

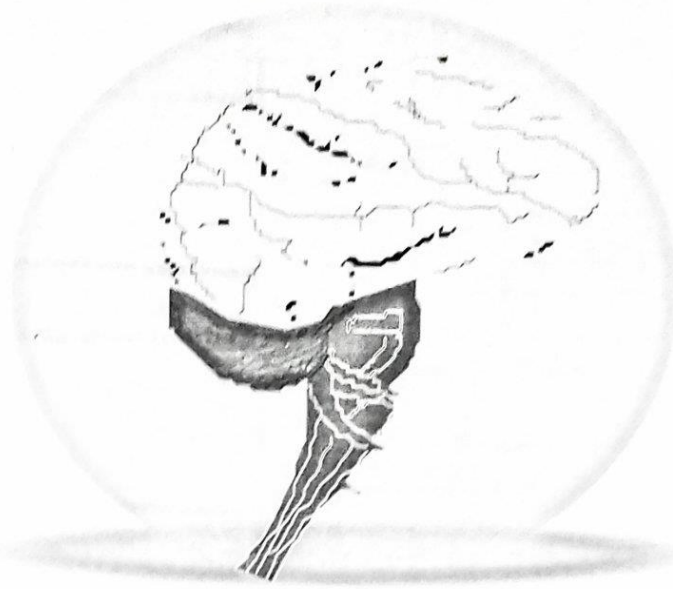
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Transforming Nigeria-Nation through Functional Basic Education Curriculum Delivery: Roles of Teacher Education

By

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Abstract

Education as a potent tool brings about development and national transformation. "Teacher education" curriculum is designed to meet the yearning needs and aspirations of the Nigerian people (Nwadiani, 2013). Teacher education is a form of education tailored towards producing those expected to teach at primary and secondary schools. Effective teacher education is capable of bringing about sustainable development in all sectors of the economy in all developing nations including Nigeria to enhance and transform the quality of life of the people. Teacher education is the hub which the wheel of functional basic education curriculum delivery rotates because teachers are the single greatest influence on a learner's learning outcomes resulting from research-based pedagogic tools and evaluation. Pupils become products of functional basic education curriculum delivery by teachers who translate curriculum into a syllabus, schemes of work, lesson nits and notes. Skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are taught by trained teachers leading to national transformation but poor quality teacher supply can negatively affect basic education curriculum delivery. Hence, the fund should be provided for training and retraining of teachers via conferences, seminars and workshops to enable the implementers to make the basic education curriculum functional.

Education as a potent tool that brings about development, transformation and the productive capacities of a nation's human resources should be adequately enhanced

the strategy of core options available to streamline learning experiences basic for learners to ensure meaningful and functional school activities. It helps learners to acquire the necessary skills for problem-solving after all. Offorma (2005) states that education is designed as a problem-solving device and it is usually reflected in the school curriculum of a nation. At the basic education level, it inculcates in the learner acceptable norms in the society. Functional basic education curriculum in the context of these write-ups indicates its workability, practicability, feasibility and productivity of its curriculum implementation. Actually, the challenges of functional basic education curriculum delivery rest solely on the quality and quantity of teachers who have been trained to implement the curriculum designed for basic education may be difficult if there is a gap between ideal implementers and national aspirations.

Quality of teacher education of a nation determines the quality of her educational system capable of influencing such a nation's future developments in every sector of the economy. Countries which excel in education use a wide array of purposeful strategies to build a strong teacher workforce to expand access to basic education. Nigeria's educational system has the advantage of ample constitutional provisions and legislative support for the three tiers of government (federal, state and local) plus other stakeholders to participate in the delivery of education at all levels. To this effect, the private sector, civil society organizations (CSO), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others collaborate to strengthen quality education through appropriate policy guidelines and monitoring (FRN, 2008). The overall philosophy of Nigeria's education system is set to attain national transformational goals. The synopsis of this philosophy is based on education as an instrument for national development, social change, promotion of a united Nigeria, maximizes the creative potential to develop skills of the individual for self-fulfillment as well as a right of every Nigerian irrespective of gender, social status, religion and ethnic background.

Functional Basic Education Curriculum Delivery

Education describes a process of acquisition of knowledge, skills, desirable attitudes through formal, semi-formal and non-formal approaches in order to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty to fully develop the individual into a sound and effective citizen via the provision of equal opportunities at basic, secondary and tertiary levels both inside and outside formal school system (FRN, 2008). It is aimed at creating awareness thereby developing responsible individuals capable of taking independent actions and productive decisions that have far-reaching effects on self and others. Education is indispensable for the social and economic transformation of a given society to fully realize the goals of education in Nigeria and benefit from its contributions to the national economy. The following necessary measures have been taken to ensure that:

- i. Teaching needs to be a practical activity, experimental and ICT supported.

- ii. Educational activities must be learner-centered for maximum self-development and self-fulfillment,
- iii. It needs to be related to overall community desire,
- iv. All tiers (Federal, State and Local) of government should promote the culture of reading clubs in schools and community libraries
- v. Scholarship awards need to be given to those studying sciences at all levels of the education system,
- vi. Every child should learn the use of the mother tongue and
- vii. Language of the immediate community plus one Nigerian language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) (FRN. 2008).

Functional basic education curriculum delivery becomes easier if there are professionally committed, dedicated and devoted teachers to teach children aged 0 to 15 years while early childhood education takes place between) to 5 and 9 years of formal schooling. The 5th edition of the 2008 National Policy on Education is segmented into ages 0 to 3 years situated in daycare centers and it is run by the private sector and social development services. According to the policy document, basic education shall be free, universal and compulsory for all children of school-going age. Its goals are to:

1. Provide the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship, wealth generation and educational advancement,
2. Develop patriotic young people equipped to contribute their quota to civic responsibilities,
3. Inculcate values and raise orally upright individuals capable of independent thinking and who appreciate the dignity of labor.
4. Provide opportunities for the child to develop manipulative skills to enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity
Inspire national consciousness and harmonious co-existence irrespective of differences in endowment, religion, ethnicity and socio-economic background.

A curriculum is defined as a deliberate and systematic plan which attempts to change the behaviors of the young and inexperienced persons to enable them to gain insight that will empower them to build a better future in society. It is an instrument used by schools to translate the hopes of the society in which they function into concrete reality (Offorma, 2005). Functional curriculum delivery is the translation of the planned curriculum into fully operational and execution of the curriculum document. Basic education curriculum delivery is the most dependable parameter to measure the operational success of the educational system because, secondary and tertiary educational levels rest upon its foundation (Ibrahim, 2009). If the primary level is weak, the whole educational system may be weak according to him. It is the combined efforts of the teacher and the learners in putting into operation the curriculum document after its objectives, content and learning experiences have been selected, organized and

evaluation follows. The next step is actual classroom teaching and learning processes seen as curriculum delivery. This is one of the reasons why teachers are the key curriculum implementers while the learners are the recipients (Offorma, 2005). Thus, functional basic education curriculum delivery can be viewed as a series of activities intended to be completed in order to acquire knowledge, skills, habits and values for life in society.

Problem of Basic Education Curriculum Delivery

Functional basic education curriculum delivery in Nigeria is fraught with a lot of challenges lagged as the crisis in curriculum policies and activities. Such issues are overloaded curriculum contents, inadequate funding, population explosion, inadequate supply of instructional resources and poor quality teacher supply. The curricula contents in Nigerian schools are satisfactorily developed but overloaded. This problem arose from the mismatch between provision and expectation of resources in schools that have adversely affected the quality of teaching and learning. There exist inadequate teacher supply, materials and financial support given to schools to implement basic education curriculum from the government. The curricula of basic education include English studies, one major Nigerian language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba), Mathematics, Basic science and Technology, Social Studies, Cultural and Creative Arts, Christian Religious Studies, Physical and Health Education, Computer Studies and Civic Education. Others are Agricultural Science, Home Economics, Arabic and French languages.

As a result of many subjects in school curricula the teachers find it extremely difficult to cover every bit of the curricula contents in each subject. The teachers have been complaining about curriculum content overload to no avail. How can there be functional curriculum delivery if the implementers cannot cover larger proportions of available curricula contents? Notwithstanding, the curriculum contents continue to expand resulting from the integration and addition of several materials collated from research findings. Imagine a basic education pupil offering thirteen (13) or fifteen subjects whereas, the Senior Secondary School student is required to offer a minimum of eight (8) and a maximum of ten (10) subjects during Senior School Certificate Examinations. Granted that knowledge of additional content areas would equip the learners with the necessary skills to function as a member of society, the major issue lies with the functional curriculum delivery as well as enough time to facilitate teachers' tasks (Offorma, 2005).

Functional basic education curriculum delivery demands high-quality of its products but lacks adequate financial support from governments and individuals to purchase the right modern instructional materials/equipment and install viable facilities to improve teaching-learning situations. Education as an instrument for social change

experiencing interminable dynamism in curricula policies modus operadi and learning outcomes should equally attract increased funding to exert positive influences on new pedagogical approaches. Funding educational projects like this is always problematic in the face of other contesting demands. It is rather very unfortunate that basic education teachers are not sponsored to attend curriculum reviews, conferences or workshops to gain first-hand knowledge about new ideas, skills or learning experiences which they (teachers) are expected to make curriculum delivery functional. Classroom teachers could have greatly contributed their own quota to functional curriculum delivery if they are involved in the development stage of the curriculum. Unless teachers are well paid as at and when due in addition to adequate provision of equipment, infrastructural facilities and instructional materials through adequate funding, functional curriculum delivery may be difficult.

Over-classroom population has become a big challenge to basic education curriculum implementers. Few available employed teachers' battles with the management of a large number of pupils admitted each session. The consequence of the population explosion at the basic education level is that teachers cannot fully implement approved curricula contents due to infrastructure in the classrooms. How can one imagine a teacher teaching a population of 80 to 100 pupils in a class, marking their classroom works, effect necessary corrections and being able to effectively teach other lessons on the timetable, especially in urban schools? Functional curriculum delivery takes place when the desirable behavioral changes occur in the learners through cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains. All rounded educated and functional individual learners are formed using effective curriculum delivery (Offorma, 2005).

Roles of Teacher Education (TE) and National Transformation

National development and transformation are driven by people who are enlightened, knowledgeable, and skilful with ideals and positive attitudes that are transmitted through teacher education. Teacher education could have been a catalyst and dependable accelerator in national transformation to be able to bring about an increase in productivity, initiative-ness, creativity, innovativeness and inventiveness among school leavers in Nigeria if TE policies were sincerely implemented over the years by the policy implementers (Nwadiani, 2013). Teacher education is a formal systematically organized training programme geared towards producing a crop of required manpower (Teachers) to implement the planned and developed school curricula in the society. Okafor (1988) stated that teacher education is properly planned and systematically applied for the cultivation of those who teach or will teach particularly but not exclusively in primary and post-primary levels of schooling. It is argued that effective teacher education is capable of bringing about sustainable transformation in every sector of the economy of any developing nation around the world.

It is the hub which the wheel of functional basic education curriculum delivery rotates because teachers are the single greatest influence on a learner's academic performance using research-based instructional approaches and evaluation.

Teachers are responsible for the translation and implementation of curricula, policies or instructional material packages and evaluation of pupils' learning outcomes at all levels including basic education. A teacher is a person who has undergone approved professional training in education at appropriate levels capable of imparting knowledge, attitudes and skills to the learners. He/she provides knowledge or insight to pupils or students. Hence, teaching is a process of informing, instructing or inculcating into individual learners certain attitudes, skills, knowledge and virtues of appreciation. It has to be acknowledged that success in teaching and learning encounters largely depends on the quality of a teacher who imparts knowledge to facilitate learners' learning. Teachers translate curricula into syllabi, schemes of work, lesson units and notes. Pupils are taught how to listen, speak, read and write by trained teachers.

The teacher performs a number of functions while teaching meant to help learners learn something. These roles vary from society to society which according to Inomiesa (2010) include mediator of learning, parent's substitutes, organizer of curriculum, confidant to students, bureaucrat, public servant, scholar, research specialist, agent of social change, community leader and a disciplinarian. An ideal teacher should not pretend to know everything but need to be honest and humble to ask for time to further investigate. Osakwe and Okoye (1998) stated that the teacher plays the roles of facilitating learning activities, guiding learners at work and behaviour model who has to apply the teaching to real-life situations.

Education according to Abdullahi (2006) is the bedrock of economic development and transformation of any nation and its growth depends largely on the quality of teacher education programmes. Teacher education designs a programme of study to improve the pedagogical fitness of teachers for the job of educating learners at particular levels of education. For instance, the National Council for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has designed a teacher education programme to be run in Colleges of Education across the country to train professional basic education teachers to acquire pedagogical knowledge and skills in translating curriculum contents and facilitate students learning. While faculties and institutes of education of the universities run courses and programmes designed by the National Universities Commission (NUC) for teacher education. The services of teachers are indispensable to any nation around the world because of the numerous functions of teacher education to exert positive influences on national development and transformation. The quality of the teacher in any school affects the quality of pupils who would become products of that institution. The 5th edition of the 2008 National Policy on Education claims that “no education system can rise

above the quality of its teachers" and so teacher education shall continue to be given major emphasis at all levels in curriculum planning and development. The minimum qualification for entry into the teaching profession must be the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) and the objectives of TE shall be to:

- i. Produce highly motivated, conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our educational system;
- ii. Encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- iii. Help teachers fit into the social life of the community and the society at large to enhance their commitment to national goals;
- iv. Provide teachers with the intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignments and make them adaptable to changing situations;
- v. Improve teachers' commitment to the teaching profession.

Besides, the following educational institutions among others shall give required professional training so far as they meet prescribed required minimum standards.

- a. Faculties of Education of any university.
- b. Colleges of Education,
- c. National Teachers Institutes (NTI) Kaduna,
- d. Schools of Education in the Polytechnics,
- e. National Institute for Nigeria Language and
- f. National Mathematical Centre (NMC).

Teacher education programmes have been structured to equip teachers for the effective execution of their duties in recognition of the pivotal roles of providing quality education at all levels. Accordingly, information and communication technology (ICT) training has to be incorporated in all teacher education institutions (FRN. 2008). Periodically, teachers need to be exposed to innovations in curriculum and methodology while newly recruited staffers must be given a formal professional induction on graduation from initial training. Teacher Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) must register qualified teachers to regulate the teaching profession and practices plus one-year internship before such teachers could be allowed to practice at all levels. Having identified "teacher education" as an instrument par excellence for national development and transformation, government had set out what teachers need to know and be able to do at all levels of education and at various stages of their professional development.

Conclusion

Functional basic education curriculum delivery emanates from high-quality teacher education programmes as teachers are said to be a core component of any educational system to enhance, develop and transform any nation. Education is a potent tool used for national development, transformation of social changes, promotion of unity

and acquisition of knowledge, skills and desirable habits. High-quality teacher education is essential for promoting functional basic education curriculum delivery. The paper has pointed out the roles of teacher education which involves training professionals in pedagogy and methodology to be able to translate and implement school curriculum. Actual step-by-step teaching and learning processes in a formally organized classroom is regarded as curriculum delivery. Weaknesses observed in functional basic education curriculum delivery include overloaded curricula contents, population explosion, low-quality teachers supply, and poor funding plus others. These negatively affect the possibility, practicality and workability of functional curriculum delivery to transform Nigeria-nation to an enviable height as is expected.

Recommendations

Because of the key roles played by teachers at the basic education level as chief curriculum implementers, it is hereby recommended that:

- a. Effort should be made by the government to adequately fund teacher education to ensure success in curriculum delivery.
- b. Government should package teachers' welfare to motivate them.
- c. Effort should be made to implement "one-year" internship as an aspect of training spelt out in the 5th edition of 2008 National Policy on Education,
- d. Training and retraining programmes in form of conferences, seminars and workshops should be periodically organized for basic education teachers to update their knowledge and skills.

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