

Nigerian Curriculum in the Nigerian Context: Assessing the Relevance to a Sustainable National Development

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ABSTRACT

Curriculum has been crafted and reviewed several times over the years by the joint efforts of education planners, schools and the government to reflect the goals of total education and improved education for Nigerians. Despite these efforts, the products of this system keep depreciating in quality by the day, reflecting the dire need to take into cognisance the significance of context which cannot be separated from the educational system. This points to the socio-political and economic landscape being factored in ensuring efficiency of education in driving national development, one of its ultimate goals. The study, with a focus on primary and secondary education seeks to assess the relevance of Nigerian curriculum in the Nigerian context replete with poverty, unqualified teachers, poor methodology, inadequate facilities and distracted youths. The research through a questionnaire sought the views of 98 students on their experiences in the three levels of education and examined the performances of some students in English as a general course (GNS 101) in three departments in Federal Polytechnic, Offa. The result revealed that the learners' potential are not adequately developed in primary and basic schools where they spend their formative years in the Universal basic education system (9-3-4). The study concluded that with the efforts of well-trained teachers, the curriculum can be adjusted to suit different contexts and learners' needs to make it more relevant and contribute to sustainable national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Education, Curriculum, Context, National Development, Teachers

I. INTRODUCTION

Johnson (1967) in Alhassan (2002) sees curriculum as an intention, plan or prescription and idea about what one would like to happen in schools. Curriculum can equally be described as the

existing state of affairs in schools. Planning a curriculum is extremely a difficult and rigorous task which involves taking into account innumerable factors. These factors are connected with three principal factors in education which are:

The Society

The Learner and The Teacher

The society, in connection with education, always brings into mind the idea of culture and it is hard to think of education and curriculum without being confronted by the thought of the society and culture which impact on curriculum planning. Alhassan (2002) concludes that as the goals and aspirations of the society changes, there has to be changes in curriculum. He explains that the curriculum should be geared towards self-realisation, individual efficiency and development.

In considering the societal context, the curriculum planners are saddled with the responsibility of considering the needs, goals, values, value system, the aspiration and expectation with the general pattern of life of the society. Embedded in the societal context are:

Cultural Context

This includes social, cultural and linguistic background of students and teachers. Through subjects such as social studies in primary school, History, Government in secondary school and GNS in higher institution (Citizenship), the curriculum promotes Nigerian history, culture, values and national identity. It also to an extent emphasises the importance of Nigerian languages alongside English language.

Physical context

This includes the learning environment such as the classrooms, schools and facilities necessary for the realisation of learning activities.

This goes a long way in making educational goals realisable or not.

Historical Context

This covers the educational policies, traditions and events that are often employed in shaping the current educational landscape.

Socio-economic Context

This is about the economic and social status of students, families and communities. The reality of the country's economic status has led to promotion of entrepreneurship and self-reliance, vocational training and skills acquisition preparing the learners for Nigerian job market which is essential for Nigeria's economic development. Sectors such as manufacturing, agriculture and services cannot be underrated here.

The learner:

This is the personal context which is concerned with the learners' individual experiences, interest and learning styles. An organized educational programme is a product of curriculum planning whose principal aim is to provide for proper education of the learner. The curriculum planner must therefore consider the learner in terms of his unique needs and interest, his emotional state and mental capacity along with his other physical and mental peculiarities. Hutchinson & Waters 1987:8 reason that "learners have different needs and interests which would have an important influence on their motivation to learn and therefore on the effectiveness of their learning"

The teacher is a key agent for the implementation of the curriculum. The success or failure of any curriculum depends on the teacher.

The three factors mentioned above show the place of the learner as central to the determination of the overall success of the curriculum. The study thus examines the relevance of the curriculum by critically analyzing the extent to which Nigerian curriculum is able to satisfy or meet the needs of the learners, considering the current realities in Nigeria and Nigerian educational system. It sets to highlight the ways to go about this by identifying the relevant contents, best methodology that can be deployed to address the needs, interest and development of the society more efficiently.

With focus on primary and secondary education in their goals towards a developed society, this study examines the degrading nature of the higher institution, riddled with distracted youths

and a dysfunctional educational system. The youths are in the common and strange race to amass wealth and live luxurious lives. They have hence grown to align tertiary education with sheer certification for job rather than skill or knowledge development. In addition to this is the rate of increase in accommodation, transportation, feeding, a surge in the prices of goods and services including education at all levels and the general standard of living thus adding to the already complicated context making it difficult for a large percentage of parents to sponsor their children's education or to desired school or doing desired courses. This is hence casting a gloomy cloud on the future of the nation which seems to have only education as the only viable tool for development, where the youth of any nation constitutes its major work force as it is evident that education plays a vital role in the sustainable development of any nation (Singh Malik, 2018).

The study assessed the relevance of the Nigerian curriculum taking into account all human sensitivities and interests and organising them in terms of social value in order to make the school the agency of social control and behaviour change in society. The current formal curriculum is limited in meeting the economic challenges of the country (Alade, 2020). "The curriculum of any school consists of all situations that the school may select and consistently organise for the purpose of being about change in the behaviour of the children as a means of developing the personality of the individual. This is made into experiences both within curricular and extra-curricular.

In curriculum, there are at least three popular theories or a set of assumptions held by the teachers, sometimes referred to as child-centered view of education, the subject-centered or knowledge-centered and the society-centered view, meaning that education is justified in terms of supposed needs of the society. The need for society-centered curriculum suggests that curriculum must be planned according to changing needs of our society. A comprehensive theory of curriculum planning will recognize the individual nature of the child and recognise the value of education in its own right. In planning the programme of activities, we will have to take into consideration the child-centered knowledge and society-centered while each of them is incomplete on its own, each one may have something to contribute in planning the curriculum. The selection of appropriate learning experiences and context for the achievement of the goals and objectives constitute a major step in curriculum

development after setting the aims, goals and objectives.

Nigerian curriculum and the educational structure in Nigeria

The Nigerian curriculum is divided into three levels: the basic education level, the senior secondary level, and the tertiary level. At the basic education level, which consists of primary and junior secondary education, the curriculum aims to provide a broad foundation of knowledge and skills across various subjects (Adeoye, et. al., 2023). The education is thus structured into:

I. Early childhood education

This consists of preparatory education for children between 3-5 years of age. It is however largely private sector driven, though with the support of government policy.

II. Primary education

This level of education is compulsory for children between 6-12 years old. As enshrined in the curriculum, it includes basic literacy, numeracy and social studies. It is operated by both public and private ownership.

III. Secondary education

The secondary level is divided into three years of senior secondary education. It offers general education and preparation for vocational or higher education.

IV. Tertiary education

This level includes universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. In Nigeria, there are Federal, state and private tertiary institutions

Curriculum Content

However, there are criticisms that the curriculum is too content-heavy, focusing more on rote memorization rather than critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The Nigerian curriculum is primarily based on a content-driven approach, where the focus is placed on the transmission of knowledge rather than the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. This traditional approach limits the student's ability to apply their knowledge in practical situations and stifles their creativity and innovation. The curriculum lacks relevance to the needs of the students and society (Ahmadi & Lukman, 2015)

Content includes the knowledge, skills, concepts, principles, attitude and values to be learned. The problem of selection of content and

learning experiences arise from the fact that there is far more to be learnt that is possible during the period of school. The following criteria need to be satisfied before content is included in the course of studies

i. Validity- the subject matter must promote the outcome it is intended to achieve. It must also be authentic and true.

ii. Relevance to life- the learner derives more satisfaction from an educational experience if he perceives it as a functional experience achieving a relation to real life situation in and out of school.

Problems facing educational delivery in tertiary institutions

Distraction

Youths are getting more involved in many vices reducing their commitment to and interest in education. The youths are in a race to amass wealth through different means in order to get a good standard of living and these are done through illicit means such as fraud, theft, rituals, etc.

Poor Orientation

From the attitude to class attendance and poor level of class concentration to poor performance in tests, it becomes obvious that a large percentage of learners in tertiary institution are only after certificates and not bothered about merit.

Teacher factor

Teacher education cannot be underestimated in ensuring a better educational system. Most people take up the teaching profession just to make ends meet. Thus they are unable to use the appropriate methodologies. Or even have a good mastery of the subject matter they are teaching. Also, the level of discipline worthy of emulation as role models to learners becomes lacking.

Financial problem

This factor is increasingly impeding on the success of tertiary education in Nigeria. Most parents and learners hesitate on the huge investment in education considering the unemployment rate. Also, the turn in the cost of transportation and accommodation has made seeking education at a distance a difficult task. People will rather choose whatever is within their reach. Even with this, the school fees, educational materials are almost unaffordable.

All these come together to reduce the hope of a developed nation where the role of education is by no means invaluable. Hence, the urgent need to

invigorate the primary and secondary levels so as to equip adequately the learners with all it requires to be productive, logical and independent. It is equally important to emphasize that most challenges faced at tertiary institutions are the results of the poor backgrounds and bad upbringing in these elementary levels.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Education has continued to serve as the most potent medicine man ever discovered, and the youth of any nation constitutes its major instrument for development. Sadly, it has been observed that most students often consider their admission into higher institution as an entry to freedom, exploration and enjoyment. Studies have revealed that a large number gets distracted that they lose focus in totality. They also come in with the mindset that they only need the certificate for job opportunity in the nearest future to come to make ends meet. Teachers/ lecturers therefore have to adjust to this by making them succeed by all means not minding their disposition to academics. Hence, little or no learning takes place in the class during their stay in higher institution. Some don't even come to classes at all and only come to write exams with the belief that it would only cost him some amount of money. It is evident that a large percentage of students don't learn anything in the higher institution; some only come at the end of the semester to write the examinations and some only come to the class to mark attendance while they are carried away doing something else on their phones.

Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie once said in one of her speeches, "Most of the things I know, I learned them in Primary school". Hence, the curriculum, especially primary school curriculum should be reviewed by the government and educational bodies to reflect necessary knowledge and skills that a potential pupil must have before proceeding to other stages of educational level, not minding whether the school is privately owned or government owned. The primary school level is coincidental with the critical developmental stage of a child and therefore their full potential should be tapped at this level.

Towards the end of secondary school, students begin to give problems to school management because of its coincidence with puberty stage and if care is not taken, there are records of truancy and hooliganism. However, when learning is attractive at these stages, children yearn for more knowledge. Also, when discipline is instilled at these stages, there is calm, obedience

and responsiveness at the tertiary level against what has become the norm in the present days. Therefore, the review of the curriculum highlights the need for a more holistic and learner-centered approach (Emes & Cleveland-Innes, 2003)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

In ascertaining the impact of primary and secondary education on achieving National development and a more educated populace in Nigerian contexts, the following research objectives were the focus of the study:

1. Examine the tertiary learners' academic performance.
2. Relate their level of academic performance to their educational backgrounds.
3. Examine the relation between primary educational goals and secondary educational goals with their academic performance.
4. Critically analyzing the problems in tertiary institutions
5. Identifying the best practices to achieving total education at all levels

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study assessed the relevance of Nigerian curriculum and the Nigerian context to a sustainable national development. The study restricted itself to three departments in the School of business and Management Studies within the Federal Polytechnic, Offa in Kwara State and evaluated the students' academic needs and views.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a descriptive and analytical study. This section expresses the researcher's options in terms of design and methodology. The aim of the study is to examine the relevance of Nigerian curriculum in the Nigerian context by assessing the needs and views of 100 purposively selected tertiary institution students by conducting a survey method, using questionnaires. Also, the academic performance in GNS 101 was also evaluated to assess the performance of students in the English course as a general study in the School of Business and Management Studies.

Population and Sampling

A population of 100 students Offa were studied. These students were purposively selected from Federal Polytechnic Offa to assess the needs and views of students in their educational levels. Also, the results 250 students from 3 departments in the School of Business and Management Studies Federal Polytechnic were examined in their

Use of English I (GNS 101), a General course in English.

Research Design for Questionnaire

The major research tool employed in this study was the Questionnaire. This section was curriculum survey, it elicited information about the views. It has 2 sections with Section A containing the demographic information of the respondents such as gender, age group, type of primary and secondary education, if private or public. Section B comprises 15 questions. It seeks the learners' views and achievement in their different levels of education which will assess the curriculum and guide in its review.

Summary

This chapter discusses the population, sampling method and location of data under study. It talks about the research instruments used; Questionnaire. It explains in details the content of the Questionnaire and also discusses the performance of students in the examination in GNS English 101.

II. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Introduction

The researcher carries out a detailed analysis and interpretation of the data under study using the results of the examinations taken by the students and evaluates their responses from the questionnaire administered.

Data Analysis

A total population of 100 was sampled but 98 people filled and returned their questionnaires.

Table 1

GENDER	FREQUENCY	%
Male	23	23.5
Female	75	76.5
Total	98	100

Table 1: Gender Distribution

Table 1 shows the gender distribution among the 98 students who participated voluntarily in the study. Both genders were adequately represented in the study wherein the male

participants were 23 out of the 98 population and the females were 75. Results have also shown in past researches that the female tertiary students outnumber the males.

Table 2

Age	Frequency	%
16-19	19	19.4
20-23	52	53.1
24-27	21	21.4
30-33	6	6.1
34 and above	0	0
Total	98	100

Table 2: Age Distribution

Table 2 reveals the age distribution of the sampled population. 19.4% of the 98 fell in the age bracket of 16-19, 53.1% are between the age

groups of 20-23, 21.4% are between the age bracket of 24-27 and 6.1% are categorised under 30-33. There were no students who fell under the age group 34 and above.

Table 3.

Level of Performance	Grading System	Frequency	%
0-39	F	50	20
40-44	E	27	10.8
45-49	D	21	8.4
50-54	CD	46	18.4

55-59	C	35	14
60-64	BC	20	8
65-69	B	28	11.2
70-74	AB	15	6
75-100	A	08	3.2
Total		250	100

Table 3: Students’ Performance in their GNS 101

Table 3 shows the students’ performance in their GNS 101. The Polytechnic academic grading system which is similar to that employed by WAEC was used in categorising the sampled students’ academic performance. 20 % of the sampled population failed the course, 10.8% had an E with a performance level ranging between 40-44, 8.4% had a D with a performance level ranging between 45-49, 18.4% had a CD with a performance level ranging between 50-54, 14% had a C with a performance level ranging between 55-59, 8% had a BC with a performance level ranging between 60-64, 11.2% had a B with a performance level ranging between 65-69, 6% had an AB with a performance level ranging between 70-74, 3.2% had an A with a performance level ranging between 75-100.

Summary

Based on the data drawn from information supplied on the performance of students of School of Business and Management Studies students and Questionnaire answered by the 98 respondents. These give a summative account of the entire work succinctly.

III. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from the study showed that there is a strong relationship between the curriculum as a plan of action and the achievement of the goals of education. The questions designed reflect learner’s educational needs and their perception on the importance the three levels of education to their ultimate goal of attaining independence in life and being useful to the society. It was found that 79% of the population learned more in secondary school than primary school. 82% found secondary school more interesting than primary school. This shows that primary school hardly leaves the learners with memorable experiences or zeal to forge ahead. Most of these students are those that attended public schools. They all have different subjects they liked most in primary and secondary schools, mostly based on the teachers that handled them. A

great percentage wished to acquire PhD but in reality stop halfway due to societal factors.

Skills from primary school appear to be majorly from artwork while secondary school leaves majority with agricultural skills. Students can hardly think of other skills they acquired. The students lack the necessary skills in critical thinking, problem-solving and communication which are vital for their future success in the workforce (Yusuf & Adeoye, 2012). This fragmented approach hinders the holistic development of students and limits their ability to focus on areas of interest or aptitude. The results also revealed that 45% consider tertiary institution level as the most difficult where 38% thinks it is secondary school. 75% developed their speaking skills in tertiary institution while 78% mastered the skill of writing in secondary school. This is another evidence that they their potential was not tapped early enough, thereby making it a herculean task at a higher level. 53% has linked the difficulty in Nigerian education to inexperienced teachers with poverty having 35%. The study showed that all these have negatively impacted on students’ academic performance and the overall goal of the curriculum.

The curriculum is put forward as apractical idealin the sense that to put it into practice will require certain changes in teachers’ attitude, teaching skills, parental attitude, government directives, etc. but it is practical in the sense that the claim made for the curriculum involves what ideally will result from it. To propose a common curriculum for all does not necessarily mean proposing a common teaching approach or the assumption that all will make the same degree of progress in all aspects. It involves only the assumption that something of value may be gained by all learners through some means or the other.This involves shifting the focus from excessive reliance on content memorization at primary school to a greater emphasis on critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and innovation. Also, incorporating cross-cutting themes such as sustainable development, entrepreneurship and digital literacy into the

curriculum at both primary and secondary levels to equip students with the skills necessary for the future. The core subjects such as Mathematics, Science, and English language provide a strong foundation for students and equip them with essential skills for further education and future careers. The focus on these subjects and inclusion of cultural and historical aspects of Nigeria through incorporation local history, traditions and values, the curriculum promotes a sense of identity, pride and patriotism among students. This cultural integration helps to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Nigerian heritage helps to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills which are highly valued in the modern world (Scott, 2015).

Approaches to a reformed curriculum

These are activities found crucial in offering a roadmap for reshaping the curriculum to ensure sustainable national development. According to Harris (2014), development is a holistic process of changing and becoming better advanced or causing society to change in this way. It involves both socio-economic, political, cultural, educational, and infrastructural advancement and improvement. It is a process of bringing about fundamental and sustainable changes in the society. It transcends as well as encompasses growth and embraces such aspects of the quality of life as social justice, equality of opportunity for all citizens, equitable distribution of income and democratization of the development process (Adedeji 1997).

By addressing the challenges and incorporating the necessary changes, Nigeria can create a curriculum that equips its citizens with the skills, knowledge and values needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world. It can build a curriculum that prepares students for a flourishing future by embracing the following innovative strategies:

i. Leadership skills

Nigeria can create a brighter future for its citizens and secure its place on the global stage by developing leadership skills in them. These include communication skill, conflict resolution, time management, etc.

ii. Communication skills

This is a very important skill that benefits all areas of life beyond leadership development.

iii. Extra-curricular activities

Extra-curricular activities are very essential in keeping the children actively busy, engaged and productive. It makes them sound in body and mind and then they don't find all the vices in the public attractive to them.

iv. Parental Influence

Every parent is the first teacher of their children. Educated parents should create more time for their children while the uneducated ones be given constant orientation. Learning should be playtised to make every learning experience fun. Play8way method has been described as the best teaching method for kids.

v. Child-Centered Education

This is the best alternative which is the approach adopted in developed countries like the US, Canada, UK, etc. It is a focus on child education according to their needs, interest and strength. The opposite is the Teacher-centered education which is the act of coming to class to give notes, explain and showing less concern about the needs of each child or the appropriate method for individual child. Teachers should be lively, note mean and also they should use positive reinforcements, commend the child and give gifts to make learning not just fun but permanent.

A teacher should dramatise learning through actions and story-telling methods. Teaching should also be reversed by allowing the children to also teach you after you have taught them. This way, they are able to internalise what they learn and create more desire in them.

vi. Develop Child's Potential

Find their skills from their childhood which will mean to tap their potential in their formative years.

vii. Build Reading Culture

Readers are leaders. Children should be encouraged to read and motivated for reading. It enhances all other language skills in them. It also allows them to leap into full potential.

Designing a Worthwhile Education.

In designing a worthwhile education and worthwhile curriculum, the curriculum channels its programmes to focus the present day experiences of the society and the learner. This embraces all activities capable of enhancing all the academic experiences of learners.

The education programme consists of three basic elements:

- i. Programme of Studies
- ii. Programme of Activities
- iii. Programme of Guidance

Programme of activities consists of all the activities that deal with actual pupils' experiences and the present life of the society. These regard non-academic activities as genuinely educational and not mere additional experiences as explicit in the term extra-curricular activities. These include physical education, clubs (religious, cultural, agriculture), special interest activities such as school band, boys' brigade, choir, and different projects including tours, excursions, music, health activities, all being incorporated into the daily programme in variety of ways. Making it easy for concepts and ideas to be translated and made practically real to the learner.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was concluded that Nigerian curriculum is an ideal theoretical bundle for the development of well learned citizens and terms of programme of studies, activities and guidance. Though the curriculum has a well-structured plan for learners at these levels, we are facing is the problem of implementation. A practical interpretation with the use of appropriate methods and efficient teachers will go a long way in curbing these problems. The teacher has constituted a major factor of implementation, hence teacher education and teaching profession should take a new dimension. To review Nigerian curriculum for sustainable national development also requires collaboration between stakeholders, including policymakers, educators and the private sector. The importance of involving all relevant parties in the curriculum development process is to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. By working together, stakeholders can identify the needs and priorities of the nation and design a curriculum that aligns with these goals. A reshaped curriculum should prioritize critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity and entrepreneurship, as these are essential skills for success in an increasingly competitive and technology driven world. This research aims to explore the weaknesses within the current Nigerian curriculum and propose strategies for reshaping it

The study therefore recommends motivation for learners and teachers as key to implementation strategies. Also, that the

employment of adequate service of child psychologists and counselors at these levels cannot be underestimated with the inculcation of leadership training in the children at these levels,.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Where do you think you learned more?
Primaryschool [] **secondary school**[]
2. Where do you find more interesting?
Primaryschool [] **secondary school** []
3. What subject did you like most in primary school?_____
4. What subject did you enjoy most in secondary school?_____
5. Why did you like the subjects most?_____
6. Where do you like to stop school?
ND [] **HND** [] **DEGREE** [] **MASTERS**[] **Ph.D** []
6. What type of primary school did you attend?
Private [] **Public** []
7. What type of secondary school did you attend?
Private [] **Public** []
8. Beside the mastery of the subjects of the study, what skill did you acquire in primary school?
Art work [], **Music** [], **Agriculture** [], **None** [] **Others** []
If others, write them _____
9. Beside the mastery of the subjects of the study, what skill did you acquire in secondary school?
Art work [], **Music** [], **None** [] **Others** []
If others, write them _____
10. How grounded are you in the skill(s) you acquired?
Not grounded [] **A little grounded** [] **Well-grounded** []
11. Who or What informed the choice of your course of study in higher institution?
[] **Your parents** [] **Teachers** [] **Friends** [] **Yourself** [],
Money [], **Religion** [], **Passion** []
12. Which of the three levels of education do you think is most difficult?
Primary [] **Secondary** [] **Higher institution** []
13. Which of the three levels of education do you think is the easiest?
Primary [] **Secondary** [] **Higher institution** []
14. Where did you get the most development of your writing skill?
Primary [] **Secondary** [] **Higher institution** []
15. Where did you get the most development of your speaking skill?
Primary [] **Secondary** [] **Higher institution** []