

THE ROLE OF CURRICULUM IN FOSTERING NATIONAL INTEGRATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Curriculum planning emphasizes that education should serve to enable society to achieve its needs and aspirations. One such need in Nigeria which has remained largely elusive, is National integration. Learning as a social activity has a strong influence on the development of shared norms and the value placed on tolerance and understanding within a community. This paper discusses the relationship between education and integration. It explores the contemporary conceptualization and practice with respect to the place of national integration in the school curriculum.

Key words: Curriculum, fostering, national integration century.

Introduction

Education in Nigeria is an instrument “per excellent” for effecting national development. It has witnessed active participation by non-governmental agencies, communities and individuals as well as government intervention (FGN, 2013). It is therefore desirable for the Nation to spell out in clear and unequivocal terms the philosophy and objectives that underlies its investment in education.

Education is a deliberate, purposive activity directed at the achievement of a range of ends which could potentially include the development of knowledgeable individuals who are able to think rationally, the formation of a sustainable community; and the realization of economic goals benefiting both individuals and their communities (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). The term education therefore has normative implications; it suggests that something worthwhile is being internationally transmitted. This implies that, there are some values that education should seek to achieve. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) also noted that philosophers have always sought to explain how education serve moral, social, political and economic ends, Njeng’ere (2014) observe that schools play a critical role in the making of our social world. Government therefore, uses schooling to strengthen national identity and inculcate citizenship values. How then does a country determine the specific values that its education system should achieve? How are these values achieved? This is the role of curriculum planning.

Curriculum Planning and identification of values

Njeng’ere (2014) identified four fundamental questions which must be answered in curriculum planning. These are:

1. What education purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that is likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes are being attained?

Although, there are many curriculum development models that educationists have developed since Tyler’s proposal. One of such is that of Ajibade (2009) which identified:

- a. Statement of curriculum objective
- b. Some ideals about content selection
- c. The determination and organization of sequence of learning opportunities
- d. An evaluation of learning outcome

These principles identified have remained largely the same, namely determining education purposes (objectives); identification of appropriate learning experiences and pedagogical approaches; organization of the learning experiences; and assessment and evaluation.

Globally, a major purpose that education has been identified to achieve is national integration. The report of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, chaired by Jacques Delors, identified four pillars of learning that are very important in the 21st Century (Njeng’ere, 2014). These are;

- I. Learning to know; to provide the cognitive tools required to better comprehend the world and its complexities, and to provide an appropriate and adequate foundation for future learning.
- II. Learning to do; to provide the skills that would enable individuals to effectively participate in the global economy and society.

- III. Learning to be; to provide self-analytical and social skills to enable individuals to develop to their fullest potential psycho-socially, effectively as well as physically, for all round complete person.
- IV. Learning to live together; to expose individuals to the values implicit within human rights, democratic principles, intercultural understanding and peace at all levels of society and human relationships to enable individuals and societies to live in peace and harmony.

It is the pillar of learning to live together that focuses on issues related to integration. The government of Nigeria lay a lot of emphasis on using education as a vehicle towards achievement of national integration. Indeed, the National Policy on Education in its section 1 stated that the overall philosophy of Nigeria is to:

- a. Live in unity and harmony as one indivisible, indissoluble democratic and sovereign nation founded on the principles of freedom, equality and justice;
- b. Promoter inter-African solidarity and world peace through understanding (FRN, 2013).

The Roles of Curriculum in National Integration

The roles of curriculum is to identify the education purposes and organize them into goals, objectives, aims and learning outcomes to be achieved at the different levels of education and training. Thus, curriculum refers to all that is planned to enable the learner to acquire and develop the desired knowledge, skills and attitudes. The curriculum is organized into formal, non-formal and informal dimensions (Njeng'ere, 2014).

The role of curriculum is to provide effective relationship and interactions between the individuals in the society through forces in education. The principal attitudes of the teacher-trainers, styles of the adopters are some of the forces to be considered in curriculum planning.

The content of any curriculum is an embodiment of the attitudes, knowledge and skills which a society intends to impart to her citizens through the school and other socializing agencies. The survival and prosperity of a nation depends upon that society's capacity to apply its knowledge to resolve its practical problems. The needs and aspirations of the nation give the curriculum content which in turn determines the progress or nature of the society (Okoro, N. D).

Nation building (development) can be viewed from various angles of human activity which integration is a major one and which can lead to a better living standard of people. In this way, peaceful co-existence, security of life, property and freedom can be guaranteed.

Through curriculum planning, students can read in areas such as citizenship education which can help them to be more patriotic to the country which in turn brings about integration, vis-a-vis national development. Education means a form one generation to the next. This could be made possible through curriculum planning.

Through curriculum planning, the sole purpose of training an individual to meet the needs of the society and find an enchanting way to boost up the national integration which in turn brings about national development in the best possible ways.

Curriculum well planned provides for functional education for the promotion of a progressive and united Nigeria; to this end, school programme needs to be relevant, practical and comprehensive.

Njeng'ere (2014) in his work highlighted some roles of curriculum in national integration as:

- To foster nationalism, patriotism and provide national unity.
- To develop aesthetic values and appreciates own and other people's cultures.
- Instill respect and love for own country and need for harmonious co-existence.
- Promotes respect for and development of country's rich and varied cultures.
- Promote love for and loyalty to the nation.
- Develop into a responsible and socially well-adjusted person among others.

Challenges of fostering National Integration

There are many challenges education sector faces in fostering national integration through curriculum. Some of these according to Njeng'ere (2014) include among others; gradual subordination of social capital to human capital; the gap between the intended, implemented and achieved curriculum; and the context in which the curriculum is implemented.

Subordination of social capital to human capital

Rizvi and Lingard (2010) in Njeng'ere (2014) argue that there is a global shift towards neoliberal values orientation, manifested most clearly in privatization policies and in politics that assume the validity of market mechanisms to solve the various problems and crises facing governments. This has affected curriculum design in the sense that there is a push for reorientation from a focus on the values of democracy and equality to the values of efficiency and accountability.

There is even a greater emphasis on human capital formation allegedly demanded by the new knowledge economy and required by countries in order to participate and compete successfully in the global economy. As a consequence, the social values of equality and democracy are gradually being subordinated to dominant economic concerns. The human capital theory views education and training only as an investment to meet the requirements of the global economy.

Gap between the intended, implemented and achieved Curriculum

The intended curriculum is a set of formal document which specify what all relevant national education authorities and society expect that students will learn at school in terms of knowledge, understanding, skills values, attitudes and competences to be acquired and developed, and how the outcomes of the teaching and learning process will be assessed. It is usually embodied in curriculum framework(s) and guides, syllabi, teacher's guide, contents of tests and examinations, regulations, policies and other official documents.

The implemented curriculum refers to the actual teaching and learning activities taking place in schools, for example, how the intended curriculum is translated into practice and actually delivered. It is also defined as the "curriculum in action" or the "taught curriculum". The achieved curriculum indicates the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that learners actually acquire as a result of teaching and learning or as a result of the process of implementation of the intended curriculum.

Any knowledge, skills and attitudes that are not likely to be tested in either Primary Education or Secondary Education for instance are not taught. Inevitably, the type of knowledge, skills and attitudes that would foster national integration may not necessarily be tested in a formal examination, and so, they are not taught in most schools.

Context of Curriculum Implementation

The practice learners encounter outside of school do not enable them to internalize the values of nationalism, patriotism and national unity as spell out in the national goals of education. When children watch opinion leaders in the society talk ill of some ethnic groups, defy court orders and get away with it, the children starts to internalize that it is not wrong to stereotype ethnic groups and disobey authority. This undermines the opportunity to foster national integration.

In the non-formal dimension, although many schools participate in music and drama festivals, these are reduced to a competition rather than a dimension to inculcate the intended integration values. The government uses the unity schools as a strategy for fostering national integration. However, there is a major challenge associated with staffing in most schools. Very often, the school principal, teaching staff and support staff will be drawn from the community where the school is located. The children therefore are the only ones drawn from different ethnic communities (especially state owned higher institutions). The government therefore needs to ensure that the unity schools as well as state-owned schools draw both the teaching and non-teaching staffs across the country, if the intended outcome of fostering national integration is to be achieved.

Conclusion

Education is still a very important vehicle for fostering national integration. However, there is need to reflect a little more on the strategies that have been adopted in curriculum design, implementation and the context of implementation. Some curriculum dimensions like the formal are very crucial and need to be planned holistically to include policies of school staffing and the role models of the society in creating for the children. We need to realize that in this 21st century, educating people can easily help in the unification of our country. Thus, education through a well-planned and implemented curriculum seems to be the only means by which our nation can be integrated into one single entity.

Recommendations

Based on the discussions above, the paper then recommended as follows:

The educational institutions recognized by the governments should not practice any form of discrimination under the name state, place, sex, creed, religion, among others.

Admission in the country's institutions should be on merit-based rather than on the basis of state or race.

There should be a specific curriculum and method in which education should be transmitted which could nurture the country's social, economic and political growth.

The governments (Federal and State) should ensure that schools draw both teaching and non-teaching staff from across the country so that the intended outcome of fostering national integration can be achieved.

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