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## REPOSITIONING EDUCATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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### **Abstract**

*The paper discussed some of the needed paradigm shift for repositioning educational curriculum for sustainable development in Nigeria. It went further to analyze the views of various scholars about repositioning of educational curriculum for sustainable development which is globally acknowledged. This is because no nation can grow adequately without appropriate curriculum that will reflect the changes in the society. This paper examines the concept of education, curriculum as the bridge between education and development; the importance and factors that bring about the repositioning of educational curriculum. The paper recommends that curriculum should not be static, but dynamic to meet the changing needs of the society. The curriculum should be repositioned and structured in such a way that the learners will acquire relevant skills which enable them to develop themselves, the society and also contribute to sustainable development of the country. There is need for adequate funding of teacher education for the purpose of implementing the curriculum knowing fully well that national transformation depends on qualitative teacher education.*

**Key Words:** Educational Curriculum, Repositioning and Sustainable development.

### **Introduction**

The major problem to sustainable development is how to motivate people to change or eradicate the already established behaviours that are retrogressive. Change is inevitable but human being is resentful to it. Teaching should focus more on practical education which should assist the individual to acquire relevant skills that could promote sustainable national development. According to Baha, (2005), the idea of education for sustainable development has a special role in vindicating how various processes in education, which lies at the heart of promoting change in human behaviour, can be used on global level to help things around. Education has a special role and responsibility in contributing to the challenges of sustainability. Educational curriculum should be structured and restructured to meet the changing needs of society.

### Education

The term education has no universally accepted meaning. But we do know and agree that the word is derived from the Latin word "educare" meaning to "raise" to "train" and to "bring up". On a more general level, education refers to a range of activities and experiences varying from formal teaching to the building of underlying understanding and knowledge. This implies that education is a lifelong process, leading to bringing out the best in every human being. Datta (1984) in Itedjere (2007) asserted that "education is the transmission of knowledge, skills, ideas, attitudes and patterns of behaviours". All to be transmitted is the culture of the people hence in a concise form, (Itedjere 1993), said that education can be viewed as a way of transmitting and acculturation of people. Whawa in Oloya and Egbule (2015) sees education as the process of developing the individually physically, mentally, morally and socially for his own welfare and for the benefits of the society.

Okorosaye Orobite in Nnabuo (2007) sees education as a process, a product, and a discipline. As a process, it is activity of preserving, developing, and transmitting culture of the people from one generation to another." As a product, it refers to change whether over or covert, implicit or explicit, which education is expected to bring about. In the same way, Okorosaye-Onbite (2005) stressed that the product of education is the educated man, who in African context is one who shows evidence of a well integrated personality... he is economically efficient, socially and publically competent, morally accepted and intellectually and culturally sophisticated.

In summation, Ukeje (2000) stated that:

*Maclean (2005) notes that, although there are many keys to development Education is power, it is a process of acquiring knowledge and ideas that shape and condition man's attitude and achievements; it is a process of developing the child's moral, physical, emotional and intellectual power for his contribution in social reform; it is the process of mastering the laws of nature and for utilizing them effectively for the welfare of the individual and for social reconstruction; it is the art of the utilization of knowledge for complete living.*

Such as improved infrastructure such as dams, roads, telecommunication facilities, sports and the like, education is regarded as being the master key to economic and social development. High quality and relevant education and schooling have been shown to open the doors to:

- Equality
- Sustainable development
- Poverty alleviation
- Justice
- Mainstreaming of the marginalized and vulnerable groups in the society.

In whatever form of definition we adopt, education is a social process and a continuous process till death. It is an attempt to develop the personality of the child and prepare him for the membership of the society. Plata, one of the first important thinkers in education believed that education had to be holistic and ought to play a prominent position in the formation of citizens UNESCO (2011). Education could be formal, informal or non formal.

Instruction at all levels has to be oriented toward inculcating the following values as outlined in the National policy on education.

- Respect for the work and dignity of the individuals,
- Faith in man's ability to make national decisions
- Moral and spiritual values in personal and human relations
- Shared responsibility for the common good of society,,
- Respect for the dignity of labour
- Promotion of the emotional, physical and psychological health of all children.

### **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development has been described as a construct, which envision development as meeting the need of the present generation without compromising the needs of future generation (Ugoh, 2008). It implies that while education meets the need of the present, it does not compromise the ability of the future generations to meet its own need. Never the less, this ability to meet the needs is determined by human capital (through education, technology advance, and through physical capital (machine, tool etc). Kunda argues that continued sustainable development is only possible or assured when it is agreed and indeed concrete steps are taken to raise the level of literacy and numeracy in any society. Curriculum innovation, educational institutions and their programmes are therefore the tools and its sustainability.

Sustainable development has also been defined by the Nigerian study/Action Team (NEST), 1991 in Osuji (Nnabuo & Abodike 2007) as "an approach that combines the development needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability of the future while also maintaining ecological integrity" According to Osuji, (2004), this implies a development process that is equitable and sensitive too ecological and environmental issues. It depends on the initiatives, resourcefulness and discipline of human beings who are the managers of developmental programmes.

Sustainable development as defined in the Human Development report of 2003 and quoted by Okonji Iweala (2005) "reflect as the process that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs'. Sustainable development is therefore development that helps to improve the quality of human life, that is economically, socially and in a politically participatory manner.

**Curriculum as the Bridge between Education and Development**

Curriculum can be viewed as a road map for achieving socially agreed development and education goals. It embeds the vision of society and the world – that we aspire to shape the knowledge, skills and values needed to live in and change that society and world. Some have argued that the curriculum is to education what constitution is to democracy. Another useful perspective on curriculum is as biological analogy: the curriculum is the DNA of education. It encodes the goals, and the blueprint, for who the society want individuals to become, which is more than just a collection of study plans and syllabi or of acquired knowledge, skills and/or character traits.

It is the curriculum that determines to a large extent whether education is inclusive, thus playing a significant role in ensuring that provision is equitable. It is the curriculum that provides the structure for the provision of quality learning, especially where teachers might be under-qualified and inexperienced, their classrooms under-resourced and their students lacking the prior frame works within which to situate their learning. And it is the curriculum that articulates both the competences necessary for lifelong learning and those needed for holistic development.

The curriculum therefore lies at the crossroads of these four key aspects of sustainable development goals: that education should be inclusive and equitable, characterized by quality learning, promote, lifelong learning, and relevant to holistic development. Curriculum in other words, provides the bridge between education and development and it is the competencies associated with lifelong learning and aligned with development needs, in the broadest, holistic sense of the term, that span the bridge. A well-designed curriculum serves a core to which all other aspects of education system are tethered. The curriculum determines what will be taught and learned by whom, when and where. It determined not only the content but also the sequencing of the learning and the overall educational experience. Curriculum also determines the articulation of learning and of educational experiences across sub sectors of the education system as well as across learning settings. The curriculum interprets, shapes and reflect our “social imaginary”. Curriculum aims are always embedded within a broader context of social relation and practices. A social imaginary is a way of thinking shared in a society by ordinary people, it involves common understandings that make every-day practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. Curriculum is critically important in any society as it engages in collective dialogue about what knowledge, skills and values are of such importance that they need to be learned by all.

The discourse of competencies in curriculum has elaborated more sophisticated, integrated and holistic understanding of what it is that we want young people to learn, be able to do and to become. Not content knowledge on its own, not as the pendulum has swung away from rote learned content skills alone. The

contemporary context in which young people are growing present them with an environment more complex and challenges possibly greater than ever makes the role of curriculum and its associated competencies more important than might to date has been imagined. Young people face greater challenges that we have ever had as a result of increasingly globalised world (UNESCO International Bureau of Education 2015). Therefore the need for curriculum repositioning become imperative to meet the changing needs of the society- whereby the individual will acquired skills which will make them to be useful not only to themselves but also to the society in general which will equally bring sustainable development.

#### **Concept of Repositioning Curriculum in Education**

According to Chambers Dictionary New Edition, Reposition simply means to put in a different position. In other words it means to move or place in a different position. Repositioning means a change of the old order to the new order or a transformation of the curriculum from the old order to the new order. If there is a deliberate novel specific shift in the curriculum on the basis of the fact that it will be more effective in the attainment of specified objectives, the curriculum could be repositioned. To reposition in education is to create, or put something different into the existing curriculum to make it more efficacious. The something different that is being put into the curriculum could be in respect of the goals and objectives of education, content, learning experiences, curriculum materials and evaluation. What motivates repositioning is the need to have something that is better or preferable and something that will improve existing situation. Curriculum reposition in education entails the introduction of novel ideas and practices in the entire curriculum. It means to renew the existing curriculum so as to make it relevant to the varying needs and aspirations of the learners and to the ever changing needs of the society.

#### **Reasons for Repositioning Educational Curriculum**

Curriculum is probably the most important construction in education that reflects the knowledge that are believe to be of most importance, the skills that are hold to be most useful and the values that are cherish above all.

These social constructions are not made in a vacuum: they take on significance with respect to our socio-cultural horizons, The curriculum as much as any country's national constitution, both reflects and shapes these horizons. The curriculum reflects those horizons by including the development of competences that prepare young people for decent work.

Curriculum needs to be repositioned since it interprets, shapes and reflects or social imaginary. Curriculum aims are always embedded within a broader context of social relations and practices. A social imaginary is a way of thinking, shared in a society by ordinary people, it involves common understandings that make every-day

practices possible, giving them sense and legitimacy. Curriculum is also critically important in any society as it engages in a collective dialogue about what knowledge, skills and values are of such importance that they need to learn by all. The curriculum reflects our most important values and our most important purposes.

Curriculum instead of being viewed as a collection of study plans, syllabi and teaching subjects, it becomes the outcome of a process reflecting a political and societal agreement about the what, why and how education for the desired society of the future. The consensus reflected in the curriculum can potentially provide a reference framework for putting learners' welfare and development at the core of the education system. This framework can also help strengthen the links between education policy and curriculum reform, and respond more effectively to the expectations and demand of youth and society.

Curriculum could also be repositioned when there is change in social order. The school system exists in a society and the curriculum is an instrument for educating individuals in the society for their own good and the good of the society. The school curriculum is geared to transmit to individuals the societal beliefs, values, aspirations and ideals.

Dynamic nature of knowledge also necessitates curriculum repositioning. It has been widely acknowledged that knowledge is not stable but rather it is dynamic in nature. There is knowledge explosion nearly in all courses/subjects. Because of researches in knowledge, some aspects of knowledge in some subjects are now obsolete. That requires total change that should be reflected in the curriculum.

Research findings in respect of how learning occurs. Various researches in education, in psychology of learning and in intellectual development among others have revealed some new insights into how learning occurs. The research findings have had much influence on instructional methods and techniques in teaching and learning situations. It is therefore important that educational curriculum should be repositioned to care of such relevant research findings.

#### **Process of Repositioning Educational Curriculum**

Curriculum in education can be repositioned through the followings ways:

- a. Identification of the area that needs repositioning and the agreement of the need for repositioning. This will involve the curriculum experts concerned with the system to observe and study activities in the school and the society. From the study, areas that do not satisfy the needs of the learner, school and society can be identified. In this situation, suggestions for reposition will be made and agreement as to the area that needs reposition will be reached.
- b. Identification of direction of change. This means thinking out new objectives which invariably implies having new practices that will most probably meet the

identified needs. It is at this stage that better alternatives to replace old ideas requiring reposition are thought out (Ughamadu, 2002).

- c. **Designing a curriculum:** The government has to design a curriculum for various subject disciplines to be taught at the levels of educational institutions in the country: Okam (2004) Danladi (2006) agreed that the success of repositioning education in Nigeria, the government must design a curriculum which must be firmly rooted in the changing nature of knowledge, learner and the learning activities to meet the needs and aspiration of the society. Danladi (2006) reflects that, this is because "curriculum is the sum total of all learning in the schools directed and experiences offered to a child in an attempt to prepare him or her for life through training in the cognitive affective and psychomotor domains. He maintains that this will help the learners in all the levels of educational development and this assist in developing national consciousness and a sense of national unity.
- d. **Provision of Adequate Qualified teachers.** To reposition curriculum in education, the government has to provide trained teachers who are characterized by the following virtues and qualities:
  - i. Teachers who have possessed certain knowledge, understanding and perspective which are in line with the ideas of good citizenship.
  - ii. Teachers who have possessed professional skill and model techniques of the curriculum content which subscribes a mastery of certain core subject area of knowledge that are not only relevant and related to learners present life style, but necessary as a preliminary preparation to all later, knowledge acquisition and understanding their subject discipline (Adesma 1980).

Lambert (2003) reflects that, the government must build enough classrooms with furniture to provide a maximum of "40" pupils per teacher for effective classroom management and enshrine discipline on the learners. Danladi (2006) expatiates that these teachers must be given incentive motivations so as to enable them put in their best by paying their salaries on time and regular, giving them appropriate promotion to correct grade levels, granting them in-service training, organizing refresher courses which will update their skills in teaching.

- e. **Providing Information and communication technology (ICT).** According to Mbadiven (2006) information and communication technology (ICT) is a process of creating, processing, storing, retrieving and disseminating information and data using computers and tele-communication. He went on to expatiate that (ICT) embraces the use of computer Internet, electronic mail (e-mail) satellites', tele-communication, global system of mobiles (GSM) and global packet radio services (GPRS), World wide website (WWW) are the rest: Therefore, repositioning academic curriculum, the government has the task of providing computer, internet service facilities, computer laboratories, generators where



the national electricity power supply is not adequate as well as trained computer literate teachers to teach the learners.

### **Benefits of Repositioning Educational Curriculum**

Curriculum repositioning is important in that it provides adequate means with which educational practices can meet up their inherent diverse roles at any point in time. It is also important as it aims at having dynamic educational practices that are not at variance with the changing value and aspiration of the society in which the school exist. Furthermore, Curriculum repositioning in general are directed towards improving performance of the school system.

The curriculum has a key role to play in the achievement of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related to education which is listed as Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) and it is an essential means for attaining inclusive, sustainable and holistic development.

The Repositioning of Academic Curriculum for competitiveness recognizes that enrolment performance and the quality of the curriculum can both be significantly enhanced when curriculum is prepared, aligned, re-engineered, or tampered with enrolment in mind. The curriculum will facilitate enrolment while specifically locating the area of need in the educational system.

The articulation of methods recalibrates fundamental curriculum design and content to align with the enrolment structure.

Repositioning curriculum will help academics and enrolment managers to better position curriculum and programmes of study in the complex global learning market place and improving enrolment performance.

Ughamadu (2002) outlined the following as the importance of curriculum repositioning as it:

- Enables educational practices to change from time to time so as to settle the consequent changes in the society.
- Provides the means of trying new research findings.
- Enables classroom teachers to solve some instructional problems that they occasionally encountered in the teaching/learning setting.
- Enables classroom teachers to acquire new knowledge that will make them more effective and productive.

### **Factors that Influence Repositioning Educational Curriculum**

Some of the factors as outlined by Okeke (1981) includes:-

- Change in the objectives of education emanating from change in the social values, beliefs and tradition.
- Change in the nature of knowledge and content of education.
- Change in the system of education
- Change necessitated from feedback from evaluation.

The objectives of colonial education in Nigeria was found to be inadequate to cater for the needs of the society hence new objectives of education were thought of: The National Conference organized by the Nigerian educational research council due to inadequacy in the objectives of colonial education resulted in new goals and objectives of education, as embodied in the National policy on Education 1977 revised in 1981. As the existing curriculum then could not meet the new goals and objectives of education, it became a factor that necessitated for curriculum repositioning.

There is a great increase in knowledge and possible context of education, once there exist substantial in knowledge and context of education, the curriculum will obviously be affected.

The discovery of new ways of learning or organizing learning experience such as computer based learning, teaching machines; discovery methods through educational researches exert great pressure on education and the curriculum. The profound changes in the context of education, in addition to ways of organizing learning are potent factors influencing school curriculum. The Comparative Education Study and Adaptation Centre (CESAC) Lagos based their development of curriculum packages on the idea of learning by discovery.

Any change in the educational system will obviously affect the curriculum. Since the school curriculum is normally operated within a system, it is quite in order that any change in educational system will affect the curriculum. During the time Nigeria change her system of education to 6 – 3 – 3 – 4, the curriculum was also changed to a reasonable extent. If the number of years for particular level of education is increased or decreased, it must also affect the context of the curriculum. Curriculum is usually evaluated to find out whether the degree or extent of attainment of objectives by learners, the strengths and weakness of the curriculum and the total impact of the curriculum on the school system and the society in general. The feedback from such evaluation will help in taking decision in respect of whether there is need to reposition the existing curriculum or not. The feedbacks usually turn out to be a factor that influences curriculum repositioning.

#### **Recommendations**

- The curriculum should not be static but dynamic to meet the changing needs of the society.
- The curriculum should be restructure in a way that the learners will acquire relevant skills which will enable to develop not only themselves but also the society in general.
- There is need for adequate funding of Teacher Education who are at the verge of implementing the curriculum knowing fully well that national transformation depends on qualitative teacher education.

- Curriculum experts should be used in curriculum planning and repositioning in order to reflect the social cultural milieu of the society in which education is being provided, reflects the learners interest, needs, capabilities, level of development, disposition, other physical and psychological characteristics and the way they learn, reflects the skills, ideas, habit, value, patterns and other aspects of life of a given society the school is expected to transmit to the young ones.

### Conclusion

The importance of repositioning the Educational curriculum cannot be overemphasized because it is globally recognized that curriculum determined the educational system and quality of learner produced. The government has the challenge of designing an appropriate curriculum for various subject disciplines to be taught in various levels of educational institutions in the country. For the purpose of repositioning curriculum education in Nigeria and its success, the government must design a curriculum which must be firmly rooted in the changing nature of knowledge, learners and the learning activities to meet the needs and aspiration of the society.

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