

Curriculum Development and the Challenges Intrinsic In Pedagogical Changes in Basic Education: The Tasks of Teachers In Nigerian Primary Schools

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Abstract

As a curriculum programme, basic education has become constituted into one of the importantly embedded features of the Nigerian primary education system. A major critical pivot of its pedagogical assets hinges on the perspective that its curriculum dimensions and underpinnings imply that the programme itself is submerged in immense integrative and interdisciplinary commitments. This frame of thought does not only evoke a notion of curriculum integration but also calls for a sound knowledge necessary for coping with the complex methodological dimensions and demands which are intrinsic in basic education. However, and unfortunately, in many of our classroom situations, the critical pivots and assets of basic education, which are designed for enabling teachers achieve instructional effectiveness amongst young learners, are relegated to the background. Our teachers largely wallow in traditional styles of classroom pedagogy which fail to yield desired dividends in our primary education. These developments run counter to the very basis of curriculum development in basic education. However, in recent times, the climate of views have uniformly emerged and are endorsing the need for curriculum modification and or change at the level of basic education in the framework of our primary

schools. These views generally endorse that the teacher has an uphill task to encounter and overcome if he is to achieve some good measure of success. In particular, he has to master the epistemology and ontological imperatives involved in this directive. This directive must necessarily derive not so much from the teacher's subject-matter knowledge and background but rather from his rational application of methodologies, principles and styles of classroom pedagogy' which can contribute significantly in bringing about innovations which are rooted in curriculum interdisciplinary and curriculum integration. This line of thought represents a kind of panacea which could be employed for the purpose of exploring and capitalizing on the assets intrinsic in basic education in enhancing the creative capabilities and powers of young persons in the arduous task of nation building within the framework of Nigerian primary schools.

Keywords: Curriculum, Education, Primary Education Knowledge, Government.

Introduction

The recognition of the importance and vital position of primary education in this country, according to National Policy on Education (2004:12), is explained by the objectives which this level of learning is designed to fulfill in the lives of young learners. These objectives are reflected thus: (a) the inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; (b) the laying of sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking; (c) citizenship education as a basis for reflective participation in and contribution to the life of the society; (d) character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes; (e) providing in the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his society; and (g) providing basic tools for further educational development, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality.

The National Policy on Education (2004) endorses that primary education objectives in Nigeria, as outlined above, are to be attained through curriculum programmes based on classroom dispensation of a number of subjects. These subjects include: English language, Mathematics, Physical and Health Education, Primary Science, Religious studies, Local crafts, Social studies, Music and Arts, Creative arts and Drama. Ideally, these subjects are to be dispensed in our primary schools by holders of Nigerian Certificates of Education (NCE). The National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) has also introduced Primary Education Studies (PES) as a compulsory subject for all prospective primary school teachers. The PES represents a multidisciplinary course of studies which embraces the following: Philosophy of pre-primary and primary education, social studies, integrated science, mathematics and language arts. In effect, primary curriculum programmes, whether dispensed through the NCE or PES, are intended to

help both teachers and prospective teachers meet the demands of classroom teaching in all the major subject areas in our primary school curriculum.

However, in spite of the foregoing educational innovations which represent deliberate efforts by the government to improve the quality assurance status of primary education in this country, the climate of views regarding the vital need for change in curriculum development at that level of education revealed that little in the area of qualitative growth has been recorded (Yusuf, 1995; Orubite, 2004; Obanya, 2007). In particular, Nwofo (2004) observes that as new challenges continue to arise, the need for enhanced qualitative primary education will continue to pervade public interest and debate.

The climate of criticisms continues to swing to the view that a good deal of curriculum programmes in our primary education is still based on the traditional approach to the curriculum. This approach is characterized by separate classroom instructions in the various traditional subject disciplines such as English language, Mathematics, Integrated Science, physical and health education, Social Studies, Music, Primary Science and Arts. Although these subjects do not only represent ways of organizing knowledge and also constitute the means of dealing with knowledge into thought-edifices and categories which comprise the curriculum, they are also designed to meet our practical need of making the world more intelligible and comprehensive (Tanner and Tanner, 1980). This practical need notwithstanding, however, these edifices and compartments of subject matter have emerged to represent a myriad of specializations even at the level of primary education. This fragmentation has given rise to one of the weightiest problems of primary education in modern times—a problem that impinges on the isolation of the curriculum from life experiences including the issues and problems which they raise. This development has given rise to what Dewey (1952) addressed as “the fatal disconnection of subject matter which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum in primary schools”. In other words, an enthronement of this single subject approach in primary education encourages a negation of the wholistic view of knowledge about the world we live in. The development engenders a compartmentalized and specialized view of knowledge in the minds of young children which is very psychologically misplaced, particularly at the primary school stage of development.

Predicaments of the Traditional Approach to Curriculum Development in Primary Education and the Vitality’ for Endorsing the Climate of Needs for Change Engendered by these Lapses in the Nigerian Schools’ System

The present “subject-orientedness” of primary education in Nigeria is counter-productive to the ideals intrinsic in the theoretical perspectives which underscore the basis for functional curriculum development at that level of schooling, already reflected earlier. This “ugly” feature of our primary education has been seriously criticized and challenged by a number of researchers

and academics (Nwogu, 1987; Yusuf, 1995; Okam and Bozimo, 2000; Ibiam, 2004; Nwifo, 2004; Obanya, 2007). These academics generally endorsed that the employment of the traditional approach in curriculum development in our primary schools generally rendered these institutions negatively functional in a number of ways. These predicaments of these primary institutions bear on these lapses: (a) a projection of a negation of the importance and vitality of “child centeredness” in primary education; (b) a failure in bringing about a reconciling and integration of the pastoral care of primary education and children’s curriculum activities; (c) the dangers arising from a highly structured and arbitrary time-table arrangements of the various subjects in curriculum programmes might be quite detrimental in fostering and sustaining the interests of pupils in academic learning; (d) an enthronement of subject approach to the curriculum does not only imply a subscription to a negation of the relevance of “unity of knowledge” but also a failure in emphasizing the vital links between the various subject disciplines in school programmes; (e) the “subject-mindedness” of curriculum programmes often lack a “disciplined outlook” in the sense that it might not possess any appreciable degree of academic vigour in the advantage of young learners during classroom work; (f) the comparative absence of “integrative curriculum structures” in classroom programme usually renders them abstract and unreal for teaching in imaginative ways that are designed for fostering discovery and problem-solving in the young learner; and (g) a revelation that a complete subjection and exposures of primary school children to the subject approach to curriculum development usually brings about a dampening of their interests and initiatives in the learning process. Besides, the approach is considered to be highly restrictive and tends to run counter to the growing awareness of the social mobility function of education (Tanner and Tanner, 1980; Alaezi, 1991; Okam, 1998; and Kazi and Okam, 2000).

Schofield (1975) observes that at the level of primary education, the employment of the traditional subject approach largely bears on a consideration of the curriculum in terms of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored rather than in terms of activity and experience for the growing child. Morrish (1975; 31) expatiates further that the employment of the traditional approach has rendered many primary schools non-functional in terms of responding to the climate of needs required to improve the lots of children and young persons. He discloses that these institutions have failed the child in his aspiration in a variety of ways including the following: (a) developing in him the fundamental human powers and to awaken him to the fundamental interest of civilized life so far as these powers and interests lie within the compass of childhood; (b) encouraging him to attain gradually to control an orderly management of his energies, impulses and emotions, which is the essence of moral and intellectual discipline; (c) helping him to discover the idea of duty and to ensure it; and (d) opening out his imagination and his sympathies in such a way that he may be prepared to understand and to follow in later years the highest examples of excellence in life and in conduct.

Schofield (1975) reveals that one of the lapses exhibited in primary schools, which operate on the basis of the traditional approach to the curriculum, bears very negatively on their failure to harmonize the needs of children in relation to social needs. He discloses that a major mistake of these primary schools is to relegate the needs of the society to the background and concentrate solely on the real or imaginary needs of the child. He elaborates further that since many of these schools, very often, fail to discover the real needs of their pupils, they also fail to provide these young learners with the appropriate curriculum programmes necessary to benefit them on the one hand and the society on the other hand. Schofield (1975:75) reflects the problem and failure of primary education to function effectively as baselines for enabling children discover what life holds for them.

A child's abilities and aptitudes create certain needs which primary education must fulfill. Many primary schools have failed to recognize that, because different children have different abilities and aptitudes, they (the schools) have different uphill tasks to employ the education process to meet their needs. However, since many of these schools fail to discover these needs and educate these children accordingly, they cannot be said to be child-centred in any justifiable sense. These primary schools are, therefore, not making possible individual development of children through initiating them rationally into the content of the curriculum by way of education.

The Climate of Change which Engendered the need for Instituting Integrated Curriculum Development at the Level of Basic Education in the Framework of Nigerian Primary Schools

The Climate of opinion on school learning was largely instrumental in the endorsement of the view that the traditional approach to curriculum development in primary education has generally relegated to the background the orchestration and demonstration of the intrinsic connection between "curriculum" and "suitability" with reference to the growing child (Yusuf, 1995; Okam and Kazi, 2000; Ukeje, 2000; Orubite, 2004; Ibiam, 2004, Nwufu, 2004; Obanya, 2007; Okam and Danbaba, 2011). These scholars generally disclosed that, for too long, primary education, as a base-line for sustainable educational development, has failed through the curriculum, to convey to the young learner in the school, knowledge, beliefs, aspirations and attitudes which are essential for the business of living - a design which is meant to capitalize on the curriculum ideals and realities of primary education for sustainable educational development.

However, a major promise of the curriculum designs established in the National Policy on Education (2004) largely derive in their potential for making schooling a functional happening in the lives of young learners in our primary schools. This Policy has called on schools to cease every opportunity, classroom-wise, to make primary education functionally relevant to the cognitive, affective and psychomotor needs of young learners – needs conducive for sustainable

educational development. Alaezi (1991) submitted that this “functionality principle” essentially endorses a call for a practical application of schools’ learning into three main identifiable features, namely: (a) acquisition of permanent literacy, numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively; (b) character and moral training and a development of sound attitudes; (c) provision of opportunities for developing manipulative skills. The foregoing submissions on sustainable educational development imply, among others, that the instructional programmes built into the curriculum design which bear on primary education should not only be tailored at making young learners become acquainted with bodies of content but should also be oriented into employing those knowledge structures to find what speaks to them and helps them grow in their innermost selves. This envisaged curriculum package, according to Bryan (1974), has to capitalize on the need to assist the young learner to grasp the issues involved in the “human condition” so as to develop qualities demanded in the National Policy on Education (2004) for the purpose of sustainable educational development. It was largely this concern with “human condition”, a concern which was generated by revelations from knowledge and awareness regarding child development, according to Bryan (1974), which led to the post-war curricular reform movement into issues, ideals and realities which impinge on basic education. These reform movements were, in part, largely instrumental in the foundation and establishment of “curricula integration” in primary education. These developments were also largely responsible for the emergence of social studies education, as a curriculum design in the 1970’s in Nigeria. Okobiah (1985) endorses that it was a recognition of the potentialities of social studies for inculcating the right type of attitudes, skills and virtues of an individual through a unified, integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum that the planners of the National Policy of Education gave it a prominent place within the core subjects of the primary schools curriculum in the 6-3-3-4 system of education. Obanya (2004) reminds us that it was the same concern for ‘human condition’ that shifted our attention to integrated curriculum as a possible means of providing meaningful learning to pupils at the primary education level. He advances that the focus of Basic Education in this country is the development of basic survival skills in the learner in such a way that he can meaningfully participate in economic and civic life of his society, and also be adaptable to ever changing societal and global realities and expectations. He reveals that this development cannot be obtained when learners are offered a restricted world view through the lenses of discrete subject matter; he reflects that learners must be able to see patterns, relationship and connectedness between different aspects of the curriculum material, and between the curriculum and the challenges of living. He sums up that curriculum integration is the driving force for modern curriculum development in basic education.

Responding to Demands of Climate Change at Basic Education: Exploring Curriculum Integration as Basis for Curriculum Development in Nigerian Primary Education

In response to the demands intrinsic in climate change at basic education in Nigeria, it is endorsed that this task rests on the view, among other things, that modern curriculum development in the totality of primary education must necessarily derive its basis from curriculum integration. Curriculum integration is designed to solve problems created by the separate subject approach in primary education. Its orientation is aimed at incorporating “wholistically” and or “integratively” knowledge from many realms of learning. The subject matter established in this development is geared, among others, at creating a universe of inquiry, discourse and understanding amongst youngsters of different backgrounds and aspirations who, as citizens of a free society, are obliged to share certain responsibilities and issues (Tanner and Tanner, 1980). These responsibilities and issues are essentially meant to encourage and develop the following amongst learners, namely: self confidence and initiative; power of imagination and resourcefulness; desire for continued knowledge and learning; appreciation for the dignity of man and liberty; sense of respect and tolerance for the opinion of others; social attitudes and values such as co-operation, participation, interdependence, open-mindedness, honesty, integrity, diligence, trustworthiness and obedience (Okam, 1998; Obanya, 2004; 2007).

At the primary school level of education, this “new” subject-matter arrangement is meant to provide young pupils with insight into the use of functional curricular structures and processes which are of relevance to modern civilization. Because this integrated curriculum package is intended to provide content which is both meaningful and relevant to a young learner’s personal life, it is mainly organized according to the needs and problems of young people that demand personal and social understanding. Consequently, the divisions of subject-matter that are characteristics of the traditional subject curriculum are dissolved since these problems are not confined to the singular disciplines or subject fields that constitute the separate bodies of organized knowledge (Bellack, 1965; Pring, 1971; Alaezi, 1991; Obanya, 2004; 2007; Okam, and Abdullahi, 2011).

Thus, thoughts which bear on the relevance of “curriculum integration” in primary education paved the way for shifting the context of curriculum development from individual subject disciplines to broad and integrated groups of knowledge as represented in basic education for handling pedagogical issues and problems in primary education. This development, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980), necessitated the need for envisioning general education programmes in which instructions are geared towards cutting across the disciplines while special efforts are made to show the intimate relationship between these fields as concepts from them are brought to bear on societal problems or issues raised in the curriculum for solutions with reference to young learners.

As a curriculum programme, basic education represents a baseline that is designed to satisfy, at least, the minimum learning needs of people. It combines a wide variety of formal and non-

formal educational activities and programmes designed to enable learners acquire functional literacy. Fadare (2001) reflects that basic education programmes are usually tailored at achieving, among others, the purpose of promoting social effectiveness in people by raising their level of consciousness in such a way as to enable them align themselves with the dictates of the reality of their lives and be able to meet the demands of their environment.

The Federal Government's Implementation Guidelines (FGN, 2000) expatiates further that basic education is aimed at equipping individuals with such knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them achieve the following: live meaningful and fulfilling lives; contribute to the development of society; derive maximum social, economic and cultural habits from society; and discharge their civic obligations completely. In the context and framework of curriculum integration, Tanner and Tanner (1980) disclosed that basic education largely derives sustenance from a progressivist curriculum legacy which endorses that in the education process, there is always the persistent force towards equilibrium in considering the learner, society and the world of organized knowledge as vital interactive sources and influence for curriculum development. They subscribe that these sources and influences emerged as paradigm artifacts and features intrinsic in the curriculum established in basic education. In this circumstance, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980: 435), basic education demands that the learner, the society and the world of knowledge must be treated in their complementarities rather than antagonistically if education progress is to be made. Thus, a commitment to the tenets of basic education is expected to provide a kind of general education which would help create unity out of diversity. These tenets are in consonance with Dewey's (1952: 85-86) progressivism views about the curriculum which subscribe that; the body of knowledge is indeed one; it is a spiritual organism. To attempt to chop off a member here and amputate an organ there is the veriest impossibility. The problem is not one of elimination, but of organization; of simplification, not through denial and rejection but through harmony.

Thus, the curriculum underpinnings of basic education, according to Tanner and Tanner (1980: 435-438), must, of necessity, be channeled at addressing and bringing about possible solutions to issues and problems which have bearings on the following: (a) how best to relate curriculum to life; (b) the question of re-humanizing and re-synthesizing the curriculum in order to search for new curriculum structures; (c) a development of interdisciplinary studies and courses for the possibility of addressing and proffering solutions to issues, concerns and problems; (d) inquiry and problem-solving including knowledge production and knowledge building; (f) reflective thinking for a purpose of channeling it effectively to the social problems of the day to a sufficient degree; (g) the exhibition of intellectual productivity rather than a counter-productive enterprise that derives through the process itself; (h) a liberation of the capacities of every individual for a purpose of embracing individual autonomy; (i) an education that is tailored to the service of the

democratic ideal; and (j) an establishment of relationship between learning about real life situations and problems and possibly bringing about a closure of the gap between curriculum development and social needs. These issues and problems clearly evoke a sound knowledge and display of the tenets of curriculum synthesis and curriculum integration to tackle them effectively including the proffering of needed solutions.

Curriculum Development on Climate Change at Basic Education: Capitalizing on Curriculum Integration in the framework of Primary Schooling for Executing Programme Designs

Curriculum development on climate change at basic education level demands, among other things, that if the instructional assets of curriculum integration in the totality of the framework of primary education must be visualized as one of those avenues for establishing a strong basis for teaching and learning at that level (basic education), it has to be functional. This “functionality principle” presupposes that basic education has to be tailored at meeting a number of ends namely: (a) it has to be problem-solving in orientation; (b) it must possess and display transfer values; and (c) it must display a purpose that relates to life (Alaezi, 1991; Okam and Mang, 2007; Okam and Abdullahi, 2011; Obanya, 2004; and 2007).

Okam (2005) reflects that the foregoing criteria must be made operational in a classroom setting within a framework of an understanding that basic education represents a relevant curriculum package which aims at integrating many related realms of knowledge so long as they offer to the learner a wholistic portrait of man and his knowledge of society. The implications of this perspective with reference to a classroom dispensation of basic education curriculum programmes in our primary schools are considered in terms of the demands made on the teacher, as follows: (i) pedagogical orientations; (ii) curriculum structures established in instructional programmes; (iii) scope of curriculum programmes; and (iv) design of curriculum programmes. These issues are briefly examined.

Pedagogical Orientations

In the above perspective, teachers are required and urged to groom young learners towards being intellectually capable such that they are to think for themselves; these teachers are meant to orient young learners into a variety of practical tasks designed to enable them take decisions; teachers are urged to display elements of creativity which are geared at encouraging scientific and reflective thinking amongst the young in their classrooms. A major pedagogical imperative hinges on the task of urging teachers portray the basic education curriculum as activity-oriented structures which are tailored at providing children with opportunities to practice a variety of skills which would assist them function effectively both at school and in later life. (Fadare, 2001; Obanya, 2004 and 2007).

Curriculum Structures Established in Instructional Programmes

The structures of the entire instructional programmes established in basic education curriculum has to underscore the vitality of the interrelationships of its parts, in contrast to the structure of each specific subject discipline of the traditional curriculum approach. Okam and Mang (2007) submit that this development should constitute the hub of curriculum structures in basic education programmes. In this orientation, interdisciplinary studies are being encouraged as replacements for single-focus study of separate subjects. The aim is to provide the process by which individuals use knowledge from many realms in making decisions which bear on social and public policy. The idea is to enhance a development of skills of analytical reasoning through the establishment of relationships that cut across various subject-matter areas (Okam, 1989; Alaezi, 1991; Obanya, 2004 and 2007; Okam and Mang, 2007; Okam and Abdullahi, 2011).

Scope of Curriculum Programmes

Okam and Mang (2007) reflected that if the scope of curriculum programmes is to be rendered very broadly and requisite enough for the purpose of achieving instructional effectiveness in basic education, its content must be formulated to encompass more than the infusion of art, music, literature and philosophy into social science programmes. It is also envisioned that many aspects of the natural sciences will be grafted into curriculum programmes. The emphasis will be on problem-solving rather than on fact-accumulation; it will also be geared towards

underscoring the interrelatedness and the continuity and repetitive quality of thoughts, creations and actions of predecessors which affect and are related to the works of contemporaries” (Tanner and Tanner, 1980: 425)

Design of Curriculum Programmes

A major promise of curriculum integration in primary education lies in its potential for making basic education a relevant happening in the lives of young learners (Okam and Mang, 2007). Tanner and Tanner (1980:420) reflected that the philosophy behind the entrenchment of basic education in primary education programmes impinges on the view that young learner need “free times and sympathetic guidance to look at life, to look at themselves, and to look at the human condition and slowly to decide how they mean to spend themselves and by what means they choose to govern their values upon this earth”. Tanner and Tanner (1980) endorsed that the function of curricular programmes in basic education should not be for pupils to become acquainted with bodies of content but rather to use these great treasures of culture in finding what speaks to them and helps them to grow in their innermost selves.

Capitalizing on the Relevance of Curriculum Integration in Executing Curriculum Development in Basic Education in Nigerian Primary Schools: Challenges and Tasks of the Teacher

The tasks involved in exploring the assets of curriculum integration in achieving instructional effectiveness in basic education in our primary schools necessarily demands that the teacher of the programme has to be knowledgeable and aware of its unique perspectives without which it might not function effectively in our schools' settings. These perspectives represent important operational tools for the teacher. He needs to capitalize on the functions of these operational tools in the benefit and interests of young learners in teaching-learning situations involving basic education programmes. The implications of these tasks for the teacher are considered in terms of a number of components of the curriculum which bear on basic education programme, namely: (a) The philosophy; (b) Curriculum Orientations; (c) Ontological Dimensions; (d) Instructional Methodologies; (e) Resource Materials Exploration and Usage, and (f) Evaluation Procedures.

The foregoing instructional design issues and assets are briefly addressed in terms of the classroom tasks of the teacher of basic education programmes in our primary schools.

The Philosophy

The teacher has to recognize that the philosophy behind the teaching of basic education in our schools should be seen as one of the main avenues of establishing a strong basis for the production of effective citizenry and of forging a cohesive society that will support a notion of nation-building within the context of Nigeria as a democracy (Okobiah, 1985; Okam, 2002; NPE, 2004; Okam and Mang, 2007). This criterion has to be made operational in a classroom setting within a framework of an understanding that basic education represents a relevant curriculum package which aims at integrating many related subject matter areas which offer to the young learner a wholistic portrait of man and his knowledge of society (Okam and Mang, 2007).

Curriculum Orientation

The curriculum content of basic education programmes is visualized as artefacts which are contrived as a basis for solving problems created through the employment of the separate subject approach in the curriculum of schools and colleges. These developments are in consonance with the essence of the curriculum dimensions and orientations established in basic education programmes. The curricula envisaged in these developments are aimed at incorporating integratively knowledge and inspirations from many realms of learning. The subject matter established in this curriculum development has to be tailored, among others, "at creating a universe of inquiry, discourse and understanding amongst youngsters of different backgrounds

and aspirations who, as citizens of a free society, are obliged to share certain responsibilities and problems (Tanner and Tanner, 1980:415). This curriculum package is expected to provide young pupils with some insight into the use of knowledge structures, perspectives and processes which have relevance to modern civilization. Most importantly, since basic education is intended to offer a curriculum which is both relevant and meaningful to the young learner's personal life, it has to be largely organized according to the needs and problems of young pupils that demand personal and social understanding (Okam, 2002; Okam and Mang, 2007).

Ontological Dimensions

The ontological dimensions of basic education underscore the need for the formation and development of useful and democratic values for the young learner who is expected to mature into an effective citizen (Engle, 1977; Banks and Clegg, 1977; Tanner and Tanner, 1980; Okam, 2005). This perspective is hinged and oriented to the maintenance and extension of fundamental values of a democratic society with particular reference to the young learner, as a prospective citizen. Since values are so clearly involved in citizenship formation, the ontological dimension of basic education demands that curriculum programmes have to be tailored to emphasize the value components of citizenship (Engle, 1977; Okam, 2002).

Instructional Methodology

It is underscored here that the effective implementation of programmes established in basic education in schools must depend on teachers whose expertise, among others, derives not necessarily from their subject-matter knowledge and back-ground but rather from a rational application of methodologies and styles of classroom pedagogy which can contribute significantly to bringing about innovations intrinsic in curriculum integration (Engle, 1977; Okam 2002). This directive demands from the teacher an exhibition of skills and competencies needed for instituting rational classroom manipulations of the content areas of basic education for the purpose of achieving learning objectives which centre on the needs and interests of young learners considered within the larger framework of Nigeria's needs and interests as a thriving democracy. An establishment of a functional basic education curriculum in our primary schools has to be visualized largely in terms of activities and experiences on the part of learners rather than in terms of knowledge to be acquired and facts to be stored. This thinking-pattern explains why the methodologies needed for classroom dispensation of this curriculum needs to avoid subject compartmentalization and should, therefore, emphasize the integration of subject matter from many disciplines for a major purpose of offering explanation about man in society. If such a curriculum is to emphasize the "functionality principle", it must provide a considerable variety of openings for independent inquiry amongst learners who may bring special gifts and talents to solving any problem and might also develop forms of cooperation with their fellows which

would have social significance. This scheme is essentially conceptual on the theory of integration of a variety of subjects and disciplines which stress, in effect, the need to make connections between them towards enabling learners acquire appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundation for life-learning. The teacher, therefore, has to embrace a good deal of the new methodologies, which are designed to counter rote-learning and teacher centered procedures, and embrace activity and discovery method and a variety of child centered procedures; some examples of these techniques include “inquiry methods”, ‘role playing’, ‘problem solving’, ‘small group discussions’, ‘project dramatization methods’, ‘simulation’ and ‘questioning methods’. The mark of a good teacher, according to Rice and Rice (1977), is not that he uses all these techniques but that he uses right method to get at the right job. In all these methods, the teacher’s major function is to motivate, plan, manage and control teaching-learning situations to the end of achieving learning objectives (Okam and Joof, 1992).

Resource Materials: Exploration and Usage

If the basic education teacher expects to achieve instruction effectiveness in curriculum programmes, he must necessarily be involved in a better use of instructional materials, resources, equipments, facilities and the refinements of instruments and techniques for achieving better results classroom-wise. There is a host of instructional materials, which could be placed at his disposal for the general purpose of achieving effectiveness in teaching. The teacher who is committed to the achievement of the goals of basic education needs to see the instructional materials as “teaching assistants” which can be used in enabling the learner acquire more “cognitive perspectives” including finding answers to problems, building of new insights, appreciations and making rational choice amongst alternative courses of action. The teacher has to use these instructional materials for communicating ideas to the learner and the principle task of the learner is to grasp them.

Evaluation Procedure

Better prospects for a more useful and meaningful future in the classroom dispensation of basic education programmes in Nigerian primary schools must also be rooted in a revision or complete phasing-out of the traditional approach to evaluation in the programme. Current evaluation procedure in basic education needs to involve a comprehensive process of collecting, interpreting and reporting evidence of a pupil’s growth which occurs as a consequence of a school programme. It embraces much more than measurement or testing. Measurements or testing are to be hinged on single aspect of subject-matter achievement or specific skills or abilities while the emphasis on evaluation is upon broad personality changes and attainment or achievement of major objectives of an educational programme. These include not only subject-matter

achievements but also developments and or changes in attitudes, interests, ideals, ways, thinking, work habits including personal and social adaptability (Okam, 2002; Obanya, 2004 and 2007). The teacher has to devise more comprehensive and systematic schemes for collecting evidence of a learner's growth not only in cognitive achievements but also in the affective and psychomotor developments as a result of classroom exposure to basic education programmes. It has, therefore, become important for evaluators of learning outcomes in basic education to accommodate the view that the present day evaluation in classroom situations has become far more all-embracing in the sense that everything that goes on in any given teaching-learning situation is evaluated (Okam, 1992). This modern approach is designed to last for longer periods than the traditional methods because it is expected to achieve the following outcomes among others, namely: (i) a determination of the details about how learners have acquired knowledge and what they can do with this; (ii) an assessment of teachers and resources for teaching; and (iii) an evaluation of particular methods in terms of how much pupils have been able to learn and how they react to the subject-matter being taught.

The foregoing evaluative criteria have to be adhered to by the teacher if he is to create more meaningful and lasting impact amongst young learners in terms of an achievement of the objectives that prompted the classroom dispensation of basic education programmes in Nigerian primary schools. In recognition of this development, the teacher has to institute and put in-place a number of evaluation-working mechanisms in the context of basic education programmes in the framework of our primary schools. These mechanisms are spelt out as follows: (a) the evaluation programme must be an all-embracing process; this implies that all available means of collecting data bearing on pupil's learning must be explored and utilized in the evaluation process; (b) evaluation must be goal-oriented; the need to clarify what is to be evaluated is a priority in the evaluation process; (c) evaluation needs to be a continuous process; ideally, it is expected that evaluation should be an interrelated part of all teaching- learning process involving basic education programmes; it is not something that occurs at the end of a lesson or at the termination of a school year; (d) if evaluation in basic education is to achieve comprehensiveness and effectiveness in learning programmes, it has to be a cooperative process (team evaluation) involving teachers, pupils, parents, curriculum developers and government agencies. Thus, team members, observing a young learner or pupil under varied conditions and circumstances are in a better position than a single teacher to make or pass judgments about a particular pupil.

Conclusion

In order to ensure effective implementation in the basic education scheme, as a curriculum programme in the Nigerian schools' system, we need professional teachers who must necessarily endorse and display, in practical terms, the quality assurance imperative demanded in the perspectives established in teacher production and teacher productivity in the context of the new scheme. A number of these quality assurance imperatives demand a commitment of the professional teacher of the basic education scheme in terms of an execution of the following tasks with reference to learners; (a) identifying, recognizing and promoting individual differences; (b) varying learning experiences to take care of individual differences; (c) creating opportunities for learner participation and involvement in classroom situations; (d) use of questions as instruments to challenge their intelligence and ability; (e) respect for the interests, choices and individual decisions; (f) exploring and employing guidance and counselling techniques for treating and effecting management of individual and group development; (g) providing a stimulating and conducive environment with learning opportunities through the employment of varied instructional materials; (h) execution of supervision so as to ascertain the adequacy of teaching-learning situations and techniques; (i) engagement in critical observation and study of individual children.

In order to subject themselves to the rigours of quality assurance imperatives in the context of the basic education scheme, professional teachers operating within it need to be committed to the quest for improvement and development as follows: (a) exposure to training and re-training designs and techniques so as to meet changing scientific and technological challenges; (b) identification and maximization of abilities in the interest of learners; (c) encouraging integrative and wholistic education in order to promote all-round development of learners; and (d) a commitment to consistent and continuous curriculum development to cater for different learning experiences that will appeal to the different nature and abilities of individual learners.

If the basic education programme is to succeed in Nigeria, as a foundation for life-long learning in the context of quality assurance imperatives and perspectives with reference to effective teacher production and teacher productivity, the following recommendations are made: (a) there is need for employing more qualified teachers in terms of the requisite knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience they possess; (b) teachers should be trained and retained in the use of illustration, examples, varying instructional materials, communication and human relations skills have to be embraced to enable them relate and communicate with different children in the class and the school; (c) teachers should be encouraged to obtain formal training in education technology; and (e) children should be exposed to varying experiences so as to develop inherent abilities hidden in them.

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