THE NEED FOR ADOPTION OF RESPONSIVE CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

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Abstract

A responsive curriculum is a curriculum that is relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learners. Unfortunately, the curriculum that is in use does not address the anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learners, or it is not responsive enough to meet the technological needs of the society. Therefore, a concerted effort and a total overhauling towards our education policy is imminent at this point in time. The present curriculum enthrones western culture in our land, thereby, undermining the culture and value of different states in this nation. Our educational system and value have been raped and murdered on the altar of modernization. The Nigeria education system is in trouble; and every day it continues to dwindle and deteriorate in essence, structure and purpose. The extent of damage that has been meted on our education is too alarming. The work revealed that in order to remedy the illness with Nigeria curriculum, there is need for the adoption of responsive curriculum development and employ this curriculum strictly in Nigerian education system. It showed that amongst other features, responsive curriculum should be: integrated and interdisciplinary, authentic, learner-centered and oriented to real life situations, utilizing materials from the learner's culture, assisting the learner to develop critical thinking ability. It also revealed that for the attainment of Nigeria's development through the instrumentality of curriculum, it is imperative that curriculum designers develop a responsive curriculum whose adoption in the Nigerian schools will develop valuable human capital that is needed for economic growth and human development. In view of the study, the researchers recommended that: curriculum experts should design a curriculum that is responsive to the current needs, aspirations and problems of the people, and in line with technological advancement, Government should motivate teachers through increase in salary and allowances so as to encourage them in putting in their best in harnessing the potentials of our future generation and teachers should prepare their teaching contents/objectives by effectively utilizing materials/ideas from learner's culture.

Key Words: Adoption, Responsive Curriculum, Technological needs

Introduction

The contents of teaching and learning subjects in the Nigerian Secondary Schools, which by implication equip the learner with the capability and potential to be useful to himself and the society are contained in a well-defined and simplified teaching/learning guide called the curriculum. The curriculum has the ability to shape the learner's cognitive development such that he becomes useful to himself, express an effective living, contributes his quota in the societal development and become mastery in problem-solving.

The contemporary curriculum in use in Nigerian secondary schools which is satisfactory and functional, is the thematic approach. The settlement at thematic approach after going through the different approaches to curriculum content selection is basically to reduce overloading of content, and allow for directives from government and requests from other stakeholders in education. This is gradually being implemented. However, the minimum number of subjects to be taken by each student at various levels is still unsettled as there are strong arguments for their reduction. For the organization of content, the practice the current curriculum over the years has favoured the spiral or concentric approach, which requires a good use of experience and information of learners' readiness in class. Giving the wide ability ranges in the large classes, and the deficiency in teacher supply in schools, using this strategy to obtain maximum benefit remains a big challenge in curriculum development and implementation.

In the case of content delivering however, the guided discovery approach remains the preferred option. The method and the use of all its appropriate strategies are recommended for the learner-centered and activity-oriented programmes developed for the school system. In this connection, the intended role of the teacher as a facilitator or moderator in a class that expects proper and effective interaction, is further challenged by the presence of large number of students. The use of modern techniques involving information and communication technology (ICT) gadgets, which could ameliorate the situation, poses a further challenge in curriculum development, given our environmental context and level of technological development. Evaluation is a major concern in curriculum development; however, the provision of evaluation guide in the national for curriculum content has remained an unsettled issue. We have moved from one extreme to another; and require settling in between the extremes. This is also a challenge in our contemporary curriculum. At the tertiary education level, minimum academic standards have been established for programmes in universities, polytechnics and colleges for quality assurance. However, regular accreditation has continued in these institutions with satisfactory results; and resolving the dearth of facilities for the implementation of their programmes is a major challenge to the regulatory bodies.

The term curriculum was derived from the Latin word "*Currere*" which means running a course. According to Akubuilo (2014), curriculum is a planned and organized set of formal educational and training intentions geared towards the acquisition of pre-specified competencies. Curriculum refers to the particular course or plan of study in

a school, consisting of learning activities and assignments used to achieve course goals or standards. Curriculum is the skills, knowledge, understandings and dispositions. that students are to acquire through their instructional and extra class experiences. It refers to the lessons and academic contents taught in a school or in a specific course of program. Wikipedia (2013) views curriculum as a planned sequence of instruction, or student's experiences in terms of the educator's or schools' instructional goals. The curriculum broadly contains the different instructional objectives which the learners are unavoidably expected to grasped at the end of the lesson. It contains a well broken-down contents that ought to form the integral knowledge of performance of the said learners. This instructional objectives amongst others are properly itemized and organized based on the three educational domains of learning; cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. These domains form the basis for formulating the instructional objectives in the teaching/learning process.

However, the curriculum that is in use does not address the anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learners, or it is not responsive enough to meet the technological needs of the society. Therefore, a concerted effort and a total overhauling towards our education policy is imminent at this point in time. The present curriculum enthrones western culture in our land, thereby, undermining the culture and value of different states in this nation. Our educational system and value have been raped and murdered on the altar of modernization. The Nigeria education system is in trouble; and every day it continues to dwindle and deteriorate in essence, structure and purpose. The extent of damage that has been meted on our education is too alarming, thereby militating against the attainment of the expected objectives of school curriculum.

In order to ensure the attainment of the intended instructional objectives of school subjects' curriculum, which is expected to bring about some positive changes in the learners, subjects' curriculum must be adequately and carefully designed toward being "Responsive" and likewise be effectively implemented.

Concept of Responsive Curriculum

Responsive curriculum is a curriculum that is relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learners (Ema, 2019), Ema further stated that it is the curriculum that equips the learners for development in Information, Communication and Technology (ICT); local and global challenges of ensuring peace and resolving conflicts, devastating health problems and myriads of social, economic and political demands that stare individuals and societies frontally on daily basis. A responsive curriculum takes cognizance of vital changes and challenges in the environment and prepares the learner to meet them. Any curriculum that does not respond to the major waves of changes in the learners' environment, that is, equipping them with the competency skills of solving their current or future problems and that of the society is valueless. A responsive curriculum addresses the learners' background and recognizes their learning differences. According to Mkpa (2017), it tilts towards

curriculum diversification and transformation of secondary school curricula, and offering instructions which are responsive to students' multi-ethnic and cultural heterogeneous setting.

Curriculum emanates from peoples' life and culture, therefore, a curriculum that takes into cognizance the cultural background of the learner and the societal need, fears and worries of the individuals and the society. It tackles the immediate need of the societies especially in the face of epidemic or natural disaster. Responsive curriculum fills the gap between the old knowledge and the new technology in order to meet up with the progressive and dynamic nature of the global technology. The goals and objectives which the society seeks to achieve are made possible through the aegis of curriculum as the instrument. Emereuwa (2014) opines that planners of an Ecurriculum in a society should know generally about the society's past and present life including its future life expectations. Thus, a responsive curriculum is inevitable to achieve such a landmark in the life of any society.

Since the world is ever advancing in the area of science, and as established earlier that the societal changing demands need be met, it then becomes important to know that the responsive curriculum in use should provide scientifically the ever-changing needs, problems and aspirations of the learners. Science being an important aspect of life cannot be overlooked when designing the curriculum. Therefore, the curriculum in use should be responsive enough to capture the scientific indices which are relevant in educating the prospective learners for effective living in the society, and for effective contribution of their quotas in societal development. In the same vein, the responsive curriculum should be able to address the learners' artistical life. For the society to have a balance, the curriculum should be detailed in arts and humanities. This is because, any curriculum that has not addressed the social, mental, psychological and well-being of the learners has not delivered enough in function. This goes further to explain that responsive curriculum plays a vital role in building the social traits of the citizens for effective living.

Features of Responsive Curriculum

In identifying the characteristics of responsive curriculum, another scholar, Abdal- Haqq (2016), itemized the following as the basic features of a responsive curriculum.

1. Being integrated and interdisciplinary.
2. Being authentic, learner- centered and oriented to real life situations.
3. Utilizing materials from the learner's culture.
4. Assisting the learner to develop critical thinking ability.
5. Incorporating co-operative learning and the development of self-esteem through the application and recognition of multiple intelligence facilities.
6. Requiring receptive school climate and recognition of the power of the hidden curriculum and
7. Supportive of appropriate staff development and pre-service preparation

Integration and Interdisciplinary: Life issues and problems are multifaceted. The transcend any one discipline or subject specialization. Related issues and problems need related treatment. For instance, some social problems may not be adequately addressed by an isolated social science discipline. Given the pervasiveness and enormity of some of these problems multidimensionally. This calls for integration and interdisciplinarity in curriculum development and instructions. Social studies for instance, presented in its integrated nature, can avail the learner of a web-like approach to social, economic, political and related problems. Therefore, for the curriculum to respond adequately to the needs and problems of the learners and society as a whole, it requires the ingredient of integration.

Orientation to Learner's Real Life: One key reason for educational reforms is the need to make learning relevant to real life's encounters of the learner. A culturally responsive curriculum draws materials from the learner's culture and experience to illustrate principles and concepts (Chion-Kenney, 2014). This engenders transfer of learning. Referent situations reflective of the learner's environment are created in the classroom if the curriculum is to take cognizance of the environment of the learner in its offerings. These referent situations constitute the issues of the learner's environment reflected in the curriculum and the classroom. Making the curriculum relevant to the learner's environment is very crucial to positive learning.

Utilizing Materials/Ideas from Learner's Culture: As observed by Thomas (2017), developing countries have begun to realize that their own traditional structures, ways of communication, values and beliefs, have pivotal roles in the future of the society. He observed that the cultural heritage of most developing countries had suffered some form of neglect, attributable to their drive to modernize their educational systems, looking mostly to the west which has a different cultural environment. By so doing, he observed, these governments hope that more up-to--methods of teaching and learning will give them a competitive edge and eventually lead to a greater economic success.

Development of Critical Thinking Ability: The enormity of social, economic and political problems confronted by societies daily makes it almost imperative that learners develop skills if critical thinking and analysis. It is a problem-solving device that has become very crucial in today's world. So, a responsive curriculum contains contents and methods that can help the learner develop problem-solving capacities.

Co-Operative Learning and Utilization of Multiple Intelligence and Learning Styles: Co-operative learning is promised on the belief and evidence that shared responsibility and interaction can produce positive feelings towards tasks and others, generate better inter-group relations and result in better self-image and learning (Joyce & Weil, 2020). They observed that "a democratic society requires that we work together to understand each other's world and develop a shared perspective that will enable us to learn from each other and govern ourselves while preserving a pluralistic reality". Again, multiple intelligence facilities and learning styles are required for learners to

respond properly to diverse demands from the social and physical environment. In learners' inter-group and inter-group relations, various learning styles are exhibited and should be accommodated.

Supportive Staff Development and Pre-Service Preparations: Global political, economic, social and technological changes have made it expedient to examine present staff development policies in the school system in the developing nations vis-a-vis these changes. For instance, what proportion of serving teachers are computer literate? Can source materials from the web or internet be used efficiently? Or can teachers do power point presentations? What programmes are in place to expose them to emerging technological and social demands of the time? These are some of the challenges that necessitate educational reforms that involve developing curricula that can respond to key societal demands. The teacher therefore must be versatile to be able to implement a responsive curriculum.

Issues in Developing Responsive Curriculum

Responsive curriculum is often associated with making curriculum reflective of the learner's culture both at the developmental and implementation stages. Notable among the issues to be considered in developing responsive curriculum include the following:

1. An understanding of the environment of the learner, the current and anticipated social-cultural, political, economic and technological circumstances, changes, needs and problems of the learners and society. An in-depth study of the learner's cultural environment is a necessary starting point in developing a responsive curriculum.
2. The selection or modification of educational objectives to reflect the current and future needs and problems of the society.
3. Selecting contents that are consistent with emergent and anticipated needs e.g. curriculum contents on Sex/AIDS education, peace and conflict resolution, ICT, population issues, economic survival and ethnic issues.
4. Identification of the strategies to be adopted for Implementation of the curriculum. This also involves creating an appropriate classroom atmosphere that takes into consideration learners' different backgrounds, learning styles and educational interest.
5. Selection of relevant resources for the implementation of the responsive curriculum. The resources should be culturally relevant. What may engender learning in a particular environment, say Europe, may produce negative result in another environment, say an African environment.
6. The instructional materials used in Implementing responsive curriculum should overcome the subtle pitfalls that Chion-Kenney (2014) observed are found in some curriculum materials: fragmentation and isolation, invisibility, selectivity and imbalance, stereotyping, and language bias.

7. Evaluation of the processes and outcomes of learning: it's expected that he criteria of evaluation are adhered to in responsive curriculum evaluation.

To achieve a better education for everyone, curriculum planners and policy makers must adopt the principles of recognizing, complexity, diversity and need for action at all levels of education and in cooperation and synergy with promising trends in order to make education available and accessible to all. We should not narrow down our educational activities to the classroom only, so as not to continue producing ill-equipped graduates with little or no practical aspect of the education that can help them perform optimally when faced with the realities of life. Nigeria lacks internal mobility to improve her economic development. This internal mobility can be achieved through diversification of the curriculum in terms of expanding the present curriculum in use to include entrepreneurial education, ICT and all manner of science and technical skills needed by new work place organization. An all-embracing subject matter curriculum at all levels of our education will equip school graduates with the necessary skills to contribute to nation building. The overarching strategy is to improve access and quality of education and make it more relevant to productive activities, value-orientation, employment generation and wealth creation. This implies critical reappraisal of the curriculum in use to produce answers to the prevailing problems (Ukwungwu, 2015). He went further to say that, "curriculum diversification can fill this gap created by inadequacy of the present curriculum.

The Role of the Teacher in Responsive Curriculum Implementation

In as much there's urgent need for the adoption of the above curriculum, the work of the teacher in curriculum implementation cannot be over emphasized. It is the teacher that executes these curriculum activities/curriculum actions/documents and so, the teacher and the curriculum move side by side. This implies that one cannot discuss elaborately on responsive curriculum without the mention of the teacher who is the curriculum implementer. As a curriculum implementer, it follows that the teacher is the one who brings the curriculum documents to limelight and to reality. Another name for the teacher is curriculum implementer. The teacher is one who translates the curriculum document into operating curriculum through a joint effort of hers/his, the learners and other interest groups as viewed by Mkpa (2017).

Stenhouse (2015) identifies the teachers as the key factors in curriculum implementation. Stenhouse submitted that curriculum implementation refers to how the planned curriculum is translated by the classroom teacher into syllabus, schemes of work and lessons to be delivered to the students. In order words, teachers are the key agents in the implementation process. This implies that the task of implementing the curriculum lies on the teacher. The teacher does not just implement the content as it is, rather he breaks the content into teachable units. Precisely what comes to the teacher is not the curriculum plan rather the syllabus which he breaks down to get the scheme of work,

down to the unit of plan and finally to the lesson plan which is being used daily in his/her teaching.

Justification for the Adoption of Responsive Curriculum in Nigeria

Students learn better in their own culture and language and not in a borrowed culture. More so, any curriculum that undermines the background of the learner, goals and objectives of the society does not worth it. Culturally valued knowledge has to do with the inclusion of knowledge that is relevant to the student's life. More so, it is through education that development comes to a society. The more educated or learned a society is, the more developed she is. That Nigeria is among the developing nation of the world is because of little or no attention paid to responsive curriculum which resulted to gross illiteracy and production of half-baked graduates found in the country.

However, in order to remedy the illness with Nigeria curriculum, there is need for the adoption of responsive curriculum development and employ this curriculum strictly in Nigeria's educational system. A curriculum that is responsive is one that tackles the problem of the society and gets it solved over a period of time. Moreover, the problem of the society is the problem of the learner. Consequently, curriculum designed to eradicate those anomalies in the mind of the learner is ad-rem to the messed educational system. Curriculum that addresses nation building, integrity and nobility, a curriculum that will unravel and expose the big elephant (corruption) in the wardrobe of education industry and its system, this kind of responsive curriculum should be introduced as well as mandate it upon every student starting from lower basic to upper basic levels of education. Because early years/primary education is the foundation so if the foundation is wrong, every other thing will be wrong. Responsive curriculum should be intensified in our school system. Our educational system is under siege because of the type of curriculum in use. A curriculum that is void of affective and psychomotor domain and upholds only cognitive domain cannot equip student in this era of industrialization. Curriculum according to Idu, as quoted by Orakpo (2016), "Our curriculum is too vague and nobody wants to admit that the reason we are having high unemployment is because of our curriculum. We don't prepare students towards specific industries. So many things are not relevant to the industry in our curriculum. When you leave out the applied aspect of a subject, how do you expect the students to cope at the end of the day? The curriculum should be designed to meet national needs, and we need a working curriculum. What we have now in Nigerian education sector is not workable, it is still way behind and incomplete. That is to say that the product of an education system, should after undergoing the curricular experiences, should be able to adjust well and fit into the society and even make something better out of the society i.e. ability to reconstructing the society (Izuagba, 2013).

In addition, the onus lies on curriculum experts to design a curriculum that is responsive to the needs of the people. Emah (2019) refers to a responsive curriculum as one that is relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems, and aspirations of the

learners. It is based on the changes in the learner's world or cultural milieu. In agreement, Law (2014) observes that global and community requirement for education includes the promotion of life-long education, re-emphasizing the quality of learner's experiences, re-organizing subjects into key learning areas so as to develop broad knowledge base, developing in learners the ability to think critically and be innovative, and having rising levels of professionalism among teachers. It could then be said that a responsive curriculum which is one that is living up to expectation, must assist the products of the Nigerian education system to appreciate the demands of the social goals, respond properly to economic realities and be able to face current and future life challenges.

Extending the aforesaid to the technological needs of the prospective learners and the society at large, it important to note that the learning environment is dynamic than ever before. As a result, today's students learn in ways that are different from how educational system was originally designed. With the advancement in Artificial Intelligence and the rise of remote/hybrid learning, the idea of the classroom is being remodeled and refined in number of ways to fit the evolving needs of modern digital learners. Based on this, many higher education institutions are substituting traditional resources with educational technologies to keep up with their digital learning. Hence, the technological needs of responsive curriculum among others include: distill actionable insights from the students' comment with AI, access to information and resources, connects the classroom experience to the real world, and prepare students for the modern workplace.

Adoption of Responsive Curriculum in Nigeria

That Nigeria is among the developing nations of the world is because of gross illiteracy that is found in the country. What then is the problem with Nigerian education system, that since the inception of formal education we are still grappling in gross illiteracy and under development? What could have been the cause of such dwindling situation in the Nigerian education industry? Is it the system, the curriculum or the method of teaching?

The educational system in Nigeria has experienced deterioration since the independent till date. The state of education has worsened to the extent that one can confidently say that no epoch has experienced the kind of dilapidation in the education industry like ours. Education in Nigeria has experienced over the years quantitative growth without complementary quality, (Edokpolo, 2011).

In the Nigerian educational system, the curriculum that is in use does not address the issue at stake or it is not responsive enough to the need of the society. Therefore, a concerted effort and a total overhauling towards our education policy is imminent at this point in time. This factor is very germane in the sense that relevant stakeholders will parley to redesign our policy in such a way that each State or Local Government will have their cherished values embellished into the school curriculum (Edokpolo, 2011). The present curriculum enthrones western culture in our land, thereby, undermining the

culture and value of different states in this nation. Our educational system and value have been raped and murdered on the altar of modernization. By now, responsive curriculum that will address endemic social vices like corruption, intimidation by the so-called politicians and government officials, lack of equal right and justice, extortion, bribery, public fund embezzlement and the likes that rear their ugly heads in different ways and in different levels in education industry is quite very necessary.

The Nigeria education system is in trouble; and every day it continues to dwindle and deteriorate in essence, structure and purpose. The extent of damage that has been meted on our education is too alarming. It may not be far from the truth to say that Nigeria is plagued by so many evils today due to her comatose education sector. It's high time we all stopped apportioning blames as to who did what to bring Nigeria's education sector to her knees. Having enumerated the problems to include poor teacher training, low quality education, poor funding, high teacher/students ratio, inadequate schools, curriculum, wrong policies, poor teachers' remuneration, poor infrastructure etc., this is the time to get to work. (Orakpo, 2016). Therefore, we need to employ responsive curriculum strictly in Nigeria's educational system.

According to an empiricist philosopher, Francis Bacon "knowledge is power". Knowledge comes from education even though there is innate (derived from constitution of intellect), for one to be knowledgeable one must be educated. Therefore, no nation develops beyond the level of her education. Any positive change in the society always comes from the fruit of education. Therefore, the curriculum of any nation is the pivot of development because it is through the curriculum that the need (aims, goals and objectives) of the nation is transformed into learning experience. It then follows that for the attainment of Nigeria's development through the instrumentality of curriculum, it is imperative that curriculum designers develop a responsive curriculum which when adopted in the Nigerian schools will develop valuable human capital that is needed for economic growth and human development (Onyemesim, 2015). It will encourage indigenous production and manufacturing of local goods and raw materials. This will in turn minimize the rate of brain drain in the society. Thus, the skilled, experts and qualified professionals will no longer impoverish the nation through exportation of their skill and expertise to other countries. Corruption is a cankerworm in any society and this has eating our country Nigeria down. A responsive curriculum development should in all ramification address in her structure of learning experience the endemic epidemic in our country. If the younger generations are taught the vices and implications, consequences and penalties of corruption early enough it will go a long way to serve as a deterrent. Hence, the need for the adoption of responsive curriculum in Nigeria.

Conclusion

In a bid to produce an effective subject teaching and learning guide in the Nigerian Schools, which by implication will equip the learner with the capability, skills and potentials to be useful to himself and the society at large, it is high time we critically

look into our education industry not only to sanitize the system but also to determine the type and model of curriculum that will be employed in the education system. Responsive Curriculum Development is a panacea to these myriads of problems. The problem of lack of sanity in the educational system can be solved through a pragmatic curriculum. A curriculum that tackles the problem of the learner, the needs, fears and worries of the society is what the Nigerian educational system needs. This will bring national development because as far as nation's development is involved education plays a major role. The more educated Nigerians are the faster our economy grows and our society civilized. A functional education must cater for the needs and aspirations of the nation. In this era of knowledge explosion, diverse needs and interest of the learner and the society, there is a pressing need on the curriculum to meet up the challenge. This can effectively be achieved by designing a curriculum that will take care of these needs' areas. It should be constructed in such a way that there must be integrative and interdisciplinary teaching and learning acquired from one area to solve many other problems facing them in life. The skills acquired must have utility value. The learners should acquire skills that will make them useful to themselves and the society. In order to develop competent skills, attitudes and knowledge base on critical and constructive thinking, the curriculum should be embracing, diversified and responsive to any change. This will enable the learners to adopt and adapt easily to any changing situation. The curriculum should relate to the needs of the society and skills acquisition should be emphasized. It should also be relevant to the current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learners. It's based on the occurrence and changes in the learner's world or cultural milieu.

A responsive curriculum should be properly and carefully considered and designed if ever our Nigerian Schools will be counted upon as being effective in the development and producing of sound graduates who would be useful to themselves and the society at large. Given the indisputable benefits of responsive curriculum, it's very necessary for developing countries like Nigeria to tailor their educational reforms to their peculiar cultural needs and aspirations, instead of employing imported reforms whole-hog. This view does not discountenance the credibility of some technological development in the world, but a sieving process is necessary if the main fabrics of our cultural heritage and values are not to be substantially eroded. Hence, the need for the adoption of responsive curriculum in Nigeria.

Recommendations

In view of the above discussion, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Curriculum planners and policy makers must adopt the principles of recognizing complexity, diversity and need for action at all levels of education and in cooperation and synergy with promising trends in order to make education available and accessible to all. We should not narrow down our educational activities to the classroom only, so as not to continue producing ill-equipped

graduates with little or no practical aspect of the education that can help them perform optimally when faced with the realities of life.

2. Curriculum experts should design a curriculum that is responsive to the current needs, aspirations and problems of the people.
3. Government should motivate teachers through increase in salary and allowances so as to encourage them in putting in their best in harnessing the potentials of our future generation.
4. Teachers should prepare their teaching contents/objectives by effectively utilizing materials/ideas from learner's culture.

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