



Issues and Challenges of Tertiary/ Higher Education Curriculum Change in Nigeria

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Abstract: *The right to education means educational opportunity must be both equal and universal. Throughout its existence, member state of UNESCO has sought to expand the reach of educational services and improve their quality. Its commitment to innovation, notably through the use of technology, is equally longstanding. Educational progress in many developing countries like Nigeria faces a severe double bind. This opposing trend puts intolerable pressures on Nigerian's educational system. Traditional expansion on educational system will be impossible, so there is need for enriching the higher education curriculum to meet with the twenty-first century challenges through new resources such as skill acquisition, innovation, creativity and new methods. Impressive advance in technology over the past few years provide new hope that technological solutions, innovation and creativity intelligently applied, can allow greater access, higher quality and low cost per learner. This paper seeks highlight the issues and challenges of tertiary/higher education curriculum change in Nigeria. It looks at how technology can promote improvement in reach and delivery, content, learning outcomes, teaching and pertinence. It is a contribution to global reflection on how to make learning throughout life a reality through the enriching of higher education curriculum to meet these challenges.*

Key words: *Issues and challenges, Education, Higher/Tertiary education, Curriculum and Curriculum change.*

INTRODUCTION

Perceptions on the essence of tertiary education (university education) vary amongst individuals, groups and nations. The variation is even more visibly intriguing in Nigeria. Oyeneye, O.Y. (2006) believes that students and parents, access to university education is largely viewed as a gateway to better paying jobs and higher quality of life. In the far past, besides being a status symbol, to be a university graduate was of instances in which employers went round the campuses to attract prospective graduates to their employments. University education was a life-changing factor. But

to the governments of modern societies, the essence of tertiary education is more deep-seated.

It is believed and in fact globally acknowledged that tertiary education is the hub of nation-building, national growth and development. Udida, L.A. & Co (2012) opined that as citadel of knowledge, tertiary education remains the prim over of innovation through teaching and research. Countries that have been able to create and maintain effective and functional tertiary education system are distinguished in the area of science and technology, making a relatively fast progress in all indicators of social and economic growth and development. Ogunboyede, O.M. (2012) asserts that it is a formal process of inculcating certain desirable knowledge; values and habits in the individuals to enable them understand humanity and become agent of social change

Tertiary Education Curriculum

Curriculum is defined as a series of planed learning experiences deliberately and purposefully organized to maximize the opportunities available for individuals to actualize their inherent genetic blue print in both formal and informal institutions. There are also wider social, cultural, economic and political contexts in which the curriculum can be viewed as primarily an ideological battleground for a wide range of competing socioeconomic, cultural and political interest groups. These different groups compete to enlist their professional interests, values and attitudes on the curriculum. The curriculum thus becomes one of the instruments for implementing education policies and programs.

There more aspects of the term curriculum but we are going to make emphasizes on the factors affecting the implementation of curriculum in our institutions of learning. Curriculum implementation, according to Okello and Kagoire, 1996) “is a network of varying activities involved in translating curriculum designs into classroom activities and changing people’s attitudes to accept and participate in these activities”. However, curriculum implementers (teachers, head teachers, standard officers and others) are faced with barriers which hinder the successful implementation of the curriculum. It is very difficult to implement a curriculum successfully if the education system has limited funding capacities. Under funding raise a lot of other implications on the part of curriculum. The economy of a nation will determine the success of curriculum implementation. In developing countries, the numbers of pupils and teachers have kept on rising but government money available for education is less. (Sibulwa, 1996:35). Since manpower in the education sector has increased, the bulk of money allocated to education is absorbed by salaries leaving very little for teaching materials, books, in-service training, monitoring and other things needed for the smooth implementation the of curriculum. In the absence of teaching and learning materials, the teaching and learning processes will be hampered and if standard

officers do not go out to evaluate, it will be difficult to know whether the curriculum is being effectively implemented or not.

Goals of Tertiary Education in Nigeria

The National Policy on Education (FGN, 2013a) section 5 subsection 80 - 85 specifies that the goals of tertiary education shall be to:

- Contribute to national development through high-level man power training;
- provide accessible and affordable quality learning opportunities in formal and informal education in response to the needs and interest of Nigerians;
- provide high-quality career counselling and lifelong learning opportunity that prepare students with knowledge and skills for self-reliance;
- reduce skills shortages through the production of relevant skilled workers;
- promote and encourage scholarship, entrepreneurship and community service
- forge and cement national unity; and
- promote national and international understanding and interaction.

Tertiary educational institutions pursue these goals through:

- quality student intake
- quality teaching and learning;
- research and development;
- quality facilities, services and resources;
- the generation and dissemination of knowledge, skills and competencies that contribute to national goals and enable students to succeed in a knowledge-based economy;

The Concept and Essence of Education

A brief explanation of the concept of education is fundamental to a better conceptualization of tertiary education. According to Iyamu (2005) education refers to the process of socialization in which the individual is opportune to learn and imbibe those norms, values, attitudes, habits and creative skills that are needed, not only for his survival but contribution to the progress of the society. It is a formal process of inculcating certain desirable knowledge, values, norms, habits, attitudes and other attributes in the individual to enable them understand humanity and become agent of social change. Education should not just add value to the life of the individual. It should be seen to effectively equip such individual with ability and capacity to add value to the society. Education of the individual is measured in terms of their positive impact on the social life of the community. No nation can develop to its fullest or keep pace with emerging trends in science and technology without effective and functional education.

Education remains the most important instrument of change. The major difference between the developed and underdeveloped (some are described as developing or less developed) countries today lies in the quality of their education. However, every society has priorities in terms of the essence of education based on its own values and other peculiarities. Education in every society reflects peoples' conception of the role education should play in that society. While this is expected, can we rightly say that the essence of education in Nigeria is based on values and philosophy that are unique to us? Nigerian education is yet to emphasize consensus values and photocopies that the schools should promote. Currently, there is no common modes of behaviour of Nigerians that can be attributed to the effect of education on them. Also, according to Nebo (2017), good education is the type that prepares the individual on how to eke out a living and make a meaning out of the complex world as well as being able to make reasonable input or contributions in the society he or she lives. No truly educated person can be (or is expected to be) a liability, either to himself or to the society. The question here is: why are most Nigerian youths of more than thirty years old and years after graduation from the university, still liability to their parents?

SOME ISSUES AND CHALLENGES OF TERTIARY/HIGHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM CHANGE IN NIGERIA

1. **Inadequate Lecturers:** Inadequate lecturers is a serious problem facing all the higher institutions in Nigeria. Many higher institutions do not have adequate lecturers to deploy for teaching in the various institutions. The shortage of lecturer is responsible for the poor quality of teaching and learning in most Nigerian higher institutions. The needs assessment summary report was presented to the Federal Government in November 2012. It identified manpower shortage as one of the reasons why Nigerian universities have been unable to compete favorably with universities in many other parts of the world. According to the report, a combination of infrastructural and manpower challenges is responsible for the sharp decline in scholarship in Nigerian universities. On manpower challenges, the report indicated that as at November 2012, there were 37,504 academic staff in 74 public universities in Nigeria. Considering the number of staff vis-à-vis the student population, the report revealed an unmanageable lecturer-to-student ratio. For example, at the National Open University the academic staff-to-student ratio was 1:363, at Lagos State University the ratio was 1:144, and at the University of Abuja the ratio was 1:122. Kano State University, which was 11 years old at the time of the needs assessment period, had one professor and 25 lecturers with PhD degrees, while Kebbi State University had two professors and five lecturers with doctorate degrees. These statistics revealed wide disparities between Nigerian universities and their counterparts in other parts of the world. For instance, the staff-to-student ratio in Harvard University is 1:4, Massachusetts Institute of Technology has 1:9 ratio and the University of Cambridge has 1:3.

Gender disparities were also found in the distribution of academic staff. About 83 per cent of academic staff in the universities were men and 16 per cent were women. Further classification of academic staff by qualification and rank indicated that the university system was experiencing a staffing or manpower crisis. For instance, only about 16,127 academic staff in the universities have doctorate degrees, representing 43 per cent of all university academic staff instead of 75 per cent recommended by the NUC. Only about 16,502 (44%) are within the bracket of senior lecturers and professors. Surprisingly, only seven in 74 public universities in Nigeria have up to 60 per cent of their teaching staff with PhD qualifications. These deficiencies have led to a situation in which many universities have to rely exclusively on part-time and under qualified academics with negative implications for quality education in the institutions (NEEDS, 2014).

2. Funding

The dramatic increase in student enrollment in higher education in Nigeria has not been matched by public funding. Effectively, the public expenditure per student has declined considerably, and this has inevitably led to deterioration in quality. The daunting challenges facing higher education involve the ongoing increase in student numbers, the more faculty needed to be recruited, additional infrastructure to be built and yet, the availability of public fund will be limited Oyeneye (2006). Paradoxically, public spending per higher education student in Nigeria is much higher than in other developing countries, indicating overspending and inefficiency in the use of resources. Reduction in expenditures and promoting efficiency in the institutions should therefore be the first step in coping with the shortage of funds. Changing the method of budgeting is another approach. Currently, in most countries the annual institutional budget allocated by government is determined by simply adjusting the previous year's budget by a percentage, depending on the availability of public funds. The use of formula funding, for example, based on the unit cost per student, can stimulate improvement in institutions and help to achieve more accountability and Transparency Ajayi *et al* (2002). Ultimately, however, public institutions will inevitably have to resort to the charging of tuition fees from students if they are to provide quality education. The danger here, moreover, is that public higher education then will eventually be regarded as a private enterprise, receiving decreasing contribution from the state. Nigerian governments should recognize that higher education is a "public good" and, accordingly, must benefit from state support. While fees should be introduced, they should represent only a proportion of the actual economic cost and should be accompanied by appropriate loan schemes or scholarships for the socially disadvantaged students Aina (2007). The income from cost-sharing measures, however, will never sufficiently cover the huge cost of physical infrastructural development. Capital expenditure funding to a large extent must come from government; some countries-for example, Ghana-have served an innovative approach of using a small proportion of the national contribution from the

value-added tax for funding capital projects in higher education. Public-funded institutions alone will never manage to meet the huge demand for higher education. Private and cross-border higher education institutions, which already operate in significant numbers in Africa, should be encouraged and can be beneficial in many ways. However, many of them are profit motivated and offer poor quality education. They, therefore, need to be regulated and quality controlled Adegbite (2007).

3. Research

The research output from Nigerian universities is very low. The reasons include a lack of research-experienced faculty, given brain drain, heavy teaching load, moonlighting by faculty, and lack of resources-such as, library facilities, information and communications technology infrastructure, and well-equipped laboratories. Asiyai (2009). The relevance of the research carried out is also questionable. Most faculties undertake research for personal gain, with the aim of publishing in internationally refereed journals for promotion purposes. The chosen topic is often not appropriate to national development. Most faculties do their research as individuals; there is insufficient multidisciplinary research, essential for solving development problems. Much of the research is externally funded, and being determined by the funders, the topics may not be of direct relevance to national development. Idowu (2011). Research publication comprises another challenge. Most of the research results end up on university library shelves-in theses and dissertations or advanced research journals. They are, thus, not accessible to or understood by policymakers or communities. There is a dearth of Nigerian research journals; those that are started are often not sustainable

4. Academic Corruption:

Corruption have penetrated the Nigerian higher institutions. The limited funds made available by the government for the development of programme, research and infrastructural facilities end up in private hands or are been diverted for personal used. According to Premium Times (2020) the Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund) has accused lecturers across the country's public tertiary institutions of diverting research grants to build homes, purchase cars, and engage in other frivolous activities. This is coming days after an allegation of personnel budget inflation leveled against some academic and healthcare institutions including the University of Ibadan, by the Independent Corrupt Practices and other Related Offences Commission (ICPC), was made public (Chinyere & Chukwuma, 2017). He said: "It is sad to note that public funds made available to lecturers to conduct groundbreaking and demand-driven researches towards solving Nigeria's socio-economic, and even political challenges, are misappropriated by those who are expected to be above board. I mean the beneficiaries of our grants. Corruption in this paper refers to absurd or deviant disposition of people in institutions of higher learning which violates the ethical

standards. The prevalence of corruption in tertiary institutions is viewed to negate the core values of education at this level. Major themes discussed included definition of corruption, corruption in Nigerian society and higher learning institutions, highlighting the various aspects and shapes of corruption in Nigerian higher institutions. Dimensions of corruption identified included students, lecturers, non-academic staff and administrators. The shapes of corruption among students included bribing of lecturers for unmerited grades, cultism, examination malpractice, attacks on lecturers for stopping students from indulging in examination malpractice, fiscal extortion from innocent students by fellow students who form themselves into lecturers' boys". Forms of corruption among lecturers included demanding huge amount of money, sex from female students for high grade, etc. Among non-teaching staff, the shades of corruption included monetary extortion from students before they see their results, demanding of money from unsuspecting parents in the guise that they are lecturers with a promise to secure admission for their children/wards, they also act as agents for lecturers, receiving money from students for higher grades after examination. At the administrator's level, shades of corruption included misappropriation and misapplication of fund meant for capital projects, offer of admission to undeserving students for a fee while deserving candidates are bypassed, amongst others. Impact of corruption on higher education administration was discussed and means that can be adopted or adapted to curb the menace were suggested. Corruption have done many damages to the Nigerian higher institutions.

5. Weak Leadership:

School administrators appointed to head many higher institutions in Nigeria are weak and do not have the ability and competent to handle the administration and management of higher institutions. Udida *et al.* (2009) observe that some individuals appointed as vice chancellors of some university are weak, not competent and lack administrative potentials; such appointees must possess administrative qualities and must lead by example. The leader must have integrity, must be knowledgeable, and practice modern types of management leadership styles. He or she must be visionary and ready to adjust to situations in the system. The performance of the administrator should be sustained through the proper utilization of material and human resources in the achievement of the institutional goals and objectives. Udida *et al.* (2012) also submit that leaders in some universities are weak, uncoordinated and lack administrative skills. Some do not have administrative knowledge or skills. According to Udida *et al.* (2012) who cited Ekaette (2001), a lot of higher education system managers do not pose the charisma, or good human relations needed for effective and efficient leadership. As a result of the poor leadership and ineffective style of administration, a lot of programme of activities are not carried out in such institutions such as provision of grant for research and publications, staff welfare is neglected, no adequate control of staff and students, no vision for the University. Such leaders also do not have the zeal for supervision and monitoring of institutional activities. This

can affect the systems performance in that, workers can result to a nonchalant attitude toward work and hence no sustainability or continuity of good track records of performance in the system. Nigerian Higher Educational System need leaders who can position it to an envying height of success and progress this contributing to society's quest for self-reliance (Udida *et al.*, 2012).

6. Poor Staff Development:

Poor staff development is one of the challenges facing higher institutions in Nigeria. Due to inadequate funding, many higher institutions do not support staff development programme. Chukwuma *et al.* (2015) did a study that examined staff development and the output of academic staff in the state universities in South-South Nigeria. An ex-post-facto survey design was used to conduct the research in three state universities in the area.

7. Examination malpractice:

According to Ogakwu and Isife (2012), examination malpractice has become societal problem. This phenomenon has infiltrated or permeated all parcels of the educational system in Nigeria. Examination malpractice is an act of dishonest achievement of success at an examination. It is an intentional act, which takes time, energy and most times large sums of money for the planning and execution. It can be referred to as examination fraud or examination misconduct. One of the factors through which the development of human being is attained is education through the curriculum implementation. Tests and/ or examinations are one of the steps of assessing the extent of development and knowledge acquired by the individual. It is therefore strange and disturbing that examination malpractice is increasingly devaluing the essence of implementing the curriculum. Aliyu (2008), averted that beyond the utilitarian value of education, its overall aim is to educate the mind and make one a cultural and enlightened member of the society, but with the cankerworm of examination malpractice the implementation of the curriculum to achieve the above objective is defeated.

8. The societal challenges:

The societal value system of any nation has a great effect on its education. With the event in the state, many people prefer to make ostentatious show of wealth, drive costly cars and take titles than to invest money in education programmes, knowing the needs, values, interests and aspirations to enhance proper learning. Even people in authority prefer to invest their money in the construction of new directorates in ministries and new administrative structures that will yield them personal financial gain (Tesike, 2006). This type of value devoid of the interest in the curriculum will hinder its implementation to a large extent.

Assessment techniques in Nigerian tertiary institutions

The use of assessment in Nigerian tertiary schools has been misleading in the sense that students and parents had the impression that all that matter in the school is to obtain a certificate at the end of a course (Alonge, 2004). This had led some students to be involved in examination malpractices. Ogunboyede (2009), and Alonge (2004), opined that examination, the open book examination, pre-published assessment, open time assessment, oral assessment and field/laboratory assessment are some of the techniques of assessment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

- Examination; usually, takes two to three hours to conduct, during which the students are not known in advance. This type of assessment tests the ability of students to produce their own work, recall information from memory and organize them to complete the task within a stated period of time.
- The open book examination; students are allowed to consult textbooks, lecture notes or handouts during the assessment time. This assess the highest level of learning such as evaluation and application of information.
- The pre-published assessment; this involves the announcing of some or all the questions that will come out in the final examination paper to the students days or even weeks in advance before the day of the final examination. This kind of assessment reduces stress and question spotting in the examination hall.
- Open time assessment; this is usually in form of “take home” assignment; where the examinees are required to answer the given questions in their own time and submit by a specified date. This reduces stress and assesses the student’s ability to find and use references.
- Oral assessment; this is a face-to-face situation where a student is questioned or interviewed by an examiner(s). This assess fluency in the use of language in an unstructured situation and the ability of the examinee to convince a group of examiners concerning his readiness to be awarded a higher degree certificate.
- Field/laboratory assessment; this is the type of assessment whereby the knowledge of the skills learnt in a course is assessed. This could be laboratory work, field work, practicum etc. This type of assessment is used to assess practical skills, techniques and procedures and helps students to have better understanding of the course and help in application of the theories.

Prospects of Higher Education 21st Century Curriculum

Several steps need to be taken to redress the situation. Adequate provision should first be made for funding research at the national level. The setting up of national research councils can extend toward mobilizing resources and identifying national priorities for research. At the institutional level, universities should incorporate research in their strategic planning and ensure that it is given the same priority as teaching. Each university should also create a central research office to coordinate, promote, facilitate, and manage research A process of upgrading the research

qualification of university staff-through, for example, split-site PhDs-is already under way in many institutions and needs to be expanded. With regard to accessing publication, efforts should be made for greater online access to research publications and theses in Nigeria.

Expectations of 21st Century Higher Education Curriculum

There is growing evidence of schools everywhere having the same results for implementing a 21st Century Curriculum. These are 21st Century Curriculum: (a) Interdisciplinary Project-based and Research Driving Twenty-first century curriculum has certain critical attributes. It is interdisciplinary, project-based, and research-driven. It is connected to the community- local, state, national and global. Sometimes students are collaborating with people around the world in various projects. The curriculum incorporates higher order thinking skills, multiple intelligences, technology and multimedia, the multiple literacies of the 21st century, and authentic assessments. Service learning is an important component. The classroom is expanded to include the greater community. Students are self directed, and work both independently and interdependently. The curriculum and instruction are designed to challenge all students, and provide for differentiation. The curriculum is not textbook-driven or fragmented, but is thematic, project-based and integrated. Skills and content are not taught as an end in themselves, but students learn them through their research and application in their projects. Textbooks, if they have them, are just one of many resources. Knowledge is not memorization of facts and figures, but is constructed through research and application, and connected to previous knowledge, personal experience, interests, talents and passions. The skills and content become relevant and needed as students require this information to complete their projects. The content and basic skills are applied within the context of the curriculum, and are not ends in themselves. Assessment moves from regurgitation of memorized facts and disconnected processes to demonstration of understanding through application in a variety of contexts. Real world audiences are important part of the assessment process, as is self-assessment. The new millennium was ushered in by a dramatic technological revolution. An era increasingly diverse, globalized, and complex and media-saturated society. Emerging technologies and resulting globalization provide unlimited possibilities for exciting new discoveries and developments such as new forms of energy, medical advances, and restoration of environmentally ravaged areas, communications, and exploration into space and into the depths of the oceans.

(a) Skills Acquisition:

Media literacy skills are honed as students address real-world issues, from the environment to poverty. Students use the technological and multimedia tools now available to them to design and produce web sites, television shows, radio shows, public service announcements, mini- documentaries, how-to DVDs, oral histories, and

even films. Students find their voices as they create projects using multimedia and deliver these products to real-world audiences, realizing that they can make a difference and change the world. Students learn what it is to be a contributing citizen, and carry these citizenship skills forward throughout their lives (Jodi, 2010). Looking at the global classroom, every day students from countries all over the world collaborate on important projects. The web site, ePals, is a site where teachers and students can go to join or start a collaborative project with anyone in the world. According to ePals, Inc., "Our Global Community is the largest online community of K-12 learners, enabling more than 325,000 educators and 126,000 classrooms in over 200 countries and territories to safely connect, exchange ideas, and learn together" (Douglas, 2010).

(b) Information and Communication Technology Literacies (ICT)

In order for Nigerian students to be prepared to navigate this 21st century world, Nigerian students must become literate in 21st century literacies, including multicultural, media, information, emotional, ecological, financial and cyber literacies. Nigerian students collaborating with students from around the world in meaningful, real-life projects is a necessary tool for developing these literacies. Nigerian students can learn that through collaboration, not competition, they can work together to make the world a better place. Nigerian students will use technologies, including the internet, and global collaboration to solve critical issues.

(c) Environment

Our planet and its citizen residents are facing a growing number of issues related to the environment. Education is the key. From environmental awareness to producing scientists, politicians, international relations experts, media producers, and others, our schools will assist students in finding the answers to our environmental problems. Nigerian students will be motivated as they achieve higher levels of learning in all content areas from science and mathematics to cultural studies and nutrition and other areas where students are involved in projects such as global classroom projects focused on the environment.

Conclusion

The 21st century is characterized by a society where things are changing in such an exponential pace and education, in particular higher education is required to prepare students to adapt to the change by equipping them with the skills, knowledge and information to cope with this astronomical pace of change. To achieve this, higher education curricula must be reformed to be responsive to the demands of this global change. The content of higher education programme must be changed to reflect the changing society in order to prepare graduates who are employable, adaptable, resourceful, flexible and equipped with basic skills and knowledge that will enable them to take advantage of globalization and what the 21st century has to offer.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Education especially higher education must be placed in a strategic position and given priority in development. This implies that the curricula must be restructured, reorganized and refocused to serve the social, economic and political needs of the recipients of education and the society in general;
2. Higher education curricula must take cognizance of the dramatic change in the world of works and labour industry in order to produce graduates that are relevant in the work place, multi-skilled and possess the ability to transform skills to different tasks;
3. There should be increasing need for collaboration and partnership between stakeholders in the job industry and higher education curriculum planners to ensure that the content of higher education curricula is meeting the ever increasing and changing needs of the workforce and organizing structure;
4. The content of higher education curricula should be made to enhance the personal competence and qualities of the learner as well as emphasize competency based training;
5. The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in delivery teaching learning in higher education institutions should be made compulsory and encouraged to enhance the quality of learning delivery in higher education institutions;
6. Higher education curriculum should encourage the integration of sciences, vocational education and humanities to ensure all round development of learners and
7. Higher education curriculum must encourage technological innovation, economic reconstruction as cultural diversities which are key factors in human survival in the 21st century.

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