

Need For Managing Secondary School Curriculum Reforms In Nigeria For Enhancing Equity And Globalization

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Abstract: The world is a state of natural forces, social, economic and political changes with rapid scientific and technological advancement. Nigeria, as one of the nations of the world must also respond fast, preferably and proactively to the changes in order to avert future crisis. As Nigeria is becoming more interconnected and interdependent, regular curriculum review in line with new competencies, standards and trends in both regional and international levels is mandatory as it is the practice in most educational systems of the world as a way of coping with these changes and challenges. Effective management is a gateway to the successful management and institutionalization of curriculum change in order to achieve the desired goals. This Paper examines systematically the important issues of managing secondary school curriculum reforms in Nigeria towards enhancing effectiveness, efficiency, equity and relevance in globalization.

I. INTRODUCTION

The curriculum can be broadly defined as a reflection of the kind of society to which we aspire (core objectives, concepts); the pedagogical and administrative action plans of an education system (frameworks, structures, supports); an interactive, non-linear and dynamic tool and process of pedagogical development (pedagogy, disciplinary content, didactic strategies, assessment, learning outcomes, encompassing the design and management of the curricula (IBE-UNESCO, 2010).

Nigeria, as one of the nations of the world, is experiencing both socio-economic and political changes. As the immediate needs of human beings change with globalization and its attendant challenges and consequences, existing curriculum must also change so as to bring about a dynamic adaptation. Such curriculum review efforts must put into consideration new knowledge, competencies standards and trends both regional and international while meeting the immediate needs and priorities of the targeted people. The

process of curriculum reform is a complex one. Schaeffer (1990) has reported that there is nothing easy about the process of change and nowhere is this more the case than in education, yet in no other fields are innovations and curriculum reforms greatly needed. Effective and successful implementation and institutionalization of curriculum review depends on effective management of procedures. Therefore, this paper discusses curriculum reforms and globalization, curriculum review and equity and how proper management could lead to the achievement of desired curriculum reform in the age of globalization.

II. CURRICULUM REFORM AND GLOBALIZATION

Globalization has made the whole world to be looked at as a single community. The internet, satellite television, cellular telephones and other advancements in telecommunications, air travels, containerized shipments, and online business transactions and so on have really helped to

make the world a global village and a fast changing place. Globalization is also gradually breaking down educational barriers, although local or national differences still remain.

If curriculum is a process of preparing children for a living and life in their own societies and for competition in the global economy of tomorrow (UNESCO-II CBA, 2002), then it is only logical that secondary school curriculum, both formal and informal, contents and processes should be dynamic enough to adapt to the new socio-economic, political, scientific and technological realities of times. The curriculum must begin then to reflect issues of globalization. In other words, globalization will have to be infused into the curriculum and this should affect the teaching/learning processes of curriculum development, as well as the funding, and management of secondary education.

Although our secondary school curriculum appears to have been overloaded as it now stands because of the number of subjects each student offers, there is the need to infuse global issues into the curriculum. This may imply the elimination of certain curriculum requirements, increasing the scope and depth of certain subjects and adoption of new programs.

Fortunately, the Nigerian national policy on education (NPE) recognizes the dynamic nature of the world we live in and the need for the curriculum to also continually change to reflect this world dynamism. For instance, in section 5 (22) (b) of the policy, it stated that secondary education shall “offer diversified curriculum to cater for the differences in talents, opportunities and future roles”. Similarly, the overall philosophy of Nigerian nation includes “promoting inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding (NPE, 2004, section (2b). One of the national goals which have been endorsed as necessary foundation for the national policy on education is building of “a land full of bright opportunities for all citizens (NPE, 2004, sec. 1 (e)). The Nigeria’s philosophy of education believes in the “full integration of the individual into the community”, and that “school programs need to be relevant, practical and comprehensive”.

The above provisions in the national policy on education can be said to have envisioned elements of globalization. Some realities or issues of globalization that our secondary school curriculum should reflect include, knowledge explosion; rapid scientific and technological development; health issues and new diseases such as bird flu; HIV/AIDS prevention; ecological and global environmental degradation; spread of democratic values; world economic meltdown; increasing conflicts and conflict resolution skills and rapid advances in information and communication technologies. Our curriculum must assist our children to acquire current knowledge and skills in these areas so that they can compete not only in their local society but also in the global market place which has become everyone’s community today.

Globalization has implications for the teaching – learning process, assessment, and classroom management. The best practices in these areas should be adopted. For example, learning should be individualized, class sizes greatly reduced, critical thinking, the inquiry method, problem-solving and student-centered approaches should be adopted. Furthermore, team teaching and team activities should be emphasized. In

this cyber-world, the internet should be used to support collaborative teaching and learning.

The scope and depth of pre-vocational, non-prevocational, and core courses in both junior and secondary schools will have to be enriched. For instance sexuality education, human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) prevention, bird flu and many others can be incorporated in non-vocational electives such as health education and made a required course for all students. A course titled “global studies” should be incorporated in the school curriculum and made a core course. The role of the teacher on the whole, will have to change from that of imparting knowledge to facilitating learning – helping the learner “learn how to learn”. The school hours per day and the number of school days in a year and provision of more infrastructures in terms of quantity and quality will have to be provided for schools. All these have financial implications and demand political will and commitment on the part of governments and the private sector in adequately funding secondary education in Nigeria.

III. CURRICULUM REFORMS AND EQUITY

The concept of equity, firstly, is not synonymous with equality of educational opportunity neither is it a negation of the principles of educational universalization or democratization. Equity in the management of curriculum reforms is hinged on the provision and management of curriculum resources and structures in accordance with the peculiar needs of the learner in his environment. The needs of the learner are determined by the nature of programs of study, the level of education, the community needs of the learner and of course the national policy on education.

Several research studies (Bray, 2004) have shown that in regions and countries where the will to provide quality education is present, adequate resources are equitably provided for effective curriculum development, implementation and management. School materials including books and writing materials are provided in adequate quality and quality. Children are conveyed to and from school in buses with hot lunch given to pupils during break. In other countries, particularly the developing nations, findings show (Ikoya 2015) that the struggle to provide classroom accommodation and books for pupils still appear insurmountable.

To promote equity in the management of curriculum reforms in a pluralistic country like as Nigeria, certain factors should be considered. These include.

- ✓ Learners community needs
- ✓ Ecological environment
- ✓ Resource availability
- ✓ Mental, physical and environmental challenges facing learner

In general, there is a widespread belief that most learners return to their communities upon graduation to develop their areas of origin. As a result of this, counties are becoming more interested in how curriculum management can be beneficial to the communities hence in some regions, community members want to play more active roles in the development of national

school curriculum policies. Such desires are even more relevant in a culturally diverse nation like Nigeria where economic aspirations and methods for achieving goals are very diverse.

Curriculum reforms should be effectively managed to cater for and meet the needs of the herdsmen in the north as well as those of migrant fishermen of the riverine Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Thus universalizing curriculum management reforms in a pluralistic society could result in dissonance.

Another important factor to consider in curriculum reform management is the resource available to learner's communities and this is closely linked to the ecological condition of the environment. Equity demands that in an environment where access to education possesses a serious problem, more funds should be expended there rather than other terrain with less ecological constrain. For instance, funds for building a six unit classroom block in a swampy riverine community cannot be equal to doing the same on a rocky soil in Biu area of Borno state, Nigeria. Equity recognizes that in the management of curriculum reform both the mentally and physically challenged learners are catered for through the provision of necessary infrastructure and teaching and learning materials to assist them develop their potentials to the best they are capable of.

IV. MANAGING CURRICULUM REFORM

Any form of curriculum reform, change, or innovation or renovation, whether piecemeal or holistic, can be exciting and equally complex. The environment for curriculum reform may be antagonistic, neutral or supportive. Successful management of curriculum reform is most likely when a school administrator adopts an appropriate form of leadership style. Levine (1978), for instance, recommended that in an antagonistic environment, an authoritarian leadership style is most appropriate but such school administrator must be competent, political and personally charismatic with strong government backing. The tactic for implementing change is by imposition. In a neutral environment, Levine is of the view that successful reform can best be introduced by participative leadership style and building of a coalition of opinion leaders. In a supportive environment, a democratic leadership style is recommended and consensus is the tactic for implementing change.

The education research literature on curriculum innovation and change show that leadership is of paramount importance in the implementation of change (Bennett, 1996; Kearsley and Lynch, 1992). While these authors agree with Levine (1978) that the right leadership behavior is fundamental to successful curriculum reform, this paper is of the view that transformational leadership is critical to the institutionalization, successful management and implementation of curriculum reforms irrespective of the environment in the globalization age. It argues that whether curriculum innovation is a success or failure depends very much on the effectiveness of the school administrators such as school principals who implement the curriculum reforms.

In essence, therefore, the effective institutionalization and successful management of curriculum reforms is dependent on strong leadership style. Such school administrators are able to build and provide the necessary support mechanisms for change. These mechanisms include meticulous planning, involvement of teachers, students, and other core stakeholders in decision making and building consensus on how to make the implementation of the curriculum innovation work. It involves establishment of a climate of mutual trust and respect for people, staff capacity building through in service professional development, of support to staff, establishment and use of school curriculum implementation and monitoring committees, and the appointment of a school curriculum change agent. It also entails judicious and prudent utilization of available resources including finances and promotion of team work. Jones (2002) considers the use of incentives as one important way by which school principals can promote and sustain curriculum reform.

V. CONCLUSION

Curriculum change is a complex process and successfully managing the curriculum is even a more complex problem. The management of curriculum reform should recognize right from the onset that the innovation may be good bringing about "progress and improvement" in the education system and equality of its products, or may be bad because it may be disruptive and not achieve its intended goals. The management should also anticipate and address some types of resistance to curriculum change and implementation and recognize that depending on the situation, slight modifications in the elements of the overall change management strategy are necessary while the transformational leadership style remains adopted.

Managing secondary school curriculum for equity in this globalization age implies not only fair distribution of quality educational facilities among rural and urban schools, enrichment of the curriculum and involvement of stakeholders in the curriculum re-engineering process but also supportive mechanisms. This mechanism can best be provided by school administrators who have become transformational leaders and who use their leadership style to inspire subordinates, colleague workgroups, superiors and other stakeholders in accomplishing the renewal process and the desired outcome.

It is therefore recommended that all secondary school administrators should engage in staff development activities in transformational leadership so that they can acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and other attributes of this leadership style.

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