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## **CURRICULUM ISSUES OF OVER – SCHOOLING: IMPLICATIONS FOR GENDER INVOLVEMENT IN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.**

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### **Abstract**

*Education is a process of empowering people with knowledge , skills, positive attitude and experiences for long term political, economic and social development. The attainment of this goal is undisputedly dependent on the curriculum and the dynamics of the society. The rising tide in knowledge economy has brought about excessive number of subjects resulting in overloaded curriculum with students studying so many subjects before graduating. This calls for gender- balanced curriculum development and implementation at all levels of education system. Main streaming gender in the curriculum is a precursor for National Development. This paper discusses the issue of curriculum, the issue of over schooling and implications for gender involvement in national development. Effective delivery of the curriculum contents sustains and influence creative thinking in male and female learners for self-reliance.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, Over Schooling, Curriculum Issues, National Development, Gender

### **Introduction**

There is increased awareness of the role of education for unlocking individuals' potentials for national development. The effort made by the world to bring about gender involvement in developmental aspects of Nigeria is much. In Nigeria, the provision of education is a constitutional responsibility of the Federal government majorly and which prescribes the benchmark and the curriculum to be used at all levels for formal training to become finished



products. Formal training according to Udofia and Ekong (2018) takes place in the school where structured curriculum and organised teaching and learning takes place through the use of approved curriculum to provide pupils with knowledge, skills, positive attitudes and values. The curriculum therefore provides the guide for effective interaction and transfer of experiences to learners to achieve the desired learning outcomes irrespective of gender.

Offorma (2005) defined curriculum as a programme made up of three components: programme of studies, programme of activities and programme of guidance. Joshua (2012) draws attention that there is a growing demand for school leavers to learn new sets of skills like problem solving, critical thinking, innovations and adaptability in order to meet up with the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This of course places demands on knowledge and skills acquisition resulting in bloated curriculum contents in the various school system.

Education in Nigeria is liberalized and seen as a quick source of social up-liftment thereby leading to proliferation of primary and secondary schools, the tertiary institutions are not left out. The result definitely is unhealthy competitions especially among private schools with its concomitant effect of excessive demands on teaching and learning. This is clearly demonstrated in the learners being taught many courses, they may not retain for too long as well as being given a lot of take home assignments to perform.

The resultant effect is over schooling rather than schooling for practical understanding and acquisition of competencies in knowledge, skills acquisition as well as and attitude development. According to Joshua (2012) over schooling is the process of being trained, drilled, instructed or taught in school in excess of what is required. Over schooling promotes rote learning rather than impactful learning. Some parents, even with the current economic hardship, still arrange for extra lessons at home to ensure that their wards meet up with the high curriculum demands of the school even at the circumstance when the learners not being mature physically and mentally. The negative effect of over schooling therefore, is to stuff facts in the heads of the young learners not minding their level of understanding, age or intelligent quotient. The current knowledge demand society and complexity of global challenges make it imperative that both male and female students should be given equal opportunities and considerations for participation in the classroom. Promoting gender equality is currently a global phenomenon as a developmental strategy for socio-economic development of any nation. For instance, Mezieobi, Oyeoku, Ezegebe, Igbo (2012) opined that gender equity in the implementation of social studies curriculum would be greatly attained if lecturers/ teachers encourage equal participation of male and female students in classroom activities as well as giving equal attention to male and female students in terms

of response to questions, discussions and rewards. This invariably calls for gender balanced curriculum for the realization of the goal of education

Today's schooling is designed with emphasis on thinking, problem solving, logical reasoning and conclusion than mere mastery of facts and knowledge. To be more responsive to students' needs and concern on how well they would be prepared to meet up with the ever changing societal roles, the school curriculum is being beefed with many subjects in a bid to equip the learners to effectively respond to political, economic, social and technological pressures. This invariably has led to a lot of challenges of the school curriculum which directly or indirectly affect national development. It therefore becomes necessary to approach this paper under; the concept of curriculum, curriculum issues, schooling and national development, over schooling, implications for gender involvement in national development.

### **The Issue of Curriculum**

The issue of curriculum definition is dynamic and elusive as the society changes based on different authors. Some view curriculum as the listing of subjects to be taught in school or as an important school document in any formal school setting. It guides the teacher towards achieving set goals and objectives of the school programme.

Curriculum is defined by Okobia (2010) as a course of study or training that leads to a product of education. Curriculum can be considered as any school programme that students undertake to provide them with professional competencies for self-reliance. It is linked to the quality of the curriculum content, teaching strategies, instructional materials and the learning environment.

One of the Nigeria's national educational focus is the acquisition of appropriate skills and development of mental, physical and social abilities and competencies as equipment for the individual to live and contribute to the development of the society (FRN, 2013).

The Nigerian education policy document broadly categorizes the country's education system into:

- (A) Early Childhood Care and Development Education
- (B) Basic Education which comprises;
  - (I) Kindergarten
  - (ii) Primary education
  - (iii) Junior secondary education
  
- © Post Basic Education and Career Development comprising;
  - (i) Senior secondary education

(ii) Technical, Vocational Education and Training (TVET)

**(D)** Mass Literacy and Nomadic Education comprising:

(i) Mass literacy, Adult and Non-formal education

(ii) Nomadic education

**(E)** Tertiary Education which comprise:

(i) The University

(ii) Teacher Education offered at Universities and Colleges of Education

(iii) Technology education offered at Universities, Colleges of Education (Technical), Polytechnics and Monotechnics

**(F) Innovation Enterprise Institutions.**

Each level of education system has dynamic curriculum structure to achieve the set goals and objectives. The implementation and achievement of the goals and objectives of national development are hampered by issues or challenges

### **The issues / Challenges**

The curriculum issues/ challenges are associated with a number of factors including overloaded curriculum, unconducive school environment, inadequacy of instructional materials, low interest of learners, low motivation of teachers, and non-consideration of gender characteristics in curriculum implementation among others.

**1. Overloaded Curriculum:** Currently, the school curriculum is excessively and unnecessarily taxing. The knowledge explosion society has caused so many courses to be introduced in different programmes at almost all levels of education in the school system. It is widely acknowledged that students are seriously stressed which has affected their general learning and all-round development. The problem of curriculum over load also affects the teachers' productivity with instruction being mainly assessment-driven. The curriculum over load is demonstrated by the number of subjects studied by the students and the amount of contents prescribed in each of the subject.

**2. Un-conducive School Environment:** Teaching and learning are interesting, motivating and fun if they are carried out in a conducive environment. Conducive environment is typified by secured, serene environment with adequate and functional facilities like library, laboratory, recreational grounds, and computer facilities among others. Notably, these

facilities are grossly inadequate especially in public schools thereby making it a formidable task to create a teaching–learning environment that makes learning interesting, motivating, stimulating and meaningful for students to learn with understanding and the teachers to teach effectively.

**3 Inadequacy of Instructional Materials:** Instructional materials make instructional delivery more relevant, motivating, interesting and less abstract for students thereby gingering curiosity in the subjects and in learning. Inadequate instructional materials hindered effective instructional delivery and students' participation in any teaching-learning processes. Empirical report by Udofia (2017) submitted that for effective instructional delivery, there must be varieties of learning experiences through pedagogical content/skills practices, classroom management, communication, assessment practices and personal characteristics of teachers to make teaching more successful.

**Low Interest of learners:** Students' interest is a crucial component of learning. Interest is viewed as the readiness of the learner to react positively or negatively towards what is being taught. Interest is aroused in a study when the learners feel happy, satisfied in a particular teaching-learning situation resulting in the desire to learn more. This factor is easily affected by the tone of the school and the general pedagogical principles of instructional delivery. According to Ekong and Udofia (2018) strong, healthy and conducive learning environment are some of the conditions that ginger students' interest, retention and successful completion of the school programme.

**Low Motivation of Teachers:** The implementation of the curriculum rest solely on the teacher. It is obvious and accepted in educational fora that a student is ready to learn when the teacher is ready to teach in an effective and efficient way. Motivation is a catalyst that energize the teacher to put up his or her best in role performance especially in instructional delivery. Lack of motivation in terms of regular payment of salary, promotion, reward for excellence, and conducive working environment among others are what the teachers consistently battle with in the school system.

**6. Poor content-knowledge/ pedagogical skills of Teachers.** Effective instructional delivery is very relevant to meaningful learning. For teaching to be successful as asserted by Udofia (2017), it must be effective in terms of communication, assessment, classroom management, conducive learning environment and use of ICT. Appropriate modeling of professional attitude by



teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century imply teachers' competency in content knowledge and pedagogy for teaching.

**7. Unfavorable Political Climate:** Political stability is a necessity for national development. Lack of political will to place premium on education in terms of funding is a major obstacle to effective implementation of the curriculum at all levels. This is seen in the persistent under allocation of fund for education by the government. Ekong and Udofia (2017) remarked that no educational activity or programme can succeed without adequate and consistent funding and financing in terms of provision of cash and other necessary facilities for meaningful teaching and learning.

**8. Non-consideration of Gender Characteristics in Curriculum Implementation-** Gender differences in terms of characteristics greatly influence students' choice of career and participation in national development. Female students tend to show interest in literature, home economics and history while male tend to develop interest in tasks that involves manipulation of materials. Okebukola (2008) in a study of science classroom interaction in Nigerian secondary schools reported that boys were given more opportunities to ask questions, manipulate materials and stay longer on task than girls. Similarly, Oni (2009) opined that teachers tend to give more attention to boys than girls due to religious and cultural belief. These points enumerated suggest that there is urgent need to address these curriculum issues in order to stem the tide of over schooling and achieve national development.

### **The Issue of Over Schooling**

The type of education given these days is pressure-packed with lots of subjects and other extra curricula demands to meet up with the knowledge demands, economy and digital world. The focus of schooling in the present society is more on producing good academic results with emphasis on test scores, rank in class, grade point averages, or other examinations or numeric indicators. This has seriously led to over loaded curriculum and excessive learning not that they want to learn but because the students have no option. This in a nut shell is over schooling. Over schooling according to Etiubon (2012) is the imparting of excess knowledge not desired by the learners at the time of impartation. Also, Udosen and Alfred (2012) viewed over schooling as a way of spending more time than necessary in and outside the school to acquire knowledge, skills, attitude and values.

Over schooling in this paper refers to over learning or unduly loading of students with excessive academic works. It also means students being

excessively challenged due to a comprehensive curriculum. This leads to cognitive mismatch emanating from students studying so many subjects, spending too long a time in learning as well as studying subjects that is far above their level of maturity. Over schooling implies loading the curriculum with so many courses. The adage that ‘all works and no play makes Jack a dull boy’ comes to play in over schooling because students are given very little time to relax, play and regain their strength and mental alertness. Students are made to wake up very early but return home late because of extra lesson causing loss of precious time for interaction with members of the family. This hampers the gaining of useful home experiences and personal reflection of oneself because of time spent on unwarranted academic work. This invariably could result in poor productivity on the part of the teachers while it hinders proper assimilation and acquisition of knowledge, skills and values by the students.

The National Policy of Education (2014) succinctly states that the curriculum should be implemented in such a way that students or learners acquire appropriate skills and develop mental, physical and social abilities as equipment for individuals to live and contribute to the development of the society. This is aimed at developing individual student potentials so as to produce citizens who are competent in knowledge, skills and practice good moral values. The implementation of education policies regarding curriculum at different levels of education in Nigeria still remain a clog in the wheel for national development due to over-schooling. Over schooling puts excessive pressure on students to learn and this is counterproductive due to lack of interest, readiness, motivation and maturity in cognitive processing of what is taught.

Over schooling creates imbalance between learning, teaching and attainment of desired learning outcomes. It is a serious problem to the students, teachers, parents and the society at large. It promotes unhealthy competition among students that may lead to students’ loss of interest, attention, fun and self-confidence in learning. Over schooling may lead to burn out because of physical, mental and emotional stress on the students and teachers. This may significantly influence the rate of learning, understanding and comprehension of what is taught. Therefore, making students, both male and female to enjoy some level of relaxation and freedom from excessive reading, note-taking and doing assignment and less talking, thinking and note marking by the teachers is tantamount to reducing teachers and students frustration in schooling.

### **Implications for Gender Involvement in National Development.**

The implications of gender involvement in national development of



Nigeria is to the extents of solving the various curriculum issues and challenges. Most particularly is the none consideration of gender roles in curriculum development and implementation. Male and female learners differ in physical and mental development processes. Males tend to be physically stronger and show more interest in practical activities in the classroom than the females. Curriculum development if considering the characteristics of male and female learners would mainstream elements that would care for differentials in preparation for participation in national development. Male /female products of well-organized curriculum development and implementation with volumes of knowledge, skills and good attitudinal developments will participate and contribute positively to national development.

### **Conclusion**

Lack of gender consideration in curriculum development and implementation may mask other educational attainment viz a- viz negative impact on national development. The culture of over schooling in terms of non- consideration of gender characteristics in curriculum development and implementation that leads to excessive stress on learners should be discouraged to ensure full gender integration to participate in national development.

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