.Sc Education degree, Aghenta (2022) suggests that a body should be set up to streamline and harmonize them with full-time programmes; each university senate should take a critical look at the sandwich programmes and tighten up the entry requirements, lengthen the periods for completing the courses and enrich the course content to ensure parity between the full-time and sandwich programmes. Hence, the NTI model should be emulated.

Lifelong teacher education model

The features of lifelong education include vertical integration meaning education throughout life. Thus, the objective of teacher education should include cultivating in the teachers the attitude of continuous learning. In-service programmes in form of seminars, workshops and conferences should be seen as a priority so as to offer teachers opportunities to refresh their knowledge and skills after the initial pre-service education. Fadina 2014 suggests that more on-the-job and in-service training should be provided to raise the standard of teachers in Nigeria. Olude (2014) sees in-service training as a veritable means of keeping teachers in Nigeria up-to-date in their areas, and as a lifelong education process for improvement of the teachers and the educational system.

Teachers' attendance to in-service programmes should be seen as a necessity while governments (Federal and States) should see it as their responsibility to support teachers financially and morally. The part-time programmers should be run free of charge as stated in the NPE nor should hand-outs be sold Aghenta (2022) and Mkpa (2022) suggests parity between regular full-time programmes and the in-service/ part-time/sandwich programmes in terms of entry qualifications, course duration and content. Mkpa (2022) strongly recommends the adoption of the sandwich/NTI programmes, devoid of any form of bastardization and commercialization.

Mkpa (2022) suggests innovations in the in-service programmes in Nigeria to include:

1. Mentoring: This is strategy in which highly experienced teachers in a school are assigned a number of less experienced ones to serve as their mentors or professional guides. This is like the Peer-In-Service Approach (PISA) which is a self-help in-service approach that drastically reduces the cost of financing training programmes for teachers within local government areas. Thus, the experts of good/experienced teachers is utilized to up-date other teachers in neighbouring schools in the same area.
2. Peer-Tutoring: A colleague approaches the other to obtain or seek professional assistance or guide on any aspect of his/her discipline where he/she is defective. In this

way, the area of professional competence of each colleague benefits the other eventually leading to each member of staff growing academically and professionally.

3. Subject-lead approach: A Senior Teacher of the same subject leads the other teachers overseeing all curricular programmes associated with that subject.

4. Cluster-Lead Teacher Approach: teachers in selected school in Local Government Area (five or less schools) come together to share experiences in certain subjects. A very good teacher in a particular subject leads the others. This cluster enhances mutual assistance among themselves, hence self-improvement without necessarily going to any training institution.

Recommendations

1. The different subject-teacher and discipline associations' conferences, workshops, and seminars should be encouraged on local government, state and national bases. Usually, at these gathering experts are invited to give talks after which the topics are elaborately discussed by all members.

2. The next characteristics harmonized integration, which means linking education and life. Teachers and student teachers should be made aware that much education tasks place in the society outside the formal subsystem. This awareness will enable teachers integrate or link up the school education with that of the out-off school. This integration involves bringing the society into the school and also bringing the school into the society. For instance, relevant resources in the society should be brought into the school to bring more reality and boost classroom teaching.

3. Workshops, arts galleries, agricultural establishments and industrial set-ups in the society should be used to interact with the formal school teaching. Students' practical teaching exercises should not be restricted to the formal classrooms, but should be extended to the out-of-school settings. Thus, the teachers will link school education with life in the broader society.

4. There should be pre-requisites for learning. This refers to having the disposition to continuing to learn or learning-how-to learn so as to enable one to be an autonomous learner. Aghenta (2022) commands NTI model of distance education with the student reporting to their teachers every weekend. Emphasis should be placed on the use of library and news media (print and electronic) to acquire knowledge. Continuous assessment and self-assessment should be stressed so as to enable students monitor their achievements while undertaken educational pursuits. Thus, life-long learning becomes a tool for life-long education.

Conclusion

As a matter of fact, teacher education should constitute a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, both formal and in-formal sub-systems. Teacher education provides a platform to student-teachers to acquire the required knowledge, skill and develop positive attitude, values and beliefs. Curriculum reforms, like all reforms involves serious, sometimes drastic and dramatic changes which would have nationwide and sector-wide implications. Seen in this light, reform is not an ad-hoc exercise but one which requires the time and attentions of experts who should use a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure success while also warding off negative, unintended consequences. Countries have different visions for curriculum change that match their specific context. Nevertheless, there have been some broad global trends concerning curriculum design. The most recent one is probably the shift from a content-based curriculum to a competence-based curriculum. If the curriculum is effectively implemented, it

would enhance the inculcation of the generic skills of creativity, emotional intelligence, and entrepreneurship, inquiring, reasoning, conceptualizing, problem-solving and communicating.

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