

# The Challenges of Curriculum Implementation in Nigeria

## Teacher Education

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### Abstract

The importance of teachers to the socioeconomic development of any nation cannot be overemphasized. This is because teachers are responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies, curriculum or course offerings. Teacher education therefore constitutes a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, formal and non-formal subsystems. Conversely, the policy that all teachers in educational institutions should be professionally trained appears to be the most unfulfilled goal or policy as teachers from pre-primary to the university level remain largely untrained. In effect, the teacher education program appears not to prepare teachers to meet up with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this paper, effort was geared towards taking a cursory look at the challenges that has bedeviled the curriculum implementation in Nigerian teacher education institutions. It was therefore recommended amongst other things that a balance in the content of teacher education be established in terms of academic and professional content, selection of suitably qualified candidates for teacher education programmed, professionalization of teaching by the Teachers Registration Council (TRC), and adequately equipping teacher training institutions.

**Keywords:** Curriculum implementation, Challenges, Teacher education.

### 1. Introduction

The importance of teachers and teacher education cannot be gainsaid. The Federal Government of Nigeria (FRN, 2004), through the National Policy on Education states that no education system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Teachers are largely responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies, curriculum or course offerings, instructional materials packages and assessment of learning outcome at the level of the learners (Maduwesi, 2005). According to Osuji (2009), Teacher Education refers to professional education of teachers towards attainment of attitudes, skills and knowledge considered desirable so as to make them efficient and effective in their work in accordance with the needs of the society at any point in time. It includes training/education occurring before commencement of service (pre-service) and education/training during service (in-service or on – the – job). Teacher education therefore constitutes a conspicuous element in the totality of organized education, formal and non – formal sub – systems.

Lassa (1995) posited that the critical role of the teacher in formal education is to initiate learning process, facilitate learning skills, co-ordinate learning sequence, assess learning efficiency and indeed pivot the entire educational development. These fundamental functions can only be effectively discharged where the teacher possesses all the necessary traits, characteristics and professional competence.

Moreover, Omojuwa (2007) asserted that education plays a fundamental role in national development, so does teacher education in the success of any education system. The teacher is a critical resource for effective implementation and realization of educational policy and objectives at the practical level of the classroom. It is the teacher who ultimately interprets and implements the policy as represented in the school curriculum, which is designed to actualize educational goals. The obvious implication of this situation is the fact that the quality of a nation's education can only be as high as the quality of its teachers which is a function of teacher education.

Conversely, Udofot (2005) postulated that the policy that all teachers in educational institutions shall be professionally trained appears to be the most unfulfilled goal or policy as teachers from pre – primary to the university level remain largely untrained. Similarly, Ekpo (2010) stated that deficiencies exist in teacher Education programme as the curriculum does not adequately equip the student teachers with skills in self evaluation, leadership, communication, problem solving computer application, research and individualized learning techniques. In effect, the teacher education curriculum appears not to be related to the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century teachers in the field. Majority of the teachers appear not prepared for new challenges and new roles that are apparent in a dynamic world such as ours.

### 2. The Concept of Curriculum Implementation

According to extant literatures, the term curriculum implementation has been defined in different ways by different scholars. According to Inyang – Abia and Umoren (1995), curriculum implementation can be defined as the delivery state in the curriculum process where all the relevant curriculum inputs are brought in direct

contact with the target audience such a way that through a variety of activities, learning experience and mastery can be maximally achieved at minimal cost. Ivowi (2004) defined curriculum implementation in summary as the translation of theory into practice or proposal into action. Mezieobi (1993:67) defined curriculum implementation as putting a plan, scheme, decision, proposal, intension and agreement, policy or idea into effect. Olofu (2003) defined curriculum implementation as valid actions (through participation, resources provision or creating enabling environment) in the execution of planned programme or translating theory into practice with a view of yielding expected results. Esu, Eukoha and Umoren (1998) refers to curriculum implementation as the execution or putting into effect of a curriculum plan or programme. Okebukola (2004) described curriculum implementation as the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. Onyeachu (2008) defined curriculum implementation as the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combined effort of the teacher, learners, school administrators, parents, as well as interaction with the physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environment.

### **3. The Goals of Teacher Education in Nigeria**

According to the National Policy on Education (2004), teacher education is the education given to the would-be teachers before entering into the teaching profession This implies that any person who wants to take teaching as a career must receive a specialized teacher training institutions. Therefore, as contained in the National Policy on Education (2004) the goals are to:

Produce highly motivated conscientious and efficient classroom teachers for all levels of our education system;

- a) to encourage further the spirit of enquiry and creativity in teachers;
- b) helps teachers fit into the social life of the community and society at large and enhance their commitment to national goals;
- c) provide teachers with intellectual and professional background adequate for their assignment and make them adaptable to changing situation;
- d) enhance teacher's commitment to the teaching profession.(p39)

### **4. Challenges of the Effective Implementation of the Curricular Goals of Teacher Education**

A curriculum, however beautifully planed it may be, will be of no relevance if it is not implemented. It is therefore important that curriculum be duly implemented. An implementation process will begin with a critical consideration of all means of making it work. Mkpa (2005) confirms that the implemented curriculum determines the extent to which educational objectives are achieved. Curriculum implementation is therefore a serious exercise whose success lies squarely on the shoulders of the classroom teacher (Afangideh, 2009).

Therefore, the Teacher education curriculum in Nigeria has been far from realization because of some of the following implementation challenges:

#### **4.1 The curriculum of Teacher Education**

According to Udofot (2000), the curriculum of teacher education tends to create some confusion in establishing the difference between General studies and studies related to students intended field of study as both studies are academic in nature. This illustrates an apparent imbalance between the emphasis placed on the development of academic competence and professional skills in Nigeria initial teacher education programme. Similarly, Thomson (1981), noted that because most students in African countries often arrive in school with inadequate standard of general education, much more time is spent on teaching them academic subjects. Teacher education curricula in Africa including Nigeria have therefore been criticized as being "Monstrously" overloaded, often with academic content some of which is of doubtful value to the teacher in his classroom (Hawes, 1979:133).

##### **4.1.2 Initial Teacher recruitment and training**

According to Ekpo (2010), the making of a teacher starts from recruitment. The selection and recruitment for any profession is always crucial to the attainment of its goals. Ukeje (1986) observed that the production, in sufficient numbers of knowledgeable, skillful, competent, committed properly oriented and positively motivated teachers in a period of extreme materialism and unprecedented rapid educational expansion in not an easy task. In Nigeria, the younger generation finds teaching very unattractive and will only select it when and where they cannot find a "better" alternative.

Omojuwa (2007) opined that the quality of candidates being admitted into teacher training programmes in recent times appears to have dropped at an alarming level. Generally, it seems that a good number of candidates going into teacher training programmes these days would probably not been there if they had an alternative. Conversely, Lassa (2000) noted that in the United Kingdom, applicants must be seen to possess certain personal qualities and characteristics before they are admitted for training. In most Nigerian Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics, students admissions are based on obtaining the minimum academic requirements while other requirements such as emotional ability, physical uprightness and communication proficiency are hardly given consideration. Those recruited into teacher education programmes are generally of

poor quality (Udofot, 2005). This of course constitute a challenge to the implementation of teacher education curriculum in Nigeria.

Moreover, the low quality of teachers produced through in-service training by the National Teachers' Institute (N. T. I.) is a serious challenge to teacher education curriculum implementation. Mkpa (2005) laments that the products of N. T. I by the Distance Learning system who form the bulk of the teaching personnel at the basic education levels are intellectually incapable to handle the academic or professional teaching task. The quality of their spoken and written English Language is embarrassingly poor and yet, these are the persons into whose incompetent hands the nation is placing the academic destiny of Nigerian children.

#### 4.1.3 Non – professionalization of Teaching

The status of teaching as a profession often questioned by critics. This is due to the infiltration of untrained people in the teaching profession. (Dare, 2011). Today, many still see teaching as an easy job that can be done by any body without any special training. The fact that teaching has not been fully professionalized like the Medicine and Law constitute a serious challenge to the implementation of the teacher education curriculum in Nigeria. Maduewesi (2005:36) submitted that that the quantity and quality of teachers fell far short of national expectations and needs and as of now, inadequate teacher preparation and dwindling enrolment of pre – service teachers remain a big issue in curriculum Implementation.

#### 4.1.4 Inadequate Funding

Adequate allocation of fund is necessary for successful implementation of teacher education curriculum. Dare (2004) stated that, due to political consideration and the high rate of inflation, the realization of the objectives of teacher education programme in the country tends to be unrealistic due to poor funding of the educational sector. Again, the problem of corruption and mismanagement of the limited available financial resources which is very common among the policy makers and implementers is also a bane on the effective implementation of the objectives of teacher education in Nigeria. Similarly, Lawani (2007) noted that inadequate funding for teacher education programme constitute a challenge to the implementation of teacher education curriculum in Nigeria. There is paucity of funds for the training and re-training of teachers. Lack of funds has led to inadequate infrastructural facilities in some of the Faculties and Colleges of Education. Underfunding also reflects in lack of current textbooks, journals, materials. All of these are impediments to effective teacher preparation programmes.

#### 4.1.5 Globalization and insufficient Knowledge of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Ekpo and Ekukinam (2006) carried out a need assessment analysis to ascertain the nature of training gaps in teacher education programmes (TEP). This study involved thirty (30) secondary schools teachers sampled from three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State. The result of the analysis revealed various gaps, as teachers in the sample lacked the basic information and computer technology skills needed for the implementation of the school curriculum. In line with the above, Osokoya (2010) observed that globalization in the era of ICT is a major challenge to the implementation of teacher education curriculum. The knowledge and use of computer is a necessity for all teachers to be relevant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Teachers need to be trained and re-trained in ICT as the world is becoming a global village. For our future teachers to operate effectively and efficiently, they must imbibe the new technologies and methodologies of the modern times. The question is; how many of ICT facilities are available in our teacher training institutions; few and where available lack of power supply.

### 5. Conclusion

From the forgoing discourse, these is no gainsaying the fact that no meaningful progress can take place in any educational system without high quality, devoted and competent teachers in the system. Teachers' training is an important factor for teachers' effectiveness and students' achievement. There is therefore need to property train teachers as this is sacrosanct for the success of any educational system.

### 6. Recommendations.

- There is also the need to establish balance in the content of teacher education. Balance in terms of academic and professional content of the Teacher Education Programme (TEP). Relevance is also another issue. The content of the TEP should be made to be relevant to the emerging needs and challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Selection of suitably qualified candidate is a crucial factor in teacher's preparation programme that must not be ignored if Nigeria is committed to ensuring the quality and effectiveness of teacher education institutions. If the foundation is weak, the final output will equally be weak.
- Teaching profession should be fully professionalized without further delay. There is still a general belief that anyone can teach anything. The authority concerned especially the Teacher Registration Council (TRC) should do all it can to professionalize teaching.

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