

THE TEACHERS' ROLE IN ENHANCING CURRICULUM DELIVERY AT THE SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION FOR LIFE-LONG LEARNING AND GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS

ELEMS-IKWEGBU, HELEN NGOZI, *Ph.D*

Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt

helen.elems-ikwegbu@ust.edu.ng or helenelems367@gmail.com
08036764584

Abstract

This paper addressed the critical role of teachers in enhancing curriculum delivery at the secondary level of schooling, to foster lifelong learning and prepare students for global competitiveness. In today's rapidly evolving world, education is to equip students with not only academic knowledge, but also the skills and mind set for lifelong learning. The paper therefore delved into the multifaceted responsibilities of teachers, encompassing innovative pedagogical approaches, the cultivation of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and the integration of cultural diversity in global perspectives. Furthermore, it emphasized the need for professional development opportunities for educators to adapt to the changing educational landscapes. By enhancing the teacher's role in curriculum delivery, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in nurturing individuals who are well-equipped to thrive in a globalized and competitive environment. The paper concluded that overcoming the numerous challenges which surround the teacher requires a combination of policy support, professional development, adequate resources and a commitment to adapt teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of learners and the demands of a globalized world. It therefore suggested among others that there is need for professional development of teachers to enable them stay updated with best practices, new pedagogical approaches and the latest research on effective teaching methods.

Keywords: Curriculum Delivery, Global Competitiveness, Life-Long Learning, Secondary Education

Introduction

In an era marked by constant innovation and globalisation, the role of education, especially at the secondary level can never be overstated. The dynamic landscape of the 21st century demands that students not only acquire essential knowledge and skills but also cultivate a mind-set of lifelong learning to remain competitive on a global scale. At the heart of the transformative process lies the teacher, a pivotal figure who shapes the curriculum delivery and consequently, the educational experience of students. This formed the basis for the wake-up call on stake holders to channel Nigerian education towards the development of the individuals, meeting the societal needs and developing the nation. Nigerian government realized that the education prevalent at the time of colonial departure would bring the entire country to a stand still. Without hesitation, consultations were made with stakeholders for a way out the dilemma. The result of the consultation was the National Curriculum Conference which was hosted in 1969 in Lagos by the National Assembly; various matters arising from the conference were;

- i. To adopt a systematic strategy and structure for adequate provision of education to indigenes.
- ii. To enable the acquisition of needed knowledge, skills, values and competences self-development and nation building within their generation and bound (Uyoata, et al., 2010).

The systematic strategy and structure were the introduction of National Policy on Education and the adoption of 6-3-3-4 system of education. (Elems-Ikwegbu, 2023).

As stated earlier, the reason for these bold steps were to bring in reforms and changes in curriculum for societal advancements, economic and sustainable development to achieve meaningful industrial and technological breakthrough as visible in the developed countries across Europe, North/South America and Asia (Elems-Ikwegbu, 2023). Going forward, expected to be responsive to societal and individual needs; comprehensive, courage of the three h's (the head, the hands and the heart); adaptable to changing time, changing needs and changing conditions (Obanya in Lawal, 2018). Having realized the aforementioned expectations from the curriculum, the stakeholders and educational leaders formulated the National Policy on Education in such a way that the expected academic achievements of each level of education were clearly spelt, taking cognisance of the pivotal role of quality teacher in providing quality education at all levels (FRN, 2014).

The importance of secondary education cannot be gainsaid; it is at this level of education that individuals' lives are defined and shaped. According to Juliana, et al. (2019), secondary education is one of the twelve key factors listed by world economic forum for a country's competitiveness. This assertion is one of the factors instrumental to the innovations, return, restructuring and so on in the education system. The reason for the above stated actions is for relevance to national needs and integration into the global platform. Juliana, et al. (2019) assert that many developed countries in the world such as the United States of America, Indonesia, Finland, Singapore, among others are on the global platform today because of their ability to in-still in their citizens intellectual and social efficiency. Similarly, Tan et al., cited in Elems-Ikwegbu (2022) explain that some of these countries who are able to build their education system to stand global competitiveness had huge setbacks in their early years of independence due to lack of natural resources and economic uncertainties. However, they took a bold step by making human resources their most precious assets. In essence, this implies that the curriculum was designed in such a way that it brought out the skills and potentials in the citizens which they were able to use to enhance the economy.

Clarification of Basic Concepts

Curriculum Delivery

Curriculum refers to the knowledge and skills learners are expected to learn in a given programme through interactions, experiences, planned and unplanned activities and events. However, it has been noted by scholars that the term curriculum is complex; it has no specific definition and cannot be defined in a single sentence. It is defined based on individual's perceptions (Amadioha, 2016). According to Esu, et al. in Amadioha, the term curriculum is defined according to the two schools of thoughts; the traditionalist and the progressives. The mere relevant and distinguished definition of curriculum from the schools of thought as mentioned earlier is that of the progressives which defines curriculum as the sum total of all the planned and guided learning experiences on individual encounters under the complete guidance of the school (Amadioha, 2016). This implies that curriculum does not only refer to the academic subjects the individuals learn in schools, but also places emphasis on extracurricular activities. Based on this, Amadioha notes that a meaningful curriculum must among others include the programme of studies (academic subjects), programme of activities (extracurricular activities) and programme of guidance and counselling. On the other hand, curriculum delivery involves all practice, strategies and procedures applied in the school system to

make meaningful impact on the students, with the aim to get desirable feedback from the individuals. It refers to how the teacher delivers instruction and assessment through the use of specified resources to meet the objectives (Nevenglosky, et al., 2019).

Global Competitiveness

Competitiveness is the act of struggling to achieve more success than other people with like minds. It is carried out among people who have common interest in the pursuance of a set goal. According to Ikoro & Ezeanyim (2017), formal education brings learners together as global citizens and makes them realize the need to depend on one another to understand the various challenges in their systems and proffer necessary solutions based on the belief that such solutions to global challenges are attainable. Global competitiveness emerged from globalization, global competitiveness is explained by Ikoro & Ezeanyim (2017) as a process in which the ability and performance of any sector in a country are measured and declared the best practice after being compared and ascertained to be in tandem with what is obtainable in other nations of the world. On the other hand, world economic forum as cited in Ikoro & Ezeanyim (2017) defines competitiveness as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of production of a country. In essence, competitiveness is the ability to produce quality and superior goods and services that can stand out when compared to others in standard. Therefore, global competitiveness is the ability of a country's goods and services to withstand the prevailing global market force.

Life-Long Learning

Education is designed to sustain every individual's life in a functional way that is why it is regarded as a factor which facilitates not only the development of an individual, but all aspects of society. According to Smith in Kaplan (2016), the concept of life-long learning was first proposed by "Basil Yeaxlee" in 1929. It was adopted and discussed by UNESCO in a conference in 1960 (Ohidy in Kaplan, 2016). It reached an intellectual dimension as a result of studies on adult education by Edward Lindeman in the 1920's (Bilir in Kaplan, 2016). Meanwhile Aksoy cited in Kaplan states that the concept of lifelong learning was firstly suggested in 1919 as a discussion regarding the educational needs of individuals in the workforce.

The importance of life-long learning was as a result of rapid change and global competition. In the 1970s, life-long learning approach gained recognition in the educational systems across the globe (Karaman in Kaplan, 2016). Going forward, Uzunboylu in Kaplan (2016) defines life-long learning as a process which includes a rapid change whereby individuals are able to acquire competencies in different areas of their lives. It is an educational endeavour that includes all life processes from birth to death and all activities that aim to develop individuals' knowledge, skills and competences. Similarly, life-long learning is defined as all activities that include formal, prevalent and informal learning. It is like a journey with no destination, it plays important role in individual and societal development, it provides equal opportunities irrespective of age, geographical location, socio-economic status and educational background/level (Kaplan, 2016).

Secondary Education

Education in modern world is geared towards developing an individual for proper functioning in the society, from the National Policy on Education, FRN (2014), secondary education is a formal education given to children within ages 12-17 after the completion of primary education. Prior to

the adoption of 6-3-3-4 system of education, secondary education in Nigeria comprised of 3 streams – the grammar school, commercial and technical vocational streams. The motive was for individual life-long learning, appropriate placement for proper and successful functioning in the society and preparation of individuals for higher learning.

Structure of Secondary Education in Nigeria

The emergence of 6-3-3-4 system of education divided secondary education into two - junior secondary and senior secondary. The reason for the split was for easy planning and preparation of a curriculum suitable for all forms of learning abilities and disabilities and the acquisition of practical skills with which to earn a living for life (Okorosaye-Orubite, 2008). The curriculum for junior secondary education includes English Studies, one Nigerian language; mathematics, basic science and technology (Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology, Physical and Health Education); Religion and National values (Christian Religious Studies Islamic Studies, Social Studies, Civic Education, Security Education); pre-vocational studies (Home Economics, Agriculture), French Language, Cultural and Creative Arts; Business Studies, Arabic (optional) (FRN, 2014).

The senior secondary is designed to mould the individuals towards becoming responsible, either to pursue higher studies or join the work force. At this stage, individuals are prepared mentally and emotionally for their future endeavours, either to build interest in a specific academic discipline or technical/vocational skills. The academic discipline is often structured in departments so as to prepare students for career patting; while the technical/vocational skills are designed to instill entrepreneurial (self-reliance) mind-set and passion for life-long learning in the students (Ige, 2013). Thus, the National Policy on Education recognizes this level as “Post-Basic Education and Career Development” (FRN, 2014:17).

The curriculum of senior secondary education is in four groups; it is provided in the National Policy on Education, FRN (2014) as follows:

	Group	Subjects
1.	Science and Mathematics	Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Further Mathematics, Health Education, Agriculture, Physical Education, Computer Studies.
2.	Technology	Technical Drawing, General Metal Work, Basic Electricity, Electronics, Auto Mechanics, Building Construction, Wood Work, Home Management, Food and Nutrition.
3.	Humanities	Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Visual Arts, Music, History, Geography, Government, Economics, Literature in English, French, Arabic, Any Nigerian Language that has curriculum.
4.	Business Studies	Stores Management, Accounting, Commerce, Office Practice and Insurance.

The compulsory cross-cutting subjects include;

- i. English language
- ii. General Mathematics
- iii. Civic Education
- iv. Trade/Entrepreneurial Subjects.

For trade/entrepreneurial subjects, the various fields of study include: Auto body repair and spray painting, auto electrical work, auto mechanical work, auto parts merchandizing, air conditioning and refrigeration, welding and fabrication engineering, craft practice, electrical installation and maintenance, work radio, TV and electronic servicing, block-laying, brick laying and concrete work, painting and decorating, plumbing and pipefitting, machine wood working, carpentry and joinery, furniture making, upholstery, catering, craft practice, garment making, clothing and textile, dyeing and bleaching, printing craft, practice, cosmetology, photography, mining, tourism, leather, goods manufacturing and repair, stereography, data processing, store keeping, book keeping, G. S. M. Maintenance and repairs, animal husbandry, fishery, marketing, salesmanship.

The criteria for selection of subjects for WASSCE and SSCE are tied to the four compulsory cross-cutting subjects in addition to three, four or five subjects from the preferred fields of study, depending on potential interest and capability. Minimum number is eight, maximum is nine.

The Role of the Teacher

To enhance curriculum delivery, the teacher plays significant role. Without the teacher, there will be no delivery; the rapid and regular change in the curriculum of Nigerian education requires the teachers to play the following roles:

- i. Possess adequate Knowledge and Skills to implement all that have been embedded in the Curriculum: The saying that “no education system can rise above the level of its teachers” is centred on the pedagogical knowledge of the teacher. 21st century education is hands on and know-how for the learners and the teachers respectively. According to Nevenglosky, et al., (2019), teachers contribute hugely to learners’ progress and growth through their level of consistency, efficacy and effectiveness in curriculum delivery. They must ensure that the prescribed content is delivered in a clear and engaging manner.
- ii. Use of Various Teaching Methods and Materials to make the Content more Relatable and Interesting: This strategy is required to enable the teacher meet up with the various learning abilities the learners possess. Some learners are fast, while some of them are slow. Teachers can also adapt the curriculum to cater for the diverse learning needs of the learners. This is done by adopting various teaching strategies and materials in form of teaching aids to teach the learners.
- iii. Critical Thinking: It is essential for teachers to encourage and in still critical thinking and problem-solving skills in learners. Teachers should go beyond traditional classroom rote learning and help learners develop the ability to evaluate and analyse what they learn.
- iv. Lifelong Learning: In addition to other viable skills that enable the individual to first understand his immediate environment and society, the teacher is the knowledge transmitter. He realizes that our fast-paced culture needs strategic planning for the now and the future (Laveuve Nuutinen cited in Osaat et al, 2022). They are models for lifelong learning; therefore, it is important for the teachers to follow an Astrologer’s advice and in still in the learners the desire to fall in love with the problem and not the solution.
- v. Technology Integration: Every profession has its own set of working tools for resolving issues. Tracing the developmental stages and processes of Nigerian education from 1843 to the present, there is clear evidence that the products produced by teachers from then till now are not the same. Many strategies have been put in place to meet today’s demands and prepare students for a technology driven future (Osaat et al, 2022).

- vi. **Development of Soft Skills:** Teachers should develop skills such as communication, team work and adaptability. After all, the National Policy on Education in establishing the objectives of junior and senior secondary education emphasises among others on providing the child with diverse basic knowledge and skills for entrepreneurship and educational advancement and to provide entrepreneurial, technical and vocational job-specific skills for self-reliance and for agricultural, industrial, commercial and economic development (FRN, 2014). The end result of these objectives lies on the teachers; they are the ones to in still in the learners' relevant skills needed to achieve these lofty objectives.
- vii. **Cultural and Linguistic Diversity:** Nigeria is a multicultural and linguistic nation, though English Language has been chosen as the official language used as a medium of instruction in all schools across the country, both rural and urban areas. We cannot rule out the fact that in a global context, classrooms are increasingly diverse in terms of culture and language. The teacher takes it as a duty to ensure that these diversities do not in any way hamper inclusive and equitable education.

The 21st century as earlier stated is a world of technical “know how” and “hands on” for both the teachers and learners; besides, it is a world full of many happenings which could lead to emergencies at any point in time in all the nations of the world. These happenings could come in any form; they could be human induced or natural. Whichever way, people and the society are thrown off balance and by implication, it serves as a wake-up call to enhance the curriculum and ensure teachers' technical know-how and breakthroughs (Abdulrahman, 2022; Osaat, et al., 2022). In essence, technical know-how is the key to ‘technical’ progress and the ladder through which a nation can join other industrialized nations.

Challenges Confronting the Teacher in Enhancing Curriculum Delivery at the Secondary Level of Education for Life-Long Learning and Global Competitiveness

The teachers are at the fore of education system, they have the mandate to maintain the educational torch blazing no matter the prevailing situation. Other industrialized developed countries had this understanding that no school can be better than its teachers. No matter how rich the curriculum is designed, the effectiveness of the education system and the learning outcome at each level of education depend on the quality and competence of the teacher. Secondary education which is at the centre of the three levels of schooling and also serving as a mediator between the primary and the tertiary levels hold great importance in the education system, especially in Nigeria where the 3-3 components of the 6-3-3-4 system are expected to usher individuals to world of work or academics. However, secondary school teachers are facing numerous constraints in improving curriculum delivery for life-long learning and global competitiveness. The challenges include:

Inadequate Funding

There is no gainsaying that formal education in Nigeria has been bedevilled by poor funding. Even till date nothing has changed and that is why Nigeria still struggles to meet up the global demand and competitiveness. The curriculum is designed to usher in dexterity and accommodate diverse learning needs; unfortunately, poor funding which has engulfed Nigerian school system will not allow adequate provision of the necessary facilities and materials for effective delivery and learning. Till date, the federal government finds it difficult to allocate a substantial amount of fund to education. Out of the 26% the federal government promised to release to education from its annual

budget, the education sector has been receiving less than 10% (Umar, 2023). Inadequate funding has purged both the teacher and learners many things which would have enhanced scholarly productivity through effective curriculum delivery, especially at the secondary level where workshops, laboratories, computer labs, libraries and other necessary facilities are needed. Similarly, Abdulrahman et al., (2018:87) reveal that;

Our Educational System over the years has experienced phenomenal expansion in terms of enrolment figures without a corresponding increase in funding and provision of facilities. Consequently, be it at the primary, secondary or tertiary levels, our Educational System is characterized by problems of dilapidated or non-existent infrastructures, poorly stocked library, inadequate laboratories and equipment, poor condition of service, prompting brain drain, poor quality of teaching and poor quality of graduates, especially in science and technology.

Lack of Infrastructure and Adequate Facilities

Adequate infrastructure stimulates learning and enhances the strength or performance of the teacher in curriculum delivery. The National Policy on Education is the most revolutionary educational document produced by the government at the National Curriculum Conference held in Lagos from 8th to 12th September, 1969, under the sponsorship of the Nigerian Educational Research Council (Adaralegbe in Adeyinka, 2023). The policy proposes the objectives of education at all levels and spells out the possible ways of meeting these objectives with a particular reference made to secondary education; hence, the 6-3-3-4 Education System for the country. That is, a six-year duration for the primary, followed by six-years of secondary schooling, divided into three years of junior and three years of senior secondary and a four-year programme of university education. The stake holders designed the curriculum and included the methods, materials, equipment and aids required for teaching the content component of the curriculum so as to achieve the stated objectives at each level of education (Adeyinka, 2023) lack of infrastructure and adequate facilities which engulfed Nigerian education system have crippled the teachers' efficiency in delivering the content component of the curriculum, especially at the secondary level of schooling.

Poor Administrative Support and Professional Development and Training

Administration plays crucial role in the success of every programme. Administrative strategies in controlling the various activities in Nigerian education system can affect teachers and learners positively or negatively. According to Nevenglosky, et al. (2019), administration strategy shows the level of support it gives to the teacher to effectively deliver the content component of the curriculum, especially when new contents are introduced in the curriculum. For example, in the allocation of subjects, it is important to place teachers based on their disciplines and also provide enabling or comfortable environment for both the teachers and the learners having known that new curriculum or innovation always arouses tension and anxiety among the teachers. Poor continuous professional development and training have eluded teachers the opportunity to stay updated with best practices, new pedagogical approaches and the latest research on effective teaching methods required to address these anxieties and fears which might hinder smooth implementation of the new curriculum. Another point worthy of note is that some subjects are given more administrative support, than others, when this happens the teachers of the less supported subjects feel inferior among their colleagues.

Poor Curriculum Development in Teacher Education

Literature on teacher education curriculum has consistently emphasized the content component of the curriculum because of the orientation of the programme and the need for students to pass presented exams and jump into the workforce. That is why a college of education student will boldly tell you that curriculum is the list of subjects offered in an educational institution (Adeyinka, 2013). It takes many years of experience on the job for the teacher to realize that the subjects taught in schools are part of the components of the curriculum. This is a very serious case, when a student teacher or a teacher who is new on the job does not understand the meaning of curriculum, how will such teacher apply the four elements of the curriculum which Adeyinka provides as follows: objectives, content, methods and evaluation or assessment.

According to Adeyinka (2023), out of the four elements of the curriculum, the objectives are the ultimate goals for teaching a given subject. Selection of the content comes after the objectives have been determined; this includes the subject-matter. This is what enables the teacher achieve the stated objectives. Thereafter, the teacher adopts the most appropriate methods to teach the selected content. The methods are the various techniques used in teaching. They are the teaching aids which are applied or used according to the age, learners learning needs, their levels of education and socio-economic background. Finally, the teacher judges whether the objectives of the teaching or lesson were attained. This process determines the extent learning has taken place and the extent the teacher has imparted in the learners, inadequate knowledge of curriculum in teacher education, hinders adequate curriculum delivery especially at the secondary level of schooling.

Conclusion

Curriculum is an important input element of the tripartite model of quality in education. Nigerian government, through the Curriculum Conference of 1969 designed the curriculum to achieve life-long learning and global competitiveness. Teachers are instrumental in shaping students for lifelong learning and global competitiveness by delivering the curriculum in a way that fosters critical thinking, adaptability and passion for knowledge that extends far beyond the class room. When this is carried out effectively, Nigerian society will have no hindrance in providing quality education for its citizens irrespective of age, learning needs/abilities and socio-economic background. The teacher plays important role in the curriculum delivery especially at the secondary level of schooling where individuals make life decision, either to develop their skills and potentials or follow the academic stream. However, the numerous challenges which surround the teachers require combination of policy support, professional development opportunities, adequate resources and a commitment to adapt teaching methods to meet the evolving needs of learners in a globalized world.

Suggestions

Based on the foregoing, the followings are suggested:

- i. There is need for continuous professional development of teachers to enable them stay updated with best practices, new pedagogical approaches and the latest research on effective teaching methods.
- ii. Learners in secondary schools have diverse learning needs, abilities and backgrounds. Therefore, teachers must tailor their instruction to accommodate these differences which can be a significant challenge.

- iii. Stake holders should ensure that the curriculum is relevant to the rapidly changing global landscape and trends.
- iv. It is essential to incorporate technology into the curriculum and to prepare both the teachers and learners for digital age.
- v. Limitations in resources in terms of funding, infrastructure and teaching materials can hinder effective curriculum delivery; there is need for adequate provision to be made.

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