Original Article

Perceived Challenges of Effective Implementation of Secondary School Education Curriculum in Post Covid-19 Pandemic Nigeria

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic like a dream took Nigeria and the rest of the world by surprise and gave rise to the shutting down of educational and other socio-economic activities worldwide. The students were asked to return to their homes to avoid staying and working in groups. The traditional talk/chalk approaches were no longer helpful and solution, to the problem on ground due to social-distancing measures adopted at the time. Using ICT (information and communication technology) in education has now made for a paradigm shift in curriculum implementation process. The implementers of curriculum can now employ different platforms like WhatsApp, Zoom, Skype Virtual Classrooms, and Facebook etc. to deliver lectures to students in their comfort zones. The challenges of innovative pedagogical approaches in curriculum implementation like limited funding of schools, inadequate supply of school facilities, poor motivation of teachers, non-compliance of majority of students and teachers among others. This paper presented the conceptual meaning of the key variables, secondary school Education, Effective Curriculum Implementation Sustainable Development. The challenges of Innovative Pedagogical approaches in curriculum implementation and the way forward were highlighted.

Keywords: Secondary school education, COVID-19, Effective curriculum implementation, sustainable development.

Introduction

Education remains very crucial in the life of most nations of the world, as an instrument for both socio-economic and technological development of the people, Nigeria on her part had, the National Policy on Education of Nigeria (FRN, 2014), education has been adopted as the best weapon for influencing the social and economic growth of the nation. Again, Nigeria as an active member of the United Nations Organization (UN) had like other members both developed and developing

world continued to implement the different developmental programmes of the apex world body (Ishiwu, 2017).

It is an indisputable fact that most nations cannot willingly transfer their technology to another except for needy countries trying to acquire it from those that already have, such, but perhaps through the use of education, which could afford them a sustainable living and development. Since education is the cornerstone of all national development, efforts should be made to raise the standard of education provided to the populace so that curriculum can be implemented successfully and sustainable growth and development are ensured. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO 2013), everyone can participate in activities if their country provides them with opportunities for high-quality education, which is in line with this good action.

In December 2019, a peculiar Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by a virus. Suddenly broke out in remote Wuhan, China, shocking and paralyzing all socioeconomic operations, including the education sector. In March 2020, the World Health Organization identified the outbreak as a pandemic and deemed it a public health emergency of global concern (Nwafor, 2021). Small droplets from coughing, sneezing, and even talking can transfer the aforementioned virus to persons who are in close proximity. Due to the massive death toll that it caused, it had an impact on many different nations.

However, as it continued the World Health Organization (WHO) and Disease Control Centre's worldwide did not have immediate solution to the pandemic. There was no known effective vaccine on ground to check the spread. Rather, countries devised certain preventive measures pending the time vaccine was produced. These included: regular washing of hands with soap, wearing of face mask, maintaining social/physical distance, stay at home orders, quarantine curfews, reduction in number of persons that attend office work per day, constant rubbing of hand sanitizers and avoidance of hand shaking etc. Nonetheless, the above scenario disrupted so many

sporting, religious cultural and educational/activities. Her educational institutions were badly impacted in Nigeria, like in many other nations throughout the globe. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of public secondary schools, which are the study's main focus, remained shut down.

A nationwide or local closure of schools, universities, and colleges was reported in 206 nations, including Nigeria, by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO, 2020). This impacted about 98.4% (percent) of the student population worldwide. By the month of March 2020, when there were increasing number of COVID-19 victims on daily basis, the federal and state governments, had no other option than to close secondary schools and students were asked to return home. There was no teaching and learning going on till the end of the pandemic with its numerous negative consequences on the education sector. The closure of secondary schools nationwide also affected the realization of the philosophical goal of Nigerian education system, it is centred on integrating individuals into sound and successful citizens through the instillation of acceptable societal ideals (FRN, 2014). This can only be accomplished through the efficient implementation of secondary school subject curricula, which was not possible owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because curriculum is viewed as everything that is organized and designed to help students gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values they need for use in a society that is always evolving (Kamau & Changilwa 2013).

No doubt in spite of the multi-ferrous hardships occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic, it created some alternative innovative approaches in curriculum implementation processes, using different online platforms. The online platform forms an integrated set of interactive on-line services and provide students with information, tools and resources that would enhance teaching learning process outside the classroom settings. In this era, of information communication technology (ICT), there are increasing awareness of emerging technologies for use by teachers to enhance effective classroom interactions. The resources may include among others computers, printer, internet services, e-mail, radio, television etc. The federal government has acknowledged the

crucial role that ICT plays in the implementation of curricula in the past and stated that it will provide the facilities and infrastructures needed to promote ICT and e-learning (FRN, 2014).

As of the now, the COVID-19 has passed. For the secondary school curriculum to be implemented successfully in the wake of the COVID-19 epidemic, it is essential to investigate the perceived obstacles of secondary school utilizing cutting-edge pedagogical methodologies.

Secondary School Education

Although secondary school education is the primary topic of this research, Nigeria's educational system is primarily divided into pre-primary, primary, secondary, and university levels. Children obtain secondary education after completing their primary education but prior to higher study. According to FRN (2014), the broad objectives of secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for: A practical lifestyle and a college education. Particularly, secondary education among other things shall;

i) Provide a more varied curriculum to account for the variety of skills, opportunities, and roles to be played in the future.

ii) Offer sub-professional grade trained labour in the areas of applied science, technology, and commerce.

iii) Create a generation of individuals who are able to think for themselves, respect the rights and opinions of others, uphold the dignity of work, comprehend the principles contained in our overall national goals, and live as responsible citizens.

iv) Encourage a sense of national togetherness by highlighting the similarities that diversity shares. (FRN 2014).

The secondary education system lasts for six years, divided into the three years of junior secondary school, which must be both academic and pre-vocational, and the four years of senior secondary school, which must have a comprehensive subject curriculum with both core and elective subjects carefully chosen to instil in students. When it is efficiently implemented, it is anticipated that people would have the necessary information, skills, and attitudes for sustainable living, which

indirectly contributes to the growth of the country. Accordingly, the junior secondary schools' curricula must include the following fundamental disciplines for students. Languages: (i) English (ii) French (iii) Math (iv) Language of the Environment (v) Integrated Science (vi) Social Studies (vii) Citizenship Education (viii) Basic Technology. Next are the pre-vocational electives, which include (i) practical agriculture (ii) business studies (ii), home economics (ii), (iv) regional crafts (v), (vi) fine arts (vii), and (vii) music. Similar to group A, senior secondary school students are required to offer the following underlisted disciplines as core subjects: English language proficiency (i), mathematics (ii), one of the major languages of Nigeria (ii), biology (iii), chemistry (iii), physics (iv), and (v) one of English literature, history, geography, or religious studies (vi) Civic education is a vocational subject. While group B occupational electives consist of (i) agriculture, (ii) animal husbandry, (iii) applied electrical, (iv) auto repairs, (v) bookkeeping and accounting, (vi) building construction, (vii) commerce, and (viii) viii) ix. Computer education Electronics (x), textiles and apparel (xi), food and nutrition (xii), home management (xiii) Metal work (xiv) Technical drawing (xv) Wood work (xvi) Shorthand (xvii) Type writing (xviii) Fine Art (xix) Music (FRN 2014). From the above, it can be said that the secondary school education curriculum is robust comprehensive enough, and capable of making recipients to be functional members well equipped in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of education for sustainable living and expected national development.

Education is the process by which the next generation gains the knowledge, skills, and attitude necessary to function successfully in their environment. Education, in the opinion of Ishiwu (2017), is the process through which young people learn the values of life, cultural heritage, knowledge, ideas, and past civilization events in order to participate in the present's processes of development and contribute to the civilization of the next generation. Then, according to Osuji and Oluoch-Suleh (2017), Education is viewed as a methodical process by which society helps a student acquire lasting information, abilities, values, and optimistic attitudes for the development of the heart and the transformation of society. According to Osuji et al. (2017), there are three primary functions of education in the learner: informing; facilitating the learner's acquisition of

the needed knowledge and abilities, formative; promoting the acquisition of values and positive life views, and transformative; enabling the learner to contribute to societal development. When a learner is exposed and properly internalizes the three domains by the school, the end product will be a sustainable development of the individual, society and national development.

The provision of quality formal education world over entails huge capital investment. It is in realization of this that the federal government of Nigeria welcomed a joint responsibility or partnership between the government, corporate bodies and private ventures. This decentralization of educational responsibilities aims at making Nigerian child to access education wherever they may be, irrespective of sex, age, or tribe or culture so as to derive the inexhaustible gains of formal education.

Concept of Curriculum

Although curriculum experts and writers may not agree on a description of the notion, the word curriculum is derived from the Latin word "currus," which implies a racetrack or runway. In this context, curriculum is seen as a course through which a learner or individual runs to reach an end or a goal. He or she may or may not win a prize or certificate but what is important is to pass through a school and school passing through the individual. The above view point has been held for a very long time, and it still forms the backbone of many curriculum definitions for instance, Offorma (2016) described curriculum as planned and unplanned learning experiences offered to learners in school. The document off course must be officially approved by the government. Reiterating the previous point, curriculum is the only thing that is planned and structured to help students develop the appropriate information, abilities, attitudes, and values for use in a constantly changing society (Kamau & Changilwa 2013).

According to Eya (2014), the term "curriculum" refers to all the learning activities and objectives that are systematically organized and supervised by the school during the reconstruction of knowledge, which is understood to be the cognitive, emotional, and psychomotor development of

the learner. As a result, in order to achieve the goal of providing education for Nigerian children, a tool that serves as a vehicle of operation is required. This instrument is the curriculum. Then Obih, Azubuike, and Osuagwu (2017) noted that curriculum is the process of identifying and following specific societal objectives through the use of the school. Offorma (2016) went on to say that the curriculum is the entirety of the learning environment. Then, Ogele, Ishiwu, and Adoga (2021) asserted that the curriculum is the book that contains the educational policy declaration. In other words, the curriculum, like secondary school curriculum, is a planned and directed learning objectives' that are established by the school for the learners. It indicates that in order to influence students' achievement of the desired learning outcomes at the secondary school level, the curriculum, which serves as an official document in the schools, must be carefully communicated and supervised by the implementers (teachers) in the classroom. However, it should be clearly stated that curriculum no matter how beautifully planned, largely depends on its effective implementation by those qualified to do so in Schools.

Curriculum Implementation

Ordinarily, a curriculum begins as an action plan. It won't become a reality until classroom teachers put it into practice with actual pupils in an actual classroom setting. This is due to the fact that curricular plans can only be executed in the classroom. According to Ogele et al. (2021), implementing a curriculum entails fusing subject matter and methodology to produce desirable learning activities that result in pertinent learning outcomes that, in the long run, could transform into sustainable human growth. Once more, curriculum implementation is the practical application of theory into practice in such a way that the ultimate result is demonstrated by the learners' performances inside and outside of the classroom setting. According to Akubuilo (2014), curriculum implementation is considered to have occurred when teachers effectively convey the new curriculum's contents and instructional practices in the manner for which they were intended.

However, a number of important factors, such as the teacher's knowledge/experience, qualifications, access to resources, and motivation, play a significant role in how well they are able

to apply the curriculum. At this point, it can also be claimed that curriculum implementation refers to how the officially planned or designed course of study is converted by the teachers into syllabuses, schemes of work, and lesson units to be taught or instilled in the students. The curriculum's implementation, which is a crucial component, is what will bring about the intended changes. The desired sustainable national growth is brought about by these favorable adjustments both in the short and long terms.

The classroom instructor is the driver who is now required to transport the goods (content) to the recipients of the goods, which are learners. The curriculum is the vehicle that contains the products (contents) meant to transform society. As a result, the teacher is at the center of the curriculum implementation process. Everything a teacher does is done for the advantage of the student, who in turn will bring about the desired educational change for a lasting national transformation that will benefit both the present and future generations.

Concept of Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is a shift in human civilization that both meets the requirements of the present while also preparing the way for the needs of future generations. It is an organizational principle or strategy for achieving human development goals while concurrently preserving the capacity of natural systems to deliver the natural resources and ecosystem services on which the economy and society rely.

The United Nations program known as "education for sustainable development" (ESD) defines this style of education as one that promotes changes in knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to enable a more sustainable and just society for all. It is this that would allow people to attain the sustainable development goals, which call for quality education, economic progress, and social development in all of its manifestations (Ukwueze, Ogwu, & Egbe, 2017). The goal of the sustainable education development program is to provide the next generation with the information and skills they need to manage the social and environmental changes that will take place in the

near future. Additionally, it will help pupils comprehend how interdependent humans are with the environments in which they live. In this way, students might use what they had learned in class to address unique problems in their own lives or in their communities. People who live in communities that are vulnerable to oil spills and erosion, for example, or those who are affected by climate change.

In general, education for sustainable development fosters behavioral changes that will lead to a more sustainable future and educates people from all areas of life on how to prepare for, deal with, and find solutions for situations that could endanger the sustainability of our world. (Njoku, Amadi, & Igbokwe, 2017). In order to solve their own problems and advance their own cultural, political, and economic well-being, individuals must engage in a comprehensive process called sustainable development. When our educational curriculum is executed in a way that can be sustained over the long term, sustainable development utilizing education will take place. Here, it is obvious that political authorities and education-related ministries have a significant impact on determining the sustainability of progress. Due to the fact that educational institutions key players in the growth and development of any country. This even explains why the Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN) (2014) in her education document stressed that education is a crucial tool for affecting national progress and development. This then implies that education as a process brings about sustainable national development where the present and future leaders acquire an all-round education which is a vital condition for sustainable development of a nation such as Nigeria.

Certainly, secondary school education is meant for our young and dynamic future leaders who also belong to present. The quality of education they acquire now in school equally contribute to the issue of how Nigeria will achieve sustainable national development in near future. According to Alelaimat and Taha (2014). The learner is at the center of sustainable education, and the teacher is the means and instrument through which the learner advances their sustainable learning. Then if there is a gap in the teachers' active role the learner will be negatively affected thereby truncating the needed sustainable national development.

However, as Osuji et al. (2017) repeatedly and accurately stated, "The teacher who is tasked with assisting the students in gaining enduring information, abilities, values, and attitudes for the transformation of society is allegedly "missing in action." In this regard the teachers' ability in promoting quality of life, sustainable change good citizenship and selfless service, inter-dependency and needs and rights of future generation would be in doubt. It is impossible to overstate the importance of teachers in promoting sustained national development. For a sustained national growth, teachers are crucial to children' proper socialization.

The secondary school teachers mould the characters of students morally, socially, emotionally and academically so that the adjusted individuals would fit well and contribute to the societal development. A teacher is someone who attempts to impart knowledge, information, skills, values, attitudes, or anything else to a person or group of people who are thought to be comparatively untrained or unexperienced in a way that is morally just and pedagogically effective (Njoku, et al. 2017). Izuagba and Obiefuna's (2008) definition of a teacher is once more as the expert who develops, organizes, carries out, assesses, and evaluates teaching and learning. A trained teacher is someone who undertook and successfully finished a scheduled program of training in a recognized teacher training facility, among other areas in the principles and practice of education, and was exposed to an observed internship period either or as part of the period of training. According to Mkpa (2014). Once more in vain, instructors have a significant impact on students' educational achievement because they are ultimately responsible for putting policy into practice based on practice during classroom interactions (Alelaimat & Taha, 2014). Teachers assist pupils in their learning, which frequently takes place in a classroom, an academy, or sometimes another setting like the outdoors. The teacher performs optimally when the recommended instructional materials, school facilities are available and he or she feels motivated.

Challenges of Effective Curriculum Implementation in Post COVID-19 Pandemic World

Curriculum implementation is a network of varying activities involved in translating curriculum designs into classroom activities and changing people's attitudes to accept and participate in those activities. The challenges include:

a. **Limited funding:** It is very difficult to implement any given curriculum successfully if there are limited funding of education programmes. Under funding raise a lot of other implications on the part of curriculum e.g. constant strike actions by teaching and non-teaching staff. The teachers and students may not afford the cost of data to join in the lectures.

b. **Limited supply of school facilities:** The underfunding of education sector in Nigeria do affect the supply of school facilities and instructional materials negatively. The alternative source of power and network constitute major hindrances.

c. The most significant human resource in the process of implementing a curriculum is the teaching staff, both in terms of quality and quantity. The educators are the ones who embrace and put the designers' ideas into practice. As a result, teachers are crucial to the success of any curriculum. Once more, the standard of the school instructors in Nigeria is a major factor in the country's educational system.

d. **Teachers' poor motivation:** Poor conditions of service of teachers (implementers) constitute major hindrance to curriculum implementation.

e. Information and communication technology (ICT): In Nigeria, the majority of school subjects are neither taught or learned using contemporary ICT.

f. The lack of input from instructors in decision-making and curriculum development. Any educational endeavor in Nigeria must succeed for it to be successful.

Way Forward/Suggestions

Education is the answer in providing the right information, knowledge, skills and attitudes that would ensure a sustainable growth and development of Nigeria. This can be achieved by ensuring an effective implementation of secondary school education curriculum.

- The teachers who are implementers of the curriculum are to adopt a paradigm shift from reproductive learning to constructive learning. Thus, in line with Chinese proverb of "teaching a child how to fish, instead of giving him or her fish".

- The teachers should be guided in selection of learning experiences for curriculum planning by the three domains of educational objectives (cognitive affective and psychomotor). The teachers should integrate entrepreneurial skills in every topic to be taught in every lesson.

- The annual award of National honours by the federal government should also be based on one's contributions to the upliftment of education.

- Communities/towns corporate groups and good-spirited individuals where schools are located should assist in the supply of school facilities for effective curriculum implementation.

- Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs) including wealthy individuals are to assist in sponsoring teachers to workshops and seminars for them to be abreast with current issues on education.

- Secondary school teachers the actual implementers of the curriculum have to be adequately motivated by their employers through the grant of house and car loans. Their salaries and wages are to be adequately enhanced.

- The government at all levels including philanthropists should be encouraged to supply the ICT facilities to schools, with constant power supply to schools especially those in the rural areas of the country.

- The teachers who are at the Centre of curriculum implementation should be carried along in any curriculum innovation/development and implementation process.

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