AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.7 (2), September-December, 2022 https://ajemates.org

CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS AS A TOOL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Athanatius Ifeanyi Ibeh Ph.D
Department of Educational Foundations
Ebonyi State College Of Education, Ikwo
Ebonyi State, Nigeria
E-Mail: Ifeanyiathanatius@Yahoo.Com
Doctorathanatiusibeh@Gmail.Com

ABSTRACT

This paper discussed how curriculum implementation and 21st century skills in tertiary institutions in Nigeria will enhance sustainable development. It also reviewed curriculum implementation in relation to the 21st century skills, tertiary institutions and assessment techniques, challenges of curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions, learning outcome, and sustainable development. The paper concluded that curriculum implementation enhance the aims of the education. Recommendations that a reform of the teacher training process be done so as to orientate teachers and their teaching towards the technologically driven 21st century classroom; Classrooms must be provided with equipment that reflects the 21st century workplace; Continuous professional development and in-service training should be fostered for teachers among others.

Keywords: curriculum, curriculum implementation, tertiary institutions 21st century skills, and Sustainable Development

Introduction

Historically, the term curriculum has been traced to a latin word 'curus' which translates as a runway or track. The race or course, which has both a start and an end line, is marked by various signposts and the success or failure of any runner may seem to depend on a number of factors which may either mitigate or enhance the successful completion of the race. It means a course through which students run to reach a goal. This course has a target point to cover according to the student's age. Therefore, curriculum is a track for learning because the skill, ideas, activities organized for the learners to enable them develops creativity and potentialities are the basic components of the learning.

Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation is a very important aspect of curriculum process. tertiary school for the graduates to be self-reliance and create jobs and be empowered without waiting for the government to provide white collar jobs upon graduation. Curriculum means an organized, planned educational experiences administered to the learners under the guidance and supervision of the school. The actual execution and administration of these experiences to the learners can then be called curriculum

implementation. Ivowi (2004) noted that curriculum implementation involves a number of activities culminating in translating curriculum documents into classroom practice. It involves translation of theory into practice or proposal into action. Curriculum implementation also can be seen as the translation of the objectives of the curriculum from paper to practice (Okoro, 2008). This is achieved when the teacher is handed the curriculum and ends when the learners have been exposed to the learning experiences prescribed in the document. There are intermediate steps which includes verbal and non-verbal exposition, practical work in the laboratories, interactions, workshops, field work, teacher – student interactions, student-materials interactions and the evaluation and feedback. It shows that curriculum implementation means the actual exposure of the learner to the contents of curriculum and the real teaching and learning activities that involve the teachers, learners and materials. Curriculum implementation is experienced when the inert curriculum has been translated into operating curriculum.

Okoro, (2010), averts that Curriculum implementation makes teachers to prepare lesson notes, use reinforcement and motivational strategies, classroom control and creation of friendly relationship, application of theories and principles of learning, effective use of evaluation techniques and adequate consideration of learner's cognitive styles. This facilitates resolution of instructional challenges as well as achievement of overall goals of education, which is the vision of the 21st century. Curriculum implementation is the translation of the planned curriculum into the operational curriculum according to Offorma, (2005) cited in (Usman, uzoma and Nagngere, 2013). It is the execution of the curriculum document.

Offorma,(2019) defines curriculum implementation as a phases in the curriculum process. Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) in Obilo and Saugoleye (2015). Also maintained that curriculum implementation is the actual engagement of the learner with planned learning opportunities; this planning includes the instructional materials that will be used for its implementation at the appropriate stages. Yobe (2011) in Aneke (2015) also viewed curriculum implementation as the task of translating the curriculum concept into operating curriculum by the combined efforts of the teachers and society.

Curriculum implementation is putting into action the planned curriculum. This is the combined effort of the teachers and the learners in the tertiary institutions in the case of higher learning to have productive members of the society. This shows that it is actual classroom teaching that the learners are expected to put in practice for the society to benefit from them. Planned curriculum should have objectives, content and learning experiences have been selected and organized, and the evaluation procedure determined, then its implementation comes in.

For proper curriculum implementation to yield good results in tertiary institutions, it must be effective and properly planned to be

in tandem to the societal needs. It is relevant to note that curriculum implementation should relate to the nature of the society, the society's value system and the social structure must be taken into consideration for effective curriculum implementation.

Tertiary institutions

Tertiary institutions play a vital role not only in shaping the future by educating the specialists of tomorrow, but also creating a research based for sustainability efforts and providing outreach and service to communities and nations. Historically, higher education has served the twin purpose of research and teaching. In its knowledge production function, higher education institutions have been the centers of innovation and creators of new knowledge in diverse fields of human activity. The knowledge production function is based on academic rigor and the intellectual apparatus within the higher education institutions. Over decades, such an intellectual apparatus has contributed to the establishment of orthodoxy around the meaning and epistemology of knowledge. This orthodoxy has been associated with the privileging of intellectual activity within higher education institutions over any such activity in society itself. As a result, it has been assumed that knowledge production is taking place only in higher education institutions; people's experiences and daily struggles in communities produce experiences, not knowledge. The curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions acknowledge that knowledge –in – action and knowledge-for- action were important for finding solutions to the problems of societies and communities through research. The tertiary institutions have focused largely on the learning of theories in the classrooms. Students are discouraged from engaged learning in real settings, and much of that arises from the orthodox meaning of teaching and education. Curriculum should be anchored or tailored towards solving the societal problems, so that its implementation be the teacher/learner will enhance sustainable development.

Challenges of curriculum implementation in tertiary institutions

There are some challenges affecting the implementation of curriculum in tertiary institutions. These include: Examination malpractice, inadequate resources, type of leadership, and the societal challenges.

Inadequate resources: Resources both human and material resources are inadequate for the set out curriculum to be implemented. On human resources, these include sensible and knowledgeable people that can impact foundation of basic rules, principles, attitudes, values and skills to students. The students, educators, teachers are also part of the human resources that are required for effective curriculum implementation. Once the teachers participate in decision-making and in the development and achievement of the curriculum, it fasten the set out goals, but if they are lacking or not involved the achievement of the curriculum objectives will be hindered (Ugboduma, and Atufe, 2006).

Pitan (2006), noted that a number of factors that account for the contemporary place of the teachers in the society include:

• The teaching profession has been diluted in quality due to the rapid expansion of educational system and unemployment. Hence, there is lack of professionalism. People become teachers not because they are interested in teaching or have the calling to be teachers but because they have failed in getting their choice jobs in other sectors of the economy. In such circumstances their commitment to teaching and development of their students is doubtful.

• Some teachers engage in truant behaviour, illicit activities and absenteeism. Some teachers have been indicted in abuse of their position and found even in support of examination malpractice.

• Some engage in other businesses to help them meet their economic responsibilities.

• Lack of commitment, indiscipline, and laxity in professional standard, poor mastery of the curriculum among others on the part of some teachers will impact negatively on the implementation of the curriculum.

The type of leadership:

The type of leadership affects the implementation of curriculum in the tertiary institutions. Obviously, if the political party in control at the federal is different from the one in the state, difficulties may arise because the administrative and financial needs to support the curriculum by the incumbent political authority may fail; thereby, making it impracticable and impossible to achieve the objectives of the set out curriculum. The leadership in power is the policy maker who decides on the nature of the curriculum to be implemented. In fact, the decision could be political because the stakeholders must be fully in support of any curriculum for it to be implemented in the tertiary institutions.

Poor involvement of teachers:

The issue of implementation is bedevilled with poor involvement of teachers in matters relating to curriculum implementation either in planning or reform and that make good performances impossible, no matter the teachers methodological competence; unfortunately teachers are not involved at this stage of curriculum process. Ibrahim in Nwanze (2015) stated that the involvement of teachers in curriculum planning induces good quality into the curriculum, enriches the activities and also makes them more worthwhile. He further maintained that, the conditions under which education can be made to serve the expressed aspirations of any nation revolve around the quality of the teachers. This quality will be optimally enhanced if the teachers are fully involved in the curriculum planning and other curriculum processes not only in the classroom implementation. The teacher takes the final decision as regards the actual learning experiences to be provided and so not involving or incorporating him in the planning and development process is like separating the curriculum from instruction (Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) in Obilo and Sangoleye (2015).

Excess Content/Load:

The issue of concern in curriculum implementation is excess contents added to the curriculum to be covered by both the students and teachers possess serious challenges in curriculum implementation. Some global and emerging issues, such as family life education. Citizenship education, education on HIV/AIDS and drug abuse, civic education, covid-19 pandemic among others which are recently introduced in the school curriculum as contents to be learnt by student/pupils without extending the instructional hours affect its implementation. Afangideh (2009) in Obilo and Sangoleye (2010) states that some teachers are having issues with such topics already, hence making it implementation a challenge. He further maintained that the above is in addition to the already existing subjects. Obilo and Saugoleye (2010) further maintained that the time allotted for the implementation of these heavy academic loads is not adequate enough. A followed up issue on this matter is that when these new courses are introduced or included in the existing curriculum, new personnel who specialized in them were not usually employed neither do government send the old staff on training on how to implement them.

The societal challenges:

The societal value system of any nation has a great effect on its education. With the event in the state, many people prefer to make ostentatious show of wealth, drive costly cars and take titles than to invest money in education programmes, knowing the needs, values, interests and aspirations to enhance proper learning. Even people in authority prefer to invest their money in the construction of flyovers, ecumenical centers, five star hotels, shopping males, new directorates in ministries and new administrative structures that will yield them personal financial gain (Tesike,2006). This type of value devoid of the interest in the curriculum will hinder its implementation to a large extent.

Learning outcome:

Basically, a student's level of academic achievement is regarded as the primary outcome of the learning process which is made possible through curriculum implementation. Ogunboyede, (2012) quoting Weinstein and Mayer, argued that learning outcome refers to the knowledge structures which have been created as a result of the learning process. Student's performance is likely to be influenced by these knowledge structures but is also influenced by a number of other factors, for example, fatigue or motivation. There are five major categories of learning outcomes. These include Verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, attitudes and motor skill.

• Verbal information; this is man's primary method of transmitting accumulated knowledge to successive generations. Hence, information is often learned by means of verbal communication presented to the learner in oral or printed form. This is done in order to implement what the curriculum has stipulated.

• Intellectual skills; these constitute "knowing how" as contrasted with the

"knowing that" of information. For example, the students learn how to convert fractions to decimals and knowing this, will enable them to respond adequately to teaching that is stipulated in the curriculum.

• Cognitive strategies; these are internally organized capabilities which the learner makes use of in guiding his own learning, remembering and thinking. The learner uses a cognitive strategy to select and use a "code" for what he learns and another strategy for retrieving it. Cognitive strategies are ways the learners has of "managing" the processes of learning.

• Attitudes; an attitude is an acquired internal state that influences the choice of personal action towards some class of things, persons or events. Attitudes vary in their "strength" or intensity and also in their direction e.g. one may have a positive attitude towards reading modern fiction or a negative one. However, school education is mainly concerned with the establishment of positive attitudes in the students as stipulated in the curriculum.

• Motor skills; these are distinct types of learning outcomes and must surely be included as essential components of the individual's repertory of learned capabilities. These skills are learned in connection with such common human activities as driving a car, operating a typewriter and playing musical instruments. Acquiring motor skills is essential to basic subjects of the school curriculum for example; young children learn the skills of printing and writing letters while older students learn new skills of pronouncing sounds of foreign language. Learning outcome is the student's level of academic achievement after a given period of instruction from the curriculum and should be checked through assessment.

Assessment techniques in Nigerian tertiary institutions

The use of assessment in Nigerian tertiary schools has been misleading in the sense that students and parents had the impression that all that matter in the school is to obtain a certificate at the end of a course (Alonge, 2004). This had led some students to be involved in examination malpractices. Ogunboyede (2009), and Alonge (2004), opined that examination, the open book examination, pre-published assessment, open time assessment, oral assessment and field/laboratory assessment are some of the techniques of assessment in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

• Examination; usually, takes two to three hours to conduct, during which the students are not known in advance. This type of assessment tests the ability of students to produce their own work, recall information from memory and organize them to complete the task within a stated period of time.

• The open book examination; students are allowed to consult textbooks, lecture notes or handouts during the assessment time. This assess the highest level of learning such as evaluation and application of information.

• The pre-published assessment; this involves the announcing of some or all the questions that will come out in the final examination paper to the students days or even weeks in advance before the day of the final examination. this kind of assessment reduces stress and question spotting in the examination hall.

• Open time assessment; this is usually in form of "take home" assignment; where the examinees are required to answer the given questions in their own time and submit by a specified date. This reduces stress and assesses the student's ability to find and use references.
• Oral assessment; this is a face-to-face situation where a student is questioned or interviewed by an examiner(s). This assess fluency in the use of language in an unstructured situation and the ability of the examinee to convince a group of examiners concerning his readiness to be awarded a higher degree certificate.
• Field/laboratory assessment; This is the type of assessment whereby the knowledge of the skills learnt in a course is assessed. This could be laboratory work, field work, practicum etc. This type of assessment is used to assess practical skills, techniques and procedures and helps students to have better understanding of the course and help in application of the theories.

The need for assessment

According to Alonge (2004) cited in Ogunboyede (2012), the imports of educational assessment are; • Assessment forms an integral part of the teaching-learning processes. This therefore means that the teacher should be involved in the assessment of the students. • An assessment procedure will take into account the student's performance throughout the entire period of schooling. • There will be the readiness of the teachers to introduce innovations into their teaching. Such innovations should reflect in the final assessment. • Guidance and counseling concept should be well maintained between the students and the school authorities. • The teacher needs to assess his or her instructional materials and methods in order to improve his or her performance.

21st century skills:

21st century skills are seen as the 12 abilities that today's students need to succeed in their careers during the information age. These skills are intended to help students keep up the lightning-pace of today's modern markets. Each skill is unique on how it helps students but they all have one common quality.

The Glossary of Education defines 21st Century Skills1 as follows: "The term 21st century skills refers to a broad set of knowledge, skills, work habits, and character traits that are believed— by educators, school reformers, college professors, employers, and others—to be critically important to success in today's world." In simple terms, 21st Century Skills refer to the skills that are required to enable an individual to face the challenges of the 21st centuryworld that is globally-active, digitally transforming, collaboratively moving

forward, creatively progressing, seeking competent human-resource and quick in adopting changes.

They are associated in the era of internet.21st Century skills are 12 abilities that today's students need to succeed in their careers during the Information Age.The twelve 21st Century skills are:

1. Critical thinking
2. Creativity
3. Collaboration
4. Communication
5. Information literacy
6. Media literacy
7. Technology literacy
8. Flexibility
9. Leadership
10. Initiative
11. Productivity
12. Social skills

Note that these skills are intended to help students keep up with the lightning-pace of today's modern markets. Each skill is unique in how it helps students, but they all have one quality in common. They're essential in the age of the Internet. Thus, the above mentioned skills are summed up into three categories vis;

1. Learning skills
2. Literacy skills
3. Life skills

Learning skills (the four C's) teaches students about the mental processes acquired to adapt and improve upon a modern work environment. The 4Cs are by far the most popular 21st Century skills. These skills are also called **learning skills**. More educators know about these skills because they're universal needs for any career. They also vary in terms of importance, depending on an individual's career aspirations. They include;

- **Critical thinking**: Finding solutions to problems
- **Creativity**: Thinking outside the box
- **Collaboration**: Working with others
- **Communication**: Talking to others

Literacy skills (IMT) focuses on how students can discern facts, publishing utlets, and the technology behind them. There's a strong focus on determining trustworthy sources and factual information to separate it from the misinformation that floods the Internet.

Life skills (FLIPS) take a look at intangible elements of a student's everyday life. These intangibles focus on both personal and professional qualities. Life skills is the final category. Also called FLIPS, these skills all pertain to someone's personal life, but they also bleed into professional settings.

- **Flexibility**: Deviating from plans as needed
- **Leadership**: Motivating a team to accomplish a goal

- **Initiative**: Starting projects, strategies, and plans on one's own
- **Productivity**: Maintaining efficiency in an age of distractions
- **Social skills**: Meeting and networking with others for mutual benefit

1. **Flexibility** is the expression of someone's ability to adapt to changing circumstances. This is one of the most challenging qualities to learn for students because it's based on two uncomfortable ideas:

1.Your way isn't always the best way

2. You have to know and admit when you're wrong

Designed Instruction in the 21st Century Expectation

Teachers play a significant role in helping students develop 21st century skills by applying methods that increase students' abilities. They should use innovative strategies and modern learning technologies that help integrate cognitive and social skills with content knowledge as well as increase student participation in the learning environment in order to promote these future skills. There are many strategies that enhance both learning content and skills while also allowing students to engage in real life. One such approach is problem-based learning. In this model, students can discuss and analyze different issues and topics that are related to the real world. Also, this approach allows students to investigate problems, provide explanations, generate ideas, analyze data, and make judgments in order to find the appropriate solution. Research has shown that students applying problem-based learning increase their participation in class activities and enhance critical thinking skills (Joyce et al., 2009). Some researchers found a significant correlation between problem-based learning activities and the critical thinking skills that students will need in the 21st century (Drew, 2013). Critical thinking requires a set of higher mental processes that augment students' capacities in problem solving. Trilling and Fadel (2009) defined critical thinking as the ability to analyze, interpret, evaluate, summarize, and synthesize information. These processes can give students the opportunity to be successful. Knowlton (2003) mentioned that using problem solving in teaching students can promote critical thinking skills that help them overcome challenges they may face in the real world. This approach allows students to learn through creative thinking and break through thinking barriers in order to achieve unique, 21st century learning skills. When teachers applied this strategy, they supported students' capacities in critical thinking, self-directed learning and cooperation, as well as social interaction. Another pedagogy that enhances 21st century skills is cooperative learning. This strategy divides students into different groups with diverse abilities and interests, and has a powerful effect on learning that gives distinctive results. The group's work is more creative because of the deep thought and integration of students' strengths and talents in order to achieve a product. The diversity of students' skills and

abilities can encourage creative work where "every person brings something to the table" (Knowlton, 2003). Trilling and Fadel (2009) emphasized that working students in different groups can enhance many aspects such as: mutual respect between team members, estimating teamwork required to complete the joint action, and efforts toward compromises needed to achieve a common goal. In addition, collaborative learning has a positive impact on student abilities such as increasing their motivation and performance as well as developing social interaction. Cooperative learning is an effective strategy to increase student motivation and change it from the external to the internal (Joyce et al., 2009). Today, teachers should give students the opportunities to engage in various activities that promote cooperative learning such as projects, problems, design and researched-based learning. In these activities, students work together in order to complete the class assignment while increasing their participation, achievement, and motivation to learn. Consequently, collaborative learning allows students to contribute different degrees of prior knowledge, abilities, and aptitudes. Students are also motivated to learn more, as well as learn quicker and with a greater degree of achievement. Additionally, linking knowledge with the real world is an important component in the 21st century teaching model. This achieves the goal of authentic learning. In this approach, teachers make the classroom more interesting by increasing student participation in class activities and applying the knowledge in real time. Using real world contexts allows students to research information from several resources that are outside the school walls such as interviewing experts and specialists to obtain information in a particular field. This approach allows students to obtain new knowledge and skills instead of listening to lessons and memorizing information in order to prepare for tests. Researchers found that linking content with reality lets students engage in the learning environment effectively and promotes future skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative learning (Herrington &Kervin, 2007). Students contribute in the construction of their own knowledge and produce the information that has value or meaning to them in order to achieve collaborative work in its truest sense. When students have the opportunity to see the connection between what they are learning and issues of real life, they will be able to be successful in their careers. In this way, students will be prepared with the necessary information and life skills that will help them achieve a future career that has real meaning. Teachers should find useful and effective ways that can support 21st century curriculum and instruction as well as instill necessary skills among students that help them face their challenges successfully. Developers of curriculum and instruction have claimed the essential part of learning in this century is integrating multimedia tools in teaching. Jacobsen (2001) argued that many technological tools can support different skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, collaborative learning, and the learning environment. For example, portfolios, WebQuests, Guizzes, Wiki, Google site, Digital Storytelling, ePortfolios, and SoftChalkLessonBuilder,

Blog, etc., support these skills. Technological tools offer students the option of working in collaborative groups, which may increase student motivation and develop critical thinking. Multimedia tools promote deeper understanding to complete class activities. Some studies found students who used multimedia tools in teaching have higher-level thinking skills than in comparison with traditional teaching methods (Kanuka et al., 2007).

Situating the Problem of Curriculum Implementation in the 21st Century

The turn of the 21st century brought with it globalization and technological advancements that have invaded every sphere of human life especially the classroom. It is observed that despite research findings on new teaching methods and classroom technology, curriculum implementation in Cameroon remains way below expectations. This assertion is affirmed by the Sector Wide Approach document (SWAe, pg.28) which attributes an inefficiency of over 30% to the educational system. The implication of this is that more than 30% of all resources invested for curriculum implementation are wasted in the form of failure, in examinations, poor development of skills by learners and school dropouts. This should not be the case in the 21st century when everything in education has undergone revolution for the better. Furthermore, curriculum implementation depends on the quality of teachers, and overall instructional support for teachers. It is observed that a lot of teachers have limited knowledge of ICTs particularly because the teacher training process did not help them, our schools are ill-adapted to technologies as well and these put together we have a recipe for failure. Teachers are not skilled at using technologies at the disposal of learners to stimulate life-long learning, which gives them the latitude to engage in "self-destructive" tendencies. Again, the number of school subjects for both teachers and students is observed to be too much. This inevitably reduces the amount of time dedicated to practical work for proper skill development. There is supposed to be a theory-practice nexus which is a huge problem in teacher education. This paper sought to assess the challenges to curriculum implementation in 21st century via-vis the 21st century skills..

Conclusion Curriculum implementation enhances the aims of the education. The real actualization of the objectives of education can only be seen through the implementation of the set out curriculum which will promote sustainable development in Nigeria. The 21st century skills is a sure way for curriculum implementation and sustainable development.

Suggestions/ way forward

1. Qualified teachers should be employed for them to impact the real knowledge to the students.

2. The materials needed by the institutions should be provided at the right time for proper implementation of the curriculum.

3. There should be societal awareness on the importance of education that reflects the culture of the immediate environment.

4. Examination malpractice should be avoided at all levels since it can only give certificate to the graduate and not knowledge that is needed by the student, this could be curbed by giving strong sanctions to any defaulter.

5. The leaders should imbibe the concepts of continuity, consolidation, commencement and commissioning (4C's) in the educational programmes to facilitate sustainable development in Nigeria.

6. A reform of the teacher training process be done so as to orientate teachers and their teaching towards the technologically driven 21st century classroom.

7. Classrooms must be provided with equipment that reflects the 21st century workplace.

8. Continuous professional development and in-service training should be fostered for teachers.

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