

TEACHERS PERCEIVED PROBLEMS OF CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN CROSS RIVER STATE OF NIGERIA.

ODEY EDWARD OGAR AND OPOH, FREDRICK AWHEN,

DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND TEACHING, FACULTY OF EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF CALABAR, CALABAR CROSS RIVER STATE, NIGERIA.

Abstract

The study investigated teachers' perceived problems of curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions. The need for this study was borne out of the concern over prevalent questions raised against the standard of the education system. Three objectives were pursued; to identify perceived problems, causes, and possible solutions to curriculum implementation. 480 purposively selected teachers of tertiary institutions constituted sample for the study. A validated questionnaire with 3 sections constructed by the researchers formed the main instrument of the study. Data generated were subjected to statistical analysis using frequencies, means and ranking. The findings revealed the most frequently occurring problems, causes and possible solutions of the curriculum implementation. Based on the results obtained from the study, it was recommended that heads of departments and deans of faculties should be made to incorporate the task of monitoring their colleagues to the administrative task, a review of the curriculum to meet contemporary need of the society and the need for a paradigm shift of some educational policies to result oriented policies so as to enhance proper curriculum implementation.

Keywords: Teachers' Perceived problems, curriculum, curriculum implementation, Tertiary

institutions

1.Introduction

Since the inception of western type of education in Nigeria, several attempts have been made to formulate policies in order to improve education practice. The problem facing our different level of educational system is not the formulation of policy but the implementation. Even though large sums of money are spent on implementing new curriculum, several of these efforts have failed. According to Alade (2011), the main reason for the failure is the lack of understanding of the culture of the school by both experts outside the school system and educators in the system. Successful implementation of curriculum requires understanding the power relationships, the traditions, the roles and responsibilities of individuals in the school system.

The word implementation connotes operationalisation of a well-articulated and well intentioned ideas packed as theory. Hence to implement is to put to action packed ideas or theories into reality. Mezieobi (1993), conceptualized the term implementation simply as a process of putting an agreed plan, decision, proposal, idea or policy into effect. It is the bedrock of any plan success or failure. It is the moving force of any plan without which a plan is only good wish or intention. On the other hand, the word curriculum in a formal setting can be seen as the planned learning experiences offered to the learner in school. Esu, Erukoha and Umoren (2004) conceived curriculum as all learning experiences a child has under the guidance of a teacher. According to Offorma (2005), curriculum is a programme which is made up of three components: programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance. It is therefore the blue-print or instrument by which school seeks to translate the hope and values of the society in which it operates into concrete reality.

However, the term curriculum implementation had been defined in different ways by different scholars. Garba (2004) viewed curriculum implementation as the process of putting the curriculum into work for the achievement of the goals for which the curriculum is designed. Okebukola (2004) described curriculum implementation as the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice. In a nutshell, Ivowi (2004) sees curriculum implementation as the translation of "theory into practice", or "proposal into action". In a similar vein, Afangideh (2009), sees the concept of curriculum implementation as the actual engagement of learners with planned learning opportunities. It is the actual carrying-out of societal culture and/or government policies spelt out in the curriculum.

It is a stage in curriculum process when in the midst of learning activities, the teacher and learners are involved in negotiation aimed at promoting learning. This is the interactive stage of the curriculum process which takes place in the classroom through the combined effort of the teachers, learner, school administrators and parents. It also integrates the application of physical facilities and the adoption of appropriate pedagogical strategies and methods. The quality of curriculum implementation of any society is the bedrock of its political, economic, scientific and technological well being. Little wonder, it is always said that no society can rise above the standard of its education system.

However, a major problem of the Nigerian education industry is how to operationalize the well intended and articulated curriculum via feasibility and full-scale implementation commitment. In line with this, Mezieobi (1993) opined that in Nigeria, a number of curriculum proposals or conceived curriculums have remained virtually inert in the sense that they were not made functional. Of course, a curriculum may be beautifully planned but will be of no relevance if it is not implemented. Here in Nigeria, there are beautifully planned and worthwhile curricula which have been crumbled and failed to produce the intended output due to improper implementation.

According to Asebiomo (2009), “no matter how well formulated a curriculum may be, its effective implementation is a sine qua non toward achieving the desired goals of education”. This is because the problem of most programmes arises at the implementation level. Acknowledging this, Mkpa (2005) remarked that in Nigeria, it is at the implementation state that many excellent curriculum plans and other educational policies are marred. Even in some cases where attempts at ensuring actual operation, curricula have not yielded satisfying and recommendable dividends, hence the dissatisfaction of parents and significant others with poor performance in the educational system which is characterized by crises and with curricula, marked by abysmal failure. Writing on the failure of curriculum in Nigeria, Mezieobi (1993) maintains that curriculum with all its well conceived goals is failing, largely as a result of implementation dormancy or fault. This “scenario” is general and is assuming the status of “national culture” across every curriculum of Nigerian education system.

More so, Izuagba and Afurobi (2009) in a study reported that the increasing complexity of the Nigerian society as a result of social change has had adverse effect on curriculum implementation at the tertiary level. As a matter of fact, tertiary educational institution in Nigeria had inadequately satisfied the man power need of the society. Unfortunately Izuagba and Afurobi (2009) state that in the last two decades graduate of this institution are found to be grossly deficient in practical and professional skill by employers of labour in public and private enterprises. Today, institutions of higher learning are not proud of their products because their performance is indication of implementation failure of the curriculum. This is because the effectiveness of practical translation of a programme is evident by the proper conduct, behaviour and the performance of the learner. The result of this is bred of unemployable graduates, which has become one of the most pernicious problems staring the Nigerian youths on the face. For this trend to be reversed there is a need for a paradigm shift.

Izuagba (2006) asserts that the privatization of tertiary institutions has introduced inequality in the social system as it has created two different types of tertiary institutions – one is well funded and offers quality education and is attended by the children of the rich while the second type, offers mass schooling and is attended by the children of the common man. Ifedi (2008) supports this as he asserts that the expansion and privatization of tertiary institutions has lowered standard as graduates of these institutions have failed to provide the expected dynamic leadership for economic and political development of the country.

Laudable efforts have been made through research which pointed at teachers’ non-involvement in decision making, teachers’ non-involvement and participation in curriculum development, lack of instructional materials, inadequate fund and paucity of qualified subject teachers as well as poor application among other courses. These attempts through research at providing possible solution to these problems of curriculum implementation failure have not yielded the desire result. This study hence seeks to focus on the teachers who are in the field. The study is therefore designed to examine teachers’ perceived causes and problems of curriculum implementation in higher institutions in Cross River state.

2.Statement of the problem

Despite the wide recognition and acceptance accorded the role of curriculum as a career of the national philosophy in Nigerian educational system, there seems to be problems in the implementation of this important educational blue-print. Many laudable goals of the curriculum have failed to pass the planning stage of the curriculum due to faulty implementation. Well conceived curriculum ideas have remained virtually inert and dysfunctional. The outcome of this is the bred of graduates of higher institution who are found to be grossly deficient in practical and professional competences (Izuagba and Afurobi 2009). The result of this state of affair according to Idaka and Joshua (2005) is the production of half baked, ill trained and sometimes confused

graduates. This problem and other related problems should be a cause for concern to all patriotic and serious minded stake holder of the educational sub-sector. Against this background, this study was designed to investigate teachers' perceived causes and problems of curriculum implementation.

3. Research questions

1. What are teachers' perceived problems of curriculum implementation in higher institutions in Cross River State?
2. What are teachers perceived causes of the problems of curriculum implementation in higher institutions in Cross River State?
3. What are the ways forward for these perceived problems?

4. Literature Review

Objectives of any level of education cannot be achieved if the planned programme for such level of education is not well implemented. Observing this, Onyeachu (2008:1) asserted that: "No matter how well a curriculum of any subject is planned, designed and documented, implementation is important." This is because the problem of most programmes arises at the implementation stage.

To Ehiamentor (2001: 305) facilities are "those factors which enable production workers to achieve the goals of an organization." Supporting Ehiamentor (2001), Olorok (2006) noted that the use of instructional facilities enhances learning experiences and leads to interaction within the learning environment. However, there is no enough funds to sustain some good materials developed in recent times. Appreciating the importance of facilities, Ehiamentor (2001:305) opined that: "school facilities are the operational inputs of every instructional programme. The school is like a manufacturing organization where plants and equipment must be in a top operational shape to produce result". Similarly, Ivowi (2004) noted that to ensure that curriculum is effectively implemented, infrastructural facilities, equipment, tools and materials must be provided in adequate quantities.

In spite of the historical trends in Nigeria curriculum and reviews at various times, the implementation practices are bedeviled with challenges. For example, there is problem associated with overloading of the already comprehensive curriculum content coupled with overcrowded classes, contrary to the recommended and modified teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40 notwithstanding (Alade, 2011). This needs to be looked into for appropriate action because as Offiong (2005) observed, the teacher is a major hub around which the success of education revolves. Lassa (2007) therefore viewed the teacher as the key to proper development of the child and consequently they are needed in greater number in all the secondary schools. Teachers' inability to apply Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching school subjects in the education system is also one of those problems militating against effective implementation of tertiary education curriculum. Majority of the school teachers do not use computers while teaching their lessons.

Observing the importance of involving teachers in decision-making and planning of curriculum, Obinna (2007:8) observed that, "no government policy on education can be realized if it does not first of all perceive the problems and opportunities before initiating decision-making process". The teacher is in the best position and most qualified resource person to be consulted. Mkpa (1987:345) emphatically remarked that, "as a most important person in the programme of curriculum implementation, the teacher must be involved in all stages of the curriculum process". Obinna (2007) found out that in most cases, teachers are deliberately neglected when major decisions on education and matters concerning their welfare are taken. This ugly situation has tragic and negative consequences on curriculum implementation. This is therefore an implementation issue that needs to be looked into.

Every project requires money for its effective implementation. Confirming this, Onyeachu (2006) noted that, no organization functions effectively without fund. Unfortunately, fund allotted for education is grossly inadequate. This affects implementation of a well designed curriculum. Izuagba and Afurobi (2009) state that as a matter of fact, it was the upsurge in enrolment against the backdrop of a sharp fall in the finances of tertiary institutions that adversely affected curriculum implementation. A situation where there is no money for payment of teachers salaries, purchase of equipment, books, furniture and other facilities, teachers cannot perform effectively. The result of this is the unstable and epileptic nature of Nigerian education system characterized by frequent strikes and students' rampage.

5 Research method

The research design for this study was the survey design. The adoption of this design was because the study aimed at finding out the perception of the sample on the causes and problems of curriculum implementation. This design is very useful to this study because to Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim & Ekuri (2004), survey is important for opinion and attitude studies. The population for the study comprises all the academic staff of the four

government own higher institution in cross river state. The sample of the study comprises 500 lecturers drawn from the population using purposive sampling technique. It was purposive because the sample was accidentally drawn from the four institutions.

The research instrument use for the study was a questionnaire developed and validated by the researchers and two educational evaluators. The instrument has four sections, A, B, C and D. Section A was designed to seek information of the personal data of the respondents, Section B required the respondents to indicate their perceived problems of curriculum implementation and Section C sought information on the possible causes of the problems of curriculum implementation. Section D on the other hand was designed to elicit information on the possible solutions of the problems of curriculum implementation. In sections B, C, and D, each item has a two-point rating scale of Agree (A) and Disagree (D).

The administration and the retrieval of the questionnaire were done by the researchers within the period of two weeks. Sixteen copies out of the 500 copies administered where invalidated, four of which were not returned by the respondents while the other twelve because respondents could not complete the response. However, four copies were randomly thrown out to give the sample a round figure of 480. For the analysis of the data collected for this study and to answer the three research questions posed, frequency, means and ranking statistical tools were used at 0.05 level of significance and a mean of 1.50 (ie 0.05 +1.50), which is the cut -off- point, was therefore fixed at 1.55. The interpretation of this is that items with means of 1.55 and above where considered as been significant while those below it as not significant. Agree was coded 2 while Disagree was coded 1.

Results

TABLE 1: Teachers perceived problems of curriculum implementation.

S/N	problems	Frequency Agree	Frequency Disagree	Mean	Rank	Remarks
1	Emphasis of academic staff in seminars, conferences and research as basis for promotion.	384	96	1.80	1	Significant
2	It is the problem of content delivery and wrong use of methods.	384	96	1.80	1	Significant
3	Faulty monitoring/supervision of implementation process to ensure quality control.	360	120	1.75	2	Significant
4	Low quality of human and material resources	360	120	1.75	2	Significant
5	Lack of adequate time to cover the curriculum.	360	120	1.75	2	
6	Poor preparation of scheme of work and lecture note from the curriculum.	360	120	1.75	2	Significant
7	Increased workload due to classroom over population.	336	144	1.70	3	Significant
8	Inadequate funding of the educational system	366	144	1.70	3	Significant
9	Non-involvement and participation of teachers in curriculum development	312	168	1.65	4	
10	Faulty teacher training institutions	288	192	1.60	5	Significant
11	Teachers' poor knowledge of interpretation of the curriculum.	288	192	1.60	5	Significant
12	Lack of control of recruitment into teaching	264	216	1.55	6	Significant
13	Teachers lack of interest on implementation process.	264	216	1.55	6	Significant
14	Teachers' poor understanding of the curriculum content.	240	240	1.50	7	Not significant
15	Curriculum is not clearly spelt out.	216	264	1.45	8	Not significant

The result presented in Table 1 shows that teachers perceived 13 of the 15 problems of curriculum implementation stated as been significant while 2 were not significant, hence, not considered crucial problems.

The degrees of these problems are as presented in table 1 in a descending order. The implication of this result is that items with a higher means constituted more problems of curriculum implementations than items with smaller means.

TABLE 2: Teachers perceived causes of problems of curriculum implementation

S/N	CAUSES	Frequency	Frequency	Mean	Rank	Remarks
		Agree	Disagree			
1	Lack of monitoring strategy.	480	0	2.00	1	Significant
2	Failure of government to train teachers in curriculum implementation techniques	456	24	1.95	2	Significant
3	Students crave for success at all cost without working hard for it.	408	72	1.85	3	Significant
4	Insufficient motivation for teachers.	408	72	1.85	3	Significant
5	Academic staff compromise of their teaching responsibility due to the emphasis placed on scholarly research and publication.	360	120	1.75	4	Significant
6	Laxity on the part of some teachers	360	120	1.75	4	Significant
7	Unprecedented increase in school enrollment.	360	120	1.75	4	Significant
8	Upsurge in admission	360	120	1.75	4	Significant
9	Poor remuneration of teachers.	366	144	1.70	5	Significant
10	Emphasis on examination vis-à-vis paper qualification in the country.	366	144	1.70	5	Significant
11	Alternative ways of earning grade	366	144	1.70	5	Significant
12	Teachers' lack of relevant competencies necessary for curriculum implementation.	336	144	1.70	5	Significant
13	Constant strike actions and frequent change of government.	312	168	1.65	6	Significant
14	Paucity of funds supplied to schools by the government.	312	168	1.65	6	Significant
15	Students work load/continuous introduction of new courses.	264	216	1.55	7	Significant
16	Poor parental contribution and parental interference.	240	240	1.50	8	Not significant

The result presented in table 2 revealed that 15 of the 16 perceived causes of the problems of curriculum implementation are significant and ranked in the order in which they appeared on the table with lack of monitoring strategy being the first perceived cause identified. One of the 16 items was found not to be significant hence does not really constitute cause of the problems of curriculum implementation in the research area.

TABLE 3: Teachers' perceived solutions to the problems of curriculum implementation

S/N	SOLUTIONS	Frequency	Frequency	Mean	Rank	Remarks
		Agree	Disagree			
1	Curriculum to be reviewed immediately to meet the taste of times.	480	0	2.00	1	Significant
2	Examination should be de-emphasized while competency should be tested by employer of labour	432	48	1.90	2	Significant
3	Provision of more qualified teachers.	408	72	1.85	3	Significant
4	Proper monitoring of curriculum implementation	384	96	1.80	4	Significant
5	Updating of infrastructural facilities.	384	96	1.80	4	Significant
6	Regular retraining programmes for practicing teachers	384	96	1.80	4	Significant
7	Teachers' classroom efficiency a basis for their promotion.	360	120	1.75	5	Significant
8	Enhanced teachers' remuneration.	366	144	1.70	6	Significant

9	Reduction in the enrolment impacting of schools.	312	168	1.65	7	Significant
10	Teachers' promotion should be based on students rating.	264	216	1.55	8	Significant
11	Introduction of time book for teachers	120	360	1.25	9	Not significant

The result presented in table 3 shows possible solutions to teachers' perceived problems of curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions. Teachers agreed to 10 out of the 11 solutions to the problem of curriculum implementation. Of all the possible solutions identified, only introduction of time book for teachers of tertiary institution was not significantly considered a solution to the problem of curriculum implementation.

5.1 Discussion of findings

Judging from the results on Table 1, there is indication that majority of the items had mean responses of 1.55 and above which shows that these items significantly constituted problems to curriculum implementation. This agreed with Offiong (2005), Lassa (2007) and Alade (2011) that pointed at teachers' inability to apply ICT in teaching, lack of facilities among others as problems of curriculum implementation.

The results in Table 2 revealed that 15 of 16 items had a mean of 1.55 and above and are ranked in the order of degree from the highest with a mean of 2.00 to the least of 1.55 mean. Only one item was considered not to be significant with a mean of 1.50. The finding of this supports the earlier position of Izuagba and Aforobi (2009) that as a matter of fact, it was the upsurge in enrolment against the backdrop of a sharp fall in the finances of tertiary institutions that adversely affect curriculum implementation.

Results in Table 3 on the other hand, indicated that items 1-10 are significant possible solutions to the problems of curriculum implementation in tertiary institution. Item 11 is not considered significant, hence can not address the problem of curriculum implementation.

5.2 Conclusion

Curriculum implementation is a very important aspect of the curriculum process. Hence, it is the bedrock of any school success or failure. However, Nigeria tertiary institution curriculum is bedeviled with porous implementation. The failure is attributed to implementation dormancy as well as faulty educational policy. The study however concluded that there is need for a paradigm shift of faulty policy to result oriented policies that would meet the challenges of curriculum processes.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following recommendations were made.

- i. There is a need for a paradigm shift of some education policies such as lecturers' emphasis on seminar and conferences, methodology, the 'customized' poor budget allocation to education among others, to result oriented policies that would ameliorate the deplorable state of curriculum implementation in the research area.
- ii. It is also recommended in this work that heads of departments and deans of faculties should be made to incorporate the task of monitoring of their colleagues to the administrative task. With this heavy monitoring, teachers should be sufficiently motivated for noble role.
- iii This study called for a review of the curriculum to meet contemporary need of the society, with the provision of more qualified and competent teachers to meet the challenges of the envisaged curriculum. In the new curriculum, examinations should be de-emphasized while competency should be tested by employers of labour.

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