

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND THE TEACHER: ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD

Nnabuike E.K

Department of Educational Foundation
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu

Aneke M.C

Department of Educational Foundation
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu

Otegbulu R.I^{Ph.D}

Department of Educational Foundations
Enugu State University of Science and Technology (ESUT), Enugu

Abstract

Although there are so many agents of curriculum implementation ranging from government activities of provision of equipment and learning materials, human and material resources, physical facilities to payment of salaries of all the personnel both teaching and non-teaching concerned with the implementation of curriculum. Classroom is the center of curriculum implementation and the teacher is at the middle of contents leading to the achievement of curriculum objectives and the learner. Curriculum implementation is the process of interpreting contents of the curriculum by the teacher. Therefore, curriculum implementation cannot be complete without the teacher. This paper is fashioned to examine the concept of curriculum, concept of curriculum implementation, issues in curriculum implementation, challenges and way forward

Keywords: Curriculum, Implementation, Teachers, Issues, Challenges

Introduction

In order to achieve the objectives of education, an instrument that serves as a vehicle of operation is required, that instrument is the curriculum which can be defined as all the learning experiences and intended learning outcomes systematically planned and guided by the school through the reconstruction of knowledge of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor development of the learner in Aneke in 2016, Akundolu in Eya 2012). Curriculum is the instrument through which the society via the schools educates its citizens, both adult and young. Therefore, the quality of education of every society is subject to the quality of the society's curriculum. Curriculum is planned, and implemented in accordance with the societal needs. "Need" is the gap between what is and what ought to. Therefore what ever the society wants is designed, and programmed through its curriculum which is handed over to the implementer (The teacher) for transmitting and inculcating to the learners.

In line with the above, Agangu (2009) in Aneke (2015) maintained that curriculum is the mechanism through which the educational system inculcate into the learner, the knowledge, skills and attitudes which the society has prescribed. Curriculum is the vehicle that contains the good (contents), the teacher is the driver who delivers the goods (Contents) to the consumers of the goods learners.

Therefore the teacher is at the centre of activities in curriculum implementation.

Concept of Curriculum

The activity of all nations educational system is controlled by its curriculum. Such activities must fall under any or all of the three programmes of curriculum viz; programme of studies, programme of guidance and programme of activities.

Alebiosu (2005) in Obilo and Sanugoleye (2015) is of the opinion that curriculum is the instrument that dictates the affairs of every educational system. "Curriculum is the planned and guided experiences and intended outcomes formulated through the systematic reconstruction of knowledge and experience under the auspices of the school for the learner's continuous and willful growth and personal social competence (Mkpa 1987 in Mkpa and Izuagba 2009:2 in Obilo and Saugoleye 2015)".

Cognizance of the fact that no nation develops more than its education and curriculum being the educational container of the nations, its implementation should therefore be regarded as serious as the curriculum itself. This is because no matter how lofty the curriculum is designed, if it is not effectively implemented, the objective of the education cannot be achieved.

Concept of Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation according to Ivowi (2009) in Obilo and Saugoleye (2015) "Involves the

dissemination of the structured set of learning experiences, the provision of resources to effectively execute the plan, and the actual execution of the plan in the classroom setting, where the teacher-learner interactions take place". Curriculum implementation entails the interaction of the learner and the curriculum contents under the guidance of the teacher in order to acquire desired knowledge, attitudes, abilities and skills. In consonance with the above, Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) in Obilo and Saugoleye (2015) stated that in curriculum implementation, the learner for whom the programme is being planned interacts with the contents and materials in order to acquire the necessary skills, attitudes and abilities. Curriculum implementation equally connotes the activities of all those concerned with the provision and distribution of materials that will enhance the achievement of the teaching and learning objectives. Such materials include: textbooks, instructional, desks etc. this is because for the curriculum contents to be effectively implemented at any stage of the educational system, some materials which are expected to compliment the classroom activities of the teacher should be provided for effective implementation at the classroom levels of any of the educational programmes. Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) in Obilo and Saugoleye (2015). Also maintained that curriculum implementation is the actual engagement of the learner with planned learning opportunities; this planning includes the instructional materials that will be used for its implementation at the appropriate stages.

Issues and Challenges in Curriculum Implementation

Non participation of teachers who are the curriculum implementers in curriculum planning constitutes a clog in the effectiveness and efficiency of their work as curriculum implementers. An Igbo adage says "that a person who was not present at the burial of a corpse will not know the best way to exhume it if need be". Nwanze (2015) is of the opinion that the performance and efficiency of teachers can among other things depend on the extent which they can participate in curriculum decision which they implements. Curriculum implementation which is at the center of the curriculum process is the stage where all the curriculum contents are made to come in contact with students through the various activities of the teachers and other agents. Yobe (2011) in Aneke (2015) viewed curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum concept into operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the teachers and society. Fullan in Owusi (2009) is of the opinion that curriculum implementation is a process of putting a document or an instructional programme into practice. It is pertinent to note that the process of putting either document or instructional programme into practice can not be completed without the efforts of the teachers.

Zumwalt in Akwesi (2012) asserted that curriculum implementation is the practical application of theory into practice in a way that the eventual outcome is evidenced through the learners' performances in and

outside the classroom. When teachers deliver both the curriculum contents and instructional strategies in the way and manner they were designed to be delivered, curriculum implementation is said to have occurred (Gana 2006, Akanbi 2008, Ajemole 2011) in Aneke (2015). From all the above definitions, it could be deduced that teachers' role in curriculum implementation is invaluable. However, the ability and effectiveness of the teacher to carry out curriculum implementation depends to large extent on some variables like knowledge/experience qualification, availability of resources and motivational issues among others. Things depend on the extent to which they can participate in curriculum decision which they implement. Nwankwo (2006) in agreement with the above statement, asserted that poor involvement of teachers in matters relating to curriculum either in planning or reform makes good performances impossible, no matter the teachers methodological competence; unfortunately teachers are not involved at this stage of curriculum process. Ibrahim (2003) in Nwanze (2015) stated that the involvement of teachers in curriculum planning induces good quality into the curriculum, enriches the activities and makes them more worthwhile. He further maintained that, the conditions under which education can be made to serve the expressed aspirations of any nation revolve around the quality of the teachers. This quality will be optimally enhanced if the teachers are fully involved in the curriculum planning and other curriculum processes not only in the classroom implementation.

The teacher takes the final decision as regards the actual learning experiences to be provided and so not involving or incorporating him in the planning and development process is like separating the curriculum from instruction. (Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) in Obilo and Sangoleye (2015). The implication of the above is that in as much as the design and how its objectives should be achieved cannot be separated, teachers cannot be separated from curriculum planning and development if effective implementation is to be achieved. It further implies that the teacher is not just a receiver of the curriculum but a modifier and transmitter; and for him not to derail from the objectives, goals and aims of planned curriculum, he must be part of the planning and development processes (Obilo and Sangoleye 2015).

Excess contents to be covered by both the students and teachers poses serious challenges in curriculum implementation. Some global and emerging issues, such as family life education. Citizenship education, education on HIV/AIDS and drug abuse among others which are recently introduced in the school curriculum as contents to be learnt by student/pupils, (Afangideh (2009) in Obilo and sangoleye (2010). He further maintained that the above is in addition to the already existing subjects. Obilo and Saugoleye (2010) further maintained that the time allotted for the implementation of these heavy academic loads is not adequate enough. A followed up issue on this matter is that when these new causes are introduced or included in the existing curriculum, new personnel who specialized in them were not usually employed neither do government send the old staff on training on how to implement

the new programmes. The implication is that no one can give what he does not have. A casual reflection of what happened with the inclusion of intro tech in the curriculum of junior secondary school during the 6-3-3-4 system of education will prove this point better. It could be noted that the teacher in the old 6-5-4 system of were charged with the responsibility of implementing the curriculum contents of the 6-3-3-4 system including the intro-tech being used as example here, the consequences is that government huge investment in that subject was almost a waste.

Teacher effectiveness; the national policy on education (2004) stated that no nation can rise above the qualities of its teachers. The implication of the above is that the over all educational objectives cannot be achieved if the instructional objectives at the various classroom levels are not achieved probably as a result of teacher ineffectiveness. Nnabuike (2012) identified some factors that could hinder the achievement of instructional objectives to include the following:

- i. Lack of knowledge of the objectives
- ii. Inability to communicate the language of the subject matter
- iii. Application of inappropriate teaching methods
- iv. Non utilization of instructional materials.
- v. Inability to manage the classroom among others.

Where the instructional objectives are not achieved as result of one or combination of the above factors, curriculum at that stage cannot be claimed to have been implemented.

Utilization of Instructional Materials

The importance of instructional materials in teaching and learning cannot be over emphasized. Instructional materials promote efficiency of education by improving the quality of teaching and learning (Adeoye 2010).

In a summary, Okobia (2011) in Aneke (2015)state that instructional material makes the subject-matter more real, helps to enhance the learners' imagination, helps to prevent misconceptions and also makes learning more interesting". The use of instructional material enhances permanent retention. It is unfortunates that despite all these advantages of instructional materials, and the fact that they are part of the curriculum planning and design, the governments do not provide them as required in many schools; and even where some of them are available, teachers do not utilize them. In agreement with the above statement, Ani (2000) in Nwanze (2015) stated that most secondary schools in Enugu State, Nigeria are hardly properly equipped with audio-visual materials. He also maintained that even where some schools are privileged to have instructional materials, the materials were not adequately utilized.

Generally most schools in Nigeria lack infrastructure and other facilities that enhance teaching and

learning. This is evidenced from UNESCO (2004) report which indicates poor infrastructure like shortage of desks and chairs in most secondary schools in Nigeria. UNESCO (2004) report further stated that most schools especially secondary schools lack water and sanitation facilities. The implication of the above is that a teacher leaves his class for his house or to any other place of convenience whenever he/she is pressed by nature during school hours. Equally there is the tendency that students could contract some contagious diseases as a result. Consequently the coverage of some important curriculum contents could be missed by both the students and the teachers.

Furthermore, Okebukola (2005) stated that other issues affecting curriculum implementation by the teachers include the following:

- a. Inadequate teaching materials
- b. Insufficient funding
- c. Over crowded curriculum
- d. Too much work load for the teachers
- e. Inadequate supervision
- f. Lack of incentives
- g. Use of unqualified teachers

Employment of unqualified teaching personnel- employment of public officers like teachers are in the hands of government, when government employs an unqualified persons to teach in our schools as a result of connection or membership of the same political parties, curriculum implementation at the classroom is adversely affected because no one can give what he does not have.

In his own opinion, Ifiok (2012) stated that "lack of required background and orientation relevant to curriculum on the part of the teacher leads to poor attitudes towards the implementation of a new curriculum, no matter how expertly the pages of the curriculum were designed". Ukamupong (2012) asserted that training has positive effect on the teachers' efficiency towards teaching. He also stated that teachers with lower educational qualifications will definitely implement the curriculum in the wrong way. He also maintained that quacks jump into the teaching field because of dearth of job.

Lack of Job satisfaction: Most of the teachers in Nigeria are not well paid. The poor salaries are not even regular. Their promotions are not released as at when due. There are cases of non payment of teachers leave allowances. Moreover many of the teachers are not sure of their pension and gratuity. All these could make them loose focus on the actual teaching job and focus on means of personal survival at the detriment of curriculum implementation. In his own contribution to the above, Adebayo (2011) stated that the performance of a person on a job is a function of two variables viz: the individual's skill on the job and the motivation he received to apply the skill. Lack of job satisfaction can make a teacher

degenerate to extortion of money from his students and the exhibition of other deviant behaviour like lateness to work, and apathy of his work, and even the tendency to withdraw his services unduly.

The Role of the school leader: School leaders are expected to play a very important part in the implementation of curriculum in their schools. UNESCO (2004) stated that curriculum and its implementation require an effective management. Further more, most school leaders do not supervise their workers (teachers) adequately to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Where the leadership of the school is weak, curriculum implementation by the teachers will not be achieved. On the side of the supervisors from ministry of education; some of them are lakardezik and nonchalant with their work and some may not visit the school under their schedule for supervision. Some see it as an avenue of making money from the schools all to the cost of curriculum implementation.

Societal factor: This involves both the parents and the students, some students probably because of their parental influence do not attend classes; associated with this one is even when some of them belong to some cult groups.

Generally many organs of the society encourage examination malpractice. On this note many students do not study their books or even attend classes. They solely depend on examination malpractices.

Furthermore, many parents encourage this art by sponsoring malpractice for their children. Also some parents because of their poor level of awareness do not understand the value of education and will consequently consider the payment of necessary fees as waste of money.

Way Forward

Onyeachu (2010) in Nwanze (2015) opined that provision of infrastructure/facilities, instructional materials, teachers' participation in decision making and curriculum planning, adequacy of qualified teachers, adequate funding, motivation of teachers are required for curriculum implementation succingly put;

Government and non governmental organizations should strive to provide conducive learning environment by making available the necessary facilities like good classroom, desks and chairs, instructional materials.

Teachers should be encouraged to go on training, seminar/ workshops to be abraze with the current curriculum trends and new methods of teaching.

Teachers should also participate in other stages of curriculum process, such as at the planning and development stages.

Teachers should be more creative and innovative in their work to enable them improvise where the actual materials/resources are not available.

- Working conditions of the teachers should be improved to enable them put in their best in their services.
- Campaign on the importance of education should be carried by both the government and non-governmental bodies to make parents and guidance contribute their own quotas to the education of their wards by paying the necessary school fees. This could be done through the churches, mosques, radio and television announcements and jingles.
- Whenever a new curriculum is introduced, teachers should be made to go on training on the implementation modalities.
- Teachers should be made to teach only subjects of their specialization.

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