



## **Basic education curriculum: A panacea to achieving community development in Nigeria**

**Agugam Chigozie Ndubuisi<sup>1</sup>, Achuonye Chinedum Ifeoma<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup> Department of Educational Technology and Curriculum Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

### **Abstract**

The challenge confronting the Nigeria educational system is how to transform the curriculum and teaching learning process to provide students with the skills to function effectively in a dynamic, information \_rich and continuously changing environment. Hence, the introduction of the Basic Education Curriculum which its intended aims were to drastically reduce poverty and unemployment as well as the attitudes of the learners in many areas of life. In view of the basic education curriculum, it became pertinent to ensure the inculcation of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of acquiring knowledge which involves connectivity, collaboration, analysis, conceptualization and problem solving into the curriculum. Considering the achievement of the objectives of basic education curriculum in line with the Nigerian society; the need arises for a systematic and step-wise implementation of the new curriculum which is broader and modern. For proper implementation the new curriculum, the paper recommended and concluded that teacher capacity/ability should be developed through constant training and retraining to contend educationally well with her contemporaries.

**Keywords:** Considering, educationally, contemporaries, curriculum

### **Introduction**

The Basic Education shows its newness when it adapts effectively to the timely changes and needs of the society. It has to develop and grow in conformity to the needs of ever dynamic society. In contemporary times, the rate at which the society changes has been at a very high pace; thereby making the educational system to fight harder in order to accommodate these changes. Glatthorn, Boschee, Whitehead and Boschee (2011) averred that implementers of the curriculum (teachers/facilitators) have been continually confronted with being relevant and innovative while using teaching skills for students to succeed in the world. Curriculum which is seen as the sum of all activities, experiences and learning opportunities for which an institution or a teacher takes responsibility either deliberately or by default. This includes in such a broad concept of curriculum, the formal and informal, overt and covert, the recognized and the overlooked, the intentional and the unintentional (Coles in Okoro, 2015) <sup>[7]</sup>; while curriculum content refers to an embodiment of the attitudes, knowledge and skills which a society intends to impart to her citizens through her schools and other socializing agencies as well as a veritable tool used by any nation to achieve greatness. Thus, curriculum needs to be reexamined from time to time in order to improve on its existing realities and data, especially where unattainable, outdated and irrelevant knowledge, skill and value exist in the curriculum.

### **Basic Education Curriculum**

It is on this noting that the Nigeria educational system which adopted the Basic Educational Curriculum which at different phases in recent time has undergone various development. (Yusuf,2010) <sup>[10]</sup> asserts that the sorting and reorganization of the curriculum, its contents distribution, the use of teaching aids and their relevance to the curriculum the needs and the aspiration of the society at large are problems associated with the Nigeria educational

system. The truism that qualitative education is the basis on which meaningful development resides in any society is well documented. The recent global development in the technological, cultural, social, economic and political development of human communities is highly encompassing and multidimensional, hence, the reason for the introduction of the Universal Basic Education. The Federal Government introduced Universal Basic Education (UBE) in September 1988, following this movement, the Nigeria Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) developed and introduced the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum(BEC)- a compulsory and free education programme for all children between the ages of six and fifteen (6-15) in schools by readapting all extant Primary and Junior Secondary education Curricula in order to attain the goals and expectations of the UBE programme. The 9-year BEC was recently reviewed in 2012 in accordance with some certain contemporary and national issues bordering on education to make the curriculum less theoretical but of great relevance and interesting to the learner in particular and the society at large. Hence, the focal emphasis and interest of the 9- year BEC is on re-orientation of value, eradication of poverty and employment generation capabilities in learners (Obioma, 2011). However, the implementation of 9-year BEC took off in September, 2014. The expectation of BEC is that different subjects learnt in school should boost the students' skills on academic engagement, inquiry, collaboration, reasoning, conceptualization, communication and problem solving. Hence the main features of this programmes inculcates the following;

- a. English Studies, one Nigeria Language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Religion and National Value, Cultural and Creative Arts, Pre Vocational Studies, French and Business Studies
- b. Elective (optional) Subject: Arabic Language
- c. French and Pre Vocational Studies are introduced in

Primary 4 as core subjects while Business Studies is introduced as a core subject at the junior secondary school level. Basic Science and Technology, Religion and National Values and Pre-Vocational Studies are composite subjects (Igbokwe, 2015) <sup>[1]</sup>.

Therefore, in assessing and adopting the policy for the implementation of the basic education curriculum, it was ensured that

- Pupils who completed the primary 6 with good grades will proceed to jss1 without subjecting them to a placement examination.
- This invariably means that there should be a scrapping of what used to be a conventional terminal examination for the primary 6 pupils. However in June 2010, there was an introduction of Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) which replaces the Junior secondary examination and should be taken at the end of the 9-year. However the selective (placement) is for the graduating JSS3 students who did well and are potentially bound for senior secondary (post basic) education.

Below, contains the Junior Secondary School Curriculum objectives as given by the Nigeria Educational Research and Developmental Centre (2013)

#### **Objectives of the UBE Curriculum Content**

- Continuous assessment and school examination shall be on a ratio of 40:60 and shall be used as basis.
- There shall be no common entrance examination for transmission from primary to Junior Secondary School.
- Each state and FCT shall make adequate arrangement for smooth transition based on prescribed benchmark.
- On the successful completion of the 10-yr formal schooling, a student shall sit for the Basic Education Certification Examination (BECE) and/or Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate (JAISCE)
- State Governments and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) administration shall issue the Basic Education Certificate and/or Junior Arabic and Islamic Studies Certificate.
- There shall be efforts towards achieving equitable access to educational opportunities for all Nigerian in all parts of the country.
- State Governments and FCT shall ensure the integration of formal basic education curriculum into Qur'anic and Islamiya schools and special needs schools.

Special efforts shall be made by all the levels of government and appropriate agencies and parents to:

- Support the girl-child education and the relative eradication of boy child dropout syndrome.
- The central government and its subordinate states and grass root government develop adequate strategies and programs to encourage and provide adequate Basic education for children of peculiar circumstances such as nomadic education, education for hunters, migrant, fisher folks, orphans, children in apprenticeship, etc) who are unable to benefit from Basic Education within the conventional educational system. In essence, the government at all levels should promote access, quality and inclusiveness in education.
- Schools are mandated to fly the National Flag visibly and should start the daily activities saying the National

Anthem and National Pledge. In addition to public schools, government welcomes the establishment of Daycare centers, Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary and Junior Secondary Schools by voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals, provided the set minimum standards are met.

- In recognizing the important role of Information Technology in the advancement of skills and knowledge acquisition necessary for the an efficient and effective functioning in a world driven by knowledge, the government should make adequate provision of infrastructural facilities that will enable the effective to facilitate adequate delivery of Basic Education curriculum in Nigeria.
- The Primary and Junior Secondary Schools shall be planned as neighborhood schools.
- However, if there are special circumstances, which warrant the establishment of boarding facilities at the junior secondary school level, such should be provided. It is very pertinent to put into place all that is required to infuse a sense of belonging in every school. Measures shall be taken to ensure that the culture of the nation is kept alive through the teaching of Creative and Cultural Arts and visits to museums.
- Sports, co-curricular activities such as clubs and societies are important instruments for character training and shall be positively encouraged. More so, the Government shall make available certain educational services at all levels of Basic Education. These services include the school libraries, School health services, Guidance and Counseling, Educational Resource Centers, Laboratories and Workshops.
- Government is encouraged to provide school meal deriving from the Home Grown School Feeding and Health Programme in order to ensure healthy development of the child and encourage retention in school.

To validate the objectives of the Basic Education Curriculum, the old and the revised/new curriculum was criticized on the following grounds.

#### **Criticisms of the Old and New Curriculum**

A strong criticism leveled against the old school curricula structure is that it did not give opportunity for practicing teachers to be conscious of the desire to promote the infusion of emerging issues right from the performance objectives level to evaluation guide column. According to the Journal of Education and Practice (2013), the different views of the old and new curriculum content are as follows;

- No distinction between students' and teacher activities while in the new curriculum, activities are broken down into students' activity and teacher activity.
- No sample evaluation item to guide the teacher while in the new curriculum evaluation guide consists of sample evaluation items to guide the teacher.
- Content is organized based on how teachers teach while in the new curriculum content is organized based on how students learn.
- There is little mention about developing positive attitude in students while in the new curriculum there is more emphasis on how to develop positive attitude towards subject matter and on Student's motivation.
- Teaching methods, techniques and strategies are not

student-centered while in the new curriculum teaching-learning activities prepared parallel to learning outcomes require student-centered methods, techniques and strategies.

- The existing primary and JSS mathematics curricula truncate the 9-year continuous schooling while in the new curriculum the new basic education mathematics curriculum gives room for the 9-year continuous schooling.
- The curriculum content is not information technology driven while in the new curriculum the curriculum content is information technology driven.
- Curriculum content overload which does not encourage the use of those teaching and learning strategies that promote skills development while in the new curriculum, curriculum content is evenly distributed so as to encourage the use of facilitative teaching and learning strategies.
- Academic nature of the old curricula made it to lose touch of basic learning for lifelong survival while in the new curriculum, the curriculum is interspersed with skills for lifelong survival.
- No adequate representation of emerging issues while in the new curriculum, emerging issues such as information technology and HIV AIDS are well represented.
- Provide opportunity for learners to acquire lower order skills while in the new curriculum, it provides opportunity for learners to acquire higher-order skills in addition to lower order skills.

The above criticisms of the old and revised/new curriculum of the Basic Education Curriculum could be seen clearly in schools and in the attitudes of students who live in several communities in Nigeria. As these students attach great importance to their education, so also their different communities anticipates benefiting from their knowledge.

### Community

The word community has been for a very long time and used in divergent areas such as a "community of sportsmen", "International community", or "world community". Pyakuryal (2015) averred that, for an appropriate understanding of the sociological meaning of the term (community), the following vital components could be well-thought-out to be highlighted;

- The existence of a group of interacting people on the basis of mutual dependence and concern.
- People that lives in a distinct and limited geographical area.
- Individuals that have a sense of belonging/identification or community consciousness
- People that have shared communal values, norms, and other features of culture, and
- The community should have certain needed social institutions like schools, church, governing agency, credit agency and so on.

According to Webster's Dictionary, a community is "any group living in the same area or having interests, work, etc. in common." Communities can be small or large, co-located or online, and often possess similar structures and characteristics – their members interact together over time, are held together by a common purpose, possess distinct

roles, rely on trust as the foundation or focus of their interactions, and share a common historical background.

### Community Development

Community Development could be linked to a pathway to rural development. Community development centers more on interacting human beings within a geographical boundary. Biggs (1999) posits that community development is a process where persons are integrated with those of governmental authorities to develop the socio-cultural and economic conditions of people within a designated geographical location and communities are infused into the life of the nation assisting them to contribute meaningfully to national progress.

Community development joins the idea of "community" with "development" a group of people with a shared/mutual identity. Hence, community development depends on the communication amongst and communal effort rather than individualized efforts. This is what some sociologist could call "collective agency" (Flora and Flora, 1993). In affirmation, Shaffer (1989) <sup>[1]</sup> said that community development is a method that increases choices. It builds an environment where people can exercise their full potential to lead productive, creative lives. In the views of the Department of Local Government and Communities, Government of Western Australia (2015) Community development is a procedure through which members of a community gather together and put forth a united action in order to advance answers to shared problems.

It comprises the engagement of communities in policy making, planning, development of program and assessment. Hence, it is about government providing the avenue for community initiatives in a 'lowest up' method. For a clearer outlook, community development need to: give in for the identification of local needs, sustain the voicing of local concerns, aid flexibility, independence and local control of community groups; and support people to undertake tasks at the local level to improve their communities. Mendes (2008:3) averred that Community development is the hiring of community structures to solve social needs and empower groups of people. It is a group of people in a community reaching a decision to initiate a social action procedure to change their social, cultural, economic, and environmental situation (Christenson and Robinson, 1989) <sup>[2]</sup>.

### Principles of Community Development

The prime idea should be where rural people are, the prevailing concerns and situation of people is the first point of community development;

- Community development creates an opportunity for people to act on existing concerns.
- The passion and interest of local persons pushes their action, hence, belief, motivation and commitment are the propelling forces of community development.
- People form drive and community capacity by participating and involving actively in decision making and implementation.
- Every individual should be given an equal opportunity to be involved (Inclusiveness)
- Private individuals/resource people are welcomed to work with rural persons, rather than delivering services to them. Their responsibility to challenge and suggest is accepted, but not make or influence community decision.

- Selflessness, entrepreneurship and leadership are additions of development activities.
- The existing capacity of people and their community need to be recognized and appreciated as well as creating opportunities for them to build their capacity.

### **Desired Community Development through Basic Education Curriculum**

There is growing awareness among policy-makers, business leaders, educators among others that the educational system designed to prepare learners for an agrarian or industrially-based economy will not provide students with the knowledge and skills they will need to thrive in the 21st century's knowledge-based economy and society and following the truism that quality education is the bedrock of meaningful development in any society; hence, for basic education curriculum to achieve the appropriate National Reform Initiatives, International development goals (IDG's) and the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs), there should be a systematic and step-wise implementation to phase out the old curriculum, and this could be done through periodic monitoring, feedback and follow-up diagnostic driven actions which will involve communities in monitoring and accountability; in order to link school to life-long expectations in the assessment context. For a follow-up of the above, the need for quality assurance that will drive continuous assessment framework towards defining assessment indicators and standards for strengthening human, capital and other resources development for effective school assessment should not be neglected.

### **Conclusion**

The search for a domestic curriculum that is proficient in boosting the educational sector towards making Nigeria contend educationally with other educationally advanced countries of the world, the goal of being one of the 20 most developed countries in the world by 2020 could be found in basic education curriculum. Hence, students learning of the various school subjects in the new curriculum should enhance the inculcation of the broad skills of inquiring, reasoning, conceptualizing, problem-solving and communicating for proper aligning of the new curriculum with the needs of the society.

### **Recommendations**

For basic education curriculum to be used to achieve community development in Nigeria, the following recommendations are needful;

- The main aim of the nine (9) year basic education curriculum need to be continually upheld (implemented) in all schools - value re-orientation, poverty eradication and employment generation capabilities in learners.
- The assessment of the educational domain more especially – (affective domain) should be applied in making decisions on class performance.
- Teacher capacity/ability should be developed through constant training and retraining
- Information Communication Technology equipment's/tools should be used extensively in schools by teachers/facilitators and students.
- The concern for quality assurance of basic education curriculum through various assessment procedures and

standards should be continually done at intervals.

### **References**

1. Igbokwe CO. Recent Curriculum Reforms at the Basic Education Level in Nigeria aimed at Catching Them Young to Create Change. Science and Education Publishing from Scientific Research to Knowledge, 2017, 3(1). Retrieved online from <http://pubs.sciepub.com/education/3/1/7/>
2. Christenson JA, Robinson JW. Community Development in Perspective. Iowa State University Press, Ames Iowa, 1989.
3. Glatthorn AA, Boschee F, Whitehead BM, Boschee BF. Curriculum leadership: Strategies for development and implementation. USA: Sage Publication. Government of Western Australia (2015). Community Development A Guide for Local Government Elected Members. Perth Western Australia: Department of Local Government and Communities, 2012.
4. Mendes PP. Teaching community development to social work students: A critical reflection. Community Development Journal, 2008.
5. National Policy on Education. Yaba: National Educational Research and Development Council press, 2013.
6. Obioma J. The 9 year basic education curriculum. Structure, Contents and Strategy for Implementation: Nigeria's experience in educational reform. Abuja: Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council press, 2010.
7. Okoro CO. Fundamentals of Curriculum Development. Owerri: Cape Publishers Int'l Ltd, 2015.
8. Pyakuryal K. Community Development as a strategy to Rural Development. New Delhi: Institute of Education Press, 2017.
9. Shaffer RE. Community Economics. Economic Structure and Change in Smaller Communities. Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa, 1989.
10. Yusuf H. Reform in curriculum for basic education in Nigeria: The need for character training curriculum. Educational Research. 2010; 1(10):542-547.