

Recent Curriculum Reforms in Primary and Secondary Schools in Nigeria in the new Millennium

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Abstract

The world over, education is regarded as an instrument per excellence for effecting social, psychological, economical, political, intellectual, and developmental transformation of a people and curriculum remains the tool for achieving this purpose. This paper therefore started with a brief account of education reform in Nigeria since 1960 and gradually graduated into a detailed account of recent curriculum reforms in pre-tertiary institutions (primary and secondary schools) in Nigeria in the new millennium interspersed with the reasons for the reforms, underlying principles, misconceptions about the reforms and recent review of the nine-year basic education curriculum. The differences between the new curriculum tagged Curriculum 2007 and the old curricula, constraints to the implementation of the new curriculum, and the way forward were extensively discussed.

Keywords: Curriculum reforms, Primary and Secondary Schools, New Millennium, Nigeria

1. Introduction

A major turning point in the history of education in Nigeria after Nigeria's independence in 1960 began in September 8, 1969 when the first ever national curriculum conference was inaugurated by the then Federal Commissioner for Education, Mr Wenike Briggs. The conference which was well attended by a cross-section of Nigerians and had representatives of the United Nations Economic and Scientific Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in attendance was a culmination of expression of general dissatisfaction with the existing education system which had become irrelevant to national needs, aspirations and goals. This conference, followed by a national seminar in 1973 under the chairmanship of Chief S. O. Adebayo laid the foundation of a draft document which; after due comments were received from the states and other interest groups, led to the final document, National Policy on Education (NPE) first announced by the then Federal Military Government in 1977. The 49 page policy document recommended a uniform structure of education now known as the 6-3-3-4 system of education which in conception and design, a radical departure from the British implanted education system of 6-5-2-3 in the country. The first 6 stands for six years in the primary, followed by three years at the junior secondary, three years at the senior secondary and four years at the tertiary levels. Since the publication of the first edition of the NPE in 1977, the second and third editions were published in 1981 and 1998 respectively in keeping with the dynamics of social change and demands on education. The fourth edition (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2004) was necessitated by some policy innovations and changes, and the need to update the third edition accordingly. These innovations and changes as contained in the fourth edition (FRN, 2004) include:

1. The lifting of the suspension order on open and distance learning programme by government;
2. Revitalization and expansion of the National Mathematical Centre (NMC);
3. Establishment of Teachers Registration Council (TRC);
4. Introduction of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) into the school system;
5. Prescription of French Language in the primary and secondary curriculum as a second official language;
6. Prescription of minimum number of subjects to be taken by senior secondary certificate examination (SSCE) candidates;
7. The integration of basic education in the programme of Quaranic school to ensure equal opportunity and effective implementation of Universal Basic Education (UBE);
8. Repositioning science, technical and vocational education in the scheme of national education for optimum performance; and
9. General contextual change to reflect the state of professional practice in education among others.

Effort at universalizing education in Nigeria became more pronounced through the introduction of the Universal Primary Education (UPE) Scheme on Monday 6th September 1976 by the then head of the Nigerian military administration, General Olusegun Obasanjo at the Oke-Suna Municipal Primary School in Lagos. The scheme

made primary education free and compulsory for all children of school-going age. The scheme aimed at establishing equal educational opportunity for all children of school age in Nigeria and to gradually eliminate illiteracy and ignorance in Nigerian society. Although, the UPE scheme recorded an unprecedented increase in pupils' enrolment in the primary schools throughout the federation between 1976/77 session when the scheme started and 1980/81 academic session (Osokoya, 1987) financing of the scheme became a constitutional problem following the adoption of the 1979 constitution which placed education under the concurrent legislative list. In line with the 1979 constitution, the Federal Government ceased to have direct responsibility for primary education but only gave 15% block grant to Local Governments while the State and Local Governments assumed the responsibility for primary education. This action coupled with inadequacy of teaching personnel, infrastructural decay and educational imbalance in the country had a negative impact on the development of primary education in Nigeria. However, the products of the UPE scheme formed the first set of students admitted into the junior secondary schools in 1982. Thus, the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education partially took off in 1982 with ten states out of the then nineteen states in the country. Consequently, by 1991 the entire country had completed six years of secondary education under the new policy.

Upon the return of Nigeria to a democratically elected government on 29th May, 1999, the UPE was improved upon with the expansion of its scope from six to nine years basic education and the scheme was changed to Universal Basic Education (UBE) which was launched by the then President, Chief M. O. A. Obasanjo on the 30th of September, 1999 in the city of Sokoto. The UBE according to the implementation Guidelines (FME: 2000:22) is aimed at:

- developing in the entire citizenry consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its rigorous promotion;
- the provision of free Universal Basic Education for every Nigerian child of school going age;
- reducing drastically the incidence of drop-out from the formal school system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency);
- catering for the learning needs of young persons who for one reason or another have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate form of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- ensuring the acquisition of appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life skills as well as the ethical, moral and civic values needed for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning.

Under this new scheme free education was extended to cover the junior secondary schools. This means all children of school-going age will receive nine years of uninterrupted formal education (6 years of primary and 3 years of junior secondary). The UBE scheme in Nigeria expresses the Education For All (EFA) goals and is extended to all children from age six to age fifteen. The 9-year Basic Education Programme de-articulated the junior secondary component from the senior secondary school and aligned it with the primary school. This is to ensure that every Nigerian child of school-going age is given opportunity to a free and compulsory 9-year uninterrupted schooling. The implication of this is that the minimum level of education for every Nigerian child is Junior Secondary School (JSS) year 3 and on successful completion pupils will be awarded the minimum qualification of Basic Education Certificate Examinations (BECE) at the end of the 9-year basic education schooling to replace the Junior Secondary Certificate Examination. With this arrangement, pupils need no entrance examination into the junior secondary schools since the terminal examination for primary 6 pupils had been abolished. However, with the take off of the UBE scheme in the country, it then became imperative that the existing primary and junior secondary school curricula be reworked to ensure the realization of the goals of the UBE programme. At the centre stage of the re-engineering of the basic education and senior secondary curricula is the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). Under the leadership of Professor Godswill Obioma, the NERDC successfully produced the nine-year basic education curriculum and the new senior secondary curriculum collectively tagged Curriculum 2007 for national implementation and introduced the new curriculum structure for basic education which was approved by the National Council on Education (NCE) at its 52nd meeting in Ibadan, Oyo State in 2005.

2. Evolution and Implementation of Curriculum 2007 for 9-year Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education Programmes

Following the successful launching of the 9-year Basic Education Programme in 1999 by the Federal Government, the NERDC was directed by the NCE at its meeting in Ibadan in December 2005 to review, restructure and re-align the existing primary and junior secondary school curricula to meet the targets of the 9-year Basic Education Programme in the context of National Economic Empowerment and Development

Strategies (NEEDS) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the meeting, the NCE also approved a curriculum structure for the 9-year Basic Education Programme namely: Lower Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 1-3), Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 4-6) and Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS 1-3). Table 1 below shows the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum structure listing relevant subjects for each level.

Table 1. 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum Structure with School Subjects

Lower Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 1-3)		Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 4-6)		Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS 1-3)	
Core Compulsory Subjects		Core Compulsory Subjects		Core Compulsory Subjects	
1	English studies	1	English studies	1	English studies
2	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)	2	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)	2	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)
3	Mathematics	3	Mathematics	3	Mathematics
4	Basic Science and Technology	4	Basic Science	4	Basic Science
5	Social Studies	5	Social Studies	5	Social Studies
6	Civic Education	6	Civic Education	6	Civic Education
7	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)	7	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)	7	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)
8	Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies	8	Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies	8	Christian Religious Studies/Islamic Studies
9	Physical & Health Education (PHE)	9	Physical & Health Education (PHE)	9	Physical & Health Education (PHE)
10	Computer Studies/ICT	10	French Language	10	French Language
		11	Computer Studies/ICT	11	Basic Technology
				12	Computer Studies/ICT
Elective Subjects		Elective Subjects		Elective Subjects	
1	Agriculture	1	Agriculture	1	Agriculture
2	Home Economics	2	Home Economics	2	Home Economics
3	Arabic Language	3	Arabic Language	3	Arabic Language
				4	Business Studies

It should be noted that all students must offer at least one elective subject but not more than two in primary school and not more than three in junior secondary school. With the commencement of implementation of the 9-year basic education curriculum in 2008, pupils in primary 1-3, primary 4-6, and JSS 1-3 were confronted with 10, 11, and 12 compulsory subjects respectively. This situation in all primary and junior secondary schools nation-wide during the period of trial testing (September, 2008- August, 2011) of the 9-year basic education curriculum was considered laborious for the pupils due to curriculum overload in terms of subject offerings. Also, the NCE gave approval for a new curriculum structure for the 3-year senior secondary education. The four distinct fields of study at the senior secondary school level include: Humanities, Science and Mathematics, Technology, and Business Studies. All students, irrespective of their field of study, are to take five compulsory cross cutting core subjects namely: English Language, General Mathematics, One Trade/Entrepreneurship Studies, Computer Studies/ICT and Civic Education. Table 2 below shows the core subjects in the four specialized fields of study.

Table 2. 3-Year Senior Secondary Education Curriculum Structure

Senior Secondary Education (Humanities)		Senior Secondary Education (Science/Mathematics)		Senior Secondary Education (Technology)		Senior Secondary Education (Business Studies)	
1	Nigerian Languages	1	Biology	1	Technical Drawing	1	Accounting
2	Literature-in-English	2	Chemistry	2	General Metal Work	2	Store Management
3	Geography	3	Physics	3	Basic Electricity	3	Office Practice
4	Government	4	Further Mathematics	4	Electronics	4	Insurance
5	Christian Religious Studies	5	Agriculture	5	Auto-mechanics	5	Commerce
6	Islamic Studies	6	Physical Education	6	Building construction		
7	History	7	Health Education	7	Wood-work		
8	Visual Arts			8	Home Management		
9	Music			9	Food & Nutrition		
10	French			10	Clothing & Textiles		
11	Arabic						
12	Economics						

In short, the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum structure consists of a group of 5 compulsory cross-cutting core subjects that must be offered by all students, four fields of studies (Senior Secondary Science & Mathematics, Senior Secondary Technology, Senior Secondary Humanities, and Senior Secondary Business Studies), a group of 35 trades/entrepreneurship subjects and elective subjects. The approval of new curriculum structures for the 9-year Basic Education Programme and Senior Secondary Education Programme hastened the holistic review of the school curriculum which commenced in 2001 through 2007 and in September 2008 a new curriculum framework was finally introduced in primary and junior secondary schools across the country. It should be noted that before the commencement of the review of school curricula in 2001, most of the curricula in use by Nigerian primary and secondary schools were developed by NERDC between 1982 and 1985. So the curricula have become outdated and were not in tune with the realities of the present day Nigeria. Through consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including teachers, a revised edition of curriculum, Curriculum 2007 for Basic Education and Senior Secondary Education Programmes was developed for national implementation. Curriculum 2007 was a by-product of a High level Policy Committee on Curriculum Development (HLPC) constituted in 2006 and chaired by the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC). The committee, which consisted of policymakers, parents, professional associations, civil society organizations, non-governmental, organizations, etc, provided the framework for the restructuring of the existing curricula. The series of workshops (planning, writing, critique and editorial) that were organized for the development of the Curriculum 2007 further widened the scope for curriculum decision making to include seasoned teachers, subject associations, master trainers, examination bodies, employers of labour and experts from the industry. At the planning workshop which is NERDC first stage of curriculum development, panels for each of the subjects were constituted comprising teacher trainers, policy makers and experts from the industry whose valuable inputs derived from their expertise and wealth of experience garnered in teaching and elsewhere were brought to bear on the contents and schemes of the curriculum. The NERDC second stage of the curriculum development is the writing workshop. At this stage members of the subject panel were expanded and they diligently wrote the objective, contents, instructional materials, classroom activities and evaluation method of all the school subjects at the primary, junior secondary and senior secondary school levels. At the critique workshop, which was the third stage of the curriculum development were teachers and policy experts markedly different from those who wrote the curriculum. They evaluated the curriculum under a chairman who was independent of the subject panels. The editorial workshop was the last stage of the curriculum development where experts in the subject areas were brought in to carefully edit the final draft of the curriculum to ensure quality and standard.

The Curriculum 2007 undergone further scrutiny by the Reference Committee of the Joint Consultative Council

on Education (JCCE) and the Plenary Session of JCCE, before final endorsement by the NCE at a meeting held in Abuja in March, 2007. The JCCE is an amalgam of representatives from all the segments of the Nigerian society: officials from the Federal Ministry of Education and its parastatals; the State Ministries of Education and their agencies; State Universal Basic Education Boards; Nigerian Union of Teachers; Parents Teachers Association; Universities; Polytechnics; Colleges of Education; the Armed Forces; Textbook Publishers; International Development Partners; and other relevant bodies. The degree of teacher involvement with the project was high, particularly with regard to the number of teachers who participated in the curriculum's review, the demographics of those teachers who were involved, and the extent of teachers' participation. Curriculum 2007 is premised on a learner-centred, competence-based approach to education. Curriculum 2007 reflects depth, appropriateness and interrelatedness of the curricula contents, problem solving, critical and creative reasoning, quality standards, and emergent issues such as value orientation, peace and dialogue, entrepreneurial skills, etc (NERDC, 2007). According to Awofala and Awolola (2011), Curriculum 2007 was designed in accordance with the following principles:

- Develop autonomous learning capabilities in students, or help students learn to learn, by developing their generic skills and interest.
- Introduce a learner-centred approach that can cater for individual needs and differences, learning styles, interests and abilities.
- Develop a broad and balanced curriculum that caters for diversified learning, teaching and assessment strategies.

It is expected that students learning of the various school subjects should enhance the inculcation of the generic skills of inquiring, reasoning, conceptualizing, problem-solving and communicating. By applying these skills, students are not only expected to construct their knowledge of the subject matter but also to establish confidence and positive attitudes toward the subject matter. However, teachers are encouraged to adopt student-centred, activity-based minds-on and hands-on approaches to organize students' learning. The implementation of Curriculum 2007 started at the basic education level in September 2008 while the implementation of the senior secondary aspect began in September 2011 with the first batch of junior secondary students from Upper Basic Education Curriculum. This systematic implementation is to allow for adequate planning, teacher capacity building, textbook review, provision of learning resources, monitoring, evaluation, and feedback (NERDC, 2008). The implementation adopted a gradual phasing out procedure.

2.1 Objectives and Philosophy of Curriculum 2007

The following are some of the objectives of Curriculum 2007 as envisaged by curriculum experts:

1. To inculcate a culture of information and communication technology in every learner from primary one to senior secondary year three.
2. To inculcate high ethical standard and national values in every learner from primary one to senior secondary year three.
3. To promote bilingualism by allowing the teaching of French Language in addition to English Language in Nigerian schools.
4. To promote entrepreneurial skills creativity, and self reliance in every learner.
5. To actualize the ideal of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in the area of wealth generation, employment creation, poverty eradication and planning in education.
6. To promote computer literacy and citizenship education in every learner from primary one to senior secondary year three.
7. To produce marketable citizens who are skilled and information driven and capable of creating wealth for self-reliance.

The philosophy of Curriculum 2007 for the 9-year Basic Education Programme entails that every learner who has gone through 9-years of basic education should have acquired appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative, communicative and life-skills, as well as the ethical, moral, and civic values (NERDC, 2008). The Curriculum 2007 for the Senior Secondary Education Programme is premised on the philosophy that every senior secondary education graduate should have been well prepared for higher education as well as acquired relevant functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation, and in the process strengthen further the formulations for ethical, moral and civic values acquired at the basic education level (NERDC, 2008).

2.2 Justification for Curriculum 2007

The coming on board of Curriculum 2007 is an indictment on the suitability of the existing curricula in primary, junior secondary and senior secondary schools in meeting the needs and aspirations of teeming Nigerians. Thus,

the following are some of the reasons for introducing Curriculum 2007 in Nigerian schools (Awofala, 2012): (a) meeting the needs of the Universal Basic Education Programme, (b) promoting the ideal of National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), (c) the need to produce better informed, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) compliant, bilingual citizens of high ethical standard, (d) problems with the previous curricula in the area of acquisition of strategic communication skills, entrepreneurial skills, computer literacy, citizenship education, and functional literacy and numeracy, and (e) keeping pace with emergent global and national issues.

In addition, the old primary and junior secondary curricula contained some gaps which have been closed in the new 9-year Basic Education Curriculum aspect of Curriculum 2007. For instance, there is disconnect between some subjects of the old curricula like primary science and integrated science, introductory technology, with no technology in the primary school curriculum. The disconnect between the curriculum contents in the senior secondary school subjects and curricular contents of tertiary education is one other reason for the overhauling of the old school curricula. For instance, there is a wide gap between the old general mathematics curricula and tertiary education mathematics. Topics such as differentiation and integration of polynomials which formed the basis of calculus in tertiary mathematics were not found in the old general mathematics curricula. The introduction of operation research in the new further mathematics curriculum to some extent bridged the gap between the old further mathematics curriculum and tertiary mathematics. A strong criticism levelled 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. This criticism has been adequately taken care of in the Curriculum 2007 to the level that while planning a lesson, the teacher is placed in a vantage position to ensure that there is a strong link between what is to be taught and what behavioural change is expected from the learners. The old school curricula had been criticized for not promoting the acquisition of problem-solving skills and higher-order skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) in the learners. Although the lower-order skills were addressed in the old curricula and these skills serve as pre-requisites for attaining higher-order skills, the Nigerian students in the 21st century need higher-order skills at the pre-tertiary level of education to function effectively in tertiary education and beyond and these skills have been taken care of in the Curriculum 2007.

3. Differences between Curriculum 2007 and the Old Curricula

The changes from the old curricula to the Curriculum 2007 are related to the content, delivery and assessment orientations of the Curriculum 2007. There are many changes in the skills emphasized in Curriculum 2007. For instance, there are rising emphasis on such macro skills as problem-solving, quantitative reasoning, communications, connections and information technologies. It is important to note that as important as these skills are, they were not well represented in the old curricula as if they were just accidentally dispersed around.

Table 3. Differences between Old Curricula and Curriculum 2007

Old Curricula	New Curriculum 2007
No distinction between students' and teacher activities.	Activities are broken down into students' activity and teacher activity.
No sample evaluation item to guide the teacher	Evaluation guide consists of sample evaluation items to guide the teacher.
Content is organized based on how teachers teach.	Content is organized based on how students learn.
There is little mention about developing positive attitude in students.	There is more emphasis on how to develop positive attitude towards subject matter and on student motivation.
Teaching methods, techniques and strategies are not student-centred.	Teaching-learning activities prepared parallel to learning outcomes require student-centred methods, techniques and strategies
The existing primary and JSS mathematics curricula truncate the 9-year continuous schooling.	The new basic education mathematics curriculum gives room for the 9-year continuous schooling.
The curriculum content is not information technology driven.	The new 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.	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	The curriculum is interspersed with skills for

lose touch of basic learning for lifelong survival.	lifelong survival.
No adequate representation of emerging issues.	Emerging issues such as information technology and HIV AIDS are well represented.
Provide opportunity for learners to acquire lower-order skills.	The curriculum provides opportunity for learners to acquire higher-order skills in addition to lower-order skills.

Besides skills, there is also a change in the approach taken towards the assessment of learning. Greater emphasis is given to process evaluation as opposed to product evaluation (Awofala, 2012). While the old curricula were test and examination driven, the Curriculum 2007 in addition to test and examination encourages such tools as projects and group works in the assessment of students' learning. These changes not only allow for flexibility and choice, are no doubt in line with constructivist approach to learning in which learners are given opportunity to construct their own knowledge of the world with already existing knowledge. One major change seems to be the way the subject matter content of Curriculum 2007 is delivered. Such constructivist pedagogies as active learning, use of manipulatives, cooperative learning, problem-solving method, value clarification method, project method, and the use of realistic and genuine tasks are emphasized. Through active learning, students' construction of their own knowledge is inevitable and this may add to their intellectual value of subject matter content. Table 3 below shows the differences between the old curricula and curriculum 2007.

4. Recent Review of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum

The new 9-year basic education curriculum trial tested across the nation's primary and junior secondary schools between 2008/09 and 2010/11 academic sessions has undergone rigorous review in 2011/12 session and major modifications approved by the NCE had been effected in the area of cutting down the number of subjects pupils will offer in primary and junior secondary schools without necessarily reducing the contents.

Table 4. Reviewed 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum Structure with School Subjects

Lower Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 1-3)		Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 4-6)		Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS 1-3)	
<i>Core Compulsory Subjects</i>		<i>Core Compulsory Subjects</i>		<i>Core Compulsory Subjects</i>	
1.	English studies	1.	English studies	1.	English studies
2.	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)	2.	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)	2.	One major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba)
3.	Mathematics	3.	Mathematics	3.	Mathematics
4.	Basic Science and Technology	4.	Basic Science	4.	Basic Science
5.	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)	5.	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)	5.	Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA)
6.	Pre-vocational Studies	6.	Pre-vocational Studies	6.	Pre-vocational Studies
7.	Religion and National Values	7.	Religion and National Values	7.	Religion and National Values
		8.	French Language	8.	French Language
				9.	Basic Technology
				10.	Business Studies
	<i>Elective Subject</i>		<i>Elective Subject</i>		<i>Elective Subject</i>
1.	Arabic Language	1.	Arabic Language	1.	Arabic Language

The need for the review of the new 9-year basic education curriculum was reiterated at the Presidential Summit on the state of education in Nigeria which held in October 2010 in which delegates at the summit called for immediate action to compress the curricula offerings at all levels of basic education. The summit recommended that the number of subjects offered at this level should be reduced to between six and 13, in line with international best practices. This recommendation coupled with the feedback on the three year trial testing/implementation of BEC which suggests curriculum overload in terms of subject offerings at the primary and JSS levels led to the setting up of a review panel which comprised members of the High Level Policy Committee meeting and the National Stakeholders Forum for the review of the curriculum headed by Professor Godswill Obioma. The panel formulated a new structure for the BEC which is deemed for national implementation in September, 2013 across all primary and junior secondary schools. Table 4 above shows the

reviewed 9-year Basic Education Curriculum structure listing relevant subjects for each level. The number of subjects in the Lower Basic Education Curriculum was reduced from 10 to a minimum of seven and maximum of eight after bringing Computer Studies/ICT and Physical and Health Education under Basic Science and Technology while Religious Studies (Islamic and Christian Religious Studies), Civic Education, Social Studies and the newly introduced Security Education were also compressed as themes under Religion and National Values. Agriculture, Home Economics and Entrepreneurship have also been compressed as themes under Pre-vocational Studies. There is, in addition, Arabic Language which is optional at this level. The subjects listed for pupils in primary 4–6 placed on the Middle Basic Education Curriculum are the same with the ones for primary 1–3. The only difference is that from primary 4, pupils are to offer French Language as a compulsory subject because it is Nigeria's second official language which in all intent and purposes will make the nation's children bilingual and globally competitive. Thus, the number of subjects to be offered by pupils at this level is maximum of nine and minimum of eight. The subject listings for students in JSS 1–3 placed on the Upper Basic Education Curriculum are the same with the earlier two levels but Business Studies which was an optional subject in the old upper basic education curriculum has now been made compulsory for all junior secondary school students. This made the number of subjects to be offered by students at this level ten. The review panel agreed that in teaching the pupils these subjects, emphasis should be on the understanding of basic concepts and their explanations while teaching and learning must be creative, innovative and practical. The streamlining of the BEC curricula is done without reducing the contents and in line with international best practices. For instance, Kenya has seven subjects; Tanzania, eight subjects; United States, six subjects; Malaysia and Indonesia, nine subjects each for pupils at the basic education level. As noted earlier, the implementation of the reviewed 9-year basic education curriculum will commence in primary and junior secondary schools across the country in September, 2013.

5. Basic Education Curriculum and the 6-3-3-4 System of Education

Following the successful development of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum by the NERDC and its subsequent public presentation in 2007 by the Federal Government of Nigeria, sundry questions and insinuations have been making around by members of the public, which of course are clear indications that they lack proper understanding of the curriculum. One of these misconceptions is the widely expressed view that with the introduction of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum, Nigeria has abandoned the 6-3-3-4 system of education and as it were adopted the 9-3-4 system. Critical stakeholders in education including teachers and educator, for long held, and even till now hold to this misconception. This is evident in the write-ups of some scholars in education and interviews granted the Nigerian press. The approved three-level structure for the Basic Education Curriculum, namely: Lower Basic Education Curriculum for Primary 1-3; Middle Basic Education Curriculum for Primary 4-6 and Upper Basic Education Curriculum for JSS 1-3 is also misconstrued that the country now runs three basic education schools that is lower basic school, middle basic school and upper basic school. This wrong perception is strongly held by top class private schools and some tertiary institutions staff schools that are up till today still using the nomenclature of lower basic school, middle basic school and upper basic school. According to some of these Private school proprietors, the 6-3-3-4 system of education is no longer in existence in Nigeria.

All these misconceptions point to the fact that the various advocacy and sensitization workshops organized by the NERDC for the purpose of familiarizing members of the public and end-users with the Basic Education Curriculum were not enough and had only yielded little result. Up till today, most Nigerians (the end-users and members of the public) cannot claim to have been fully sensitized with the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum which implementation began in September 2011 throughout the country. This is not an indictment of the NERDC on the implementation of the new senior secondary education curriculum but that the Federal Government and the National Assembly have not done much in funding the parastatal to live up to its mandates. The task of curriculum advocacy, sensitization and ultimate implementation should not be left in the hands of NERDC alone as critical stakeholders in the education industry should help in disseminating the necessary information and knowledge that would keep members of the public and end-users abreast of the changes in the new curriculum. It is not enough for the government to provide money for the review of the school curriculum and not provide the needed support for its eventual implementation in the classrooms. However, to inform the members of the public and the uninformed educators, the Federal Government has not changed the nation's system of education to 9-3-4 and that the problem with the 6-3-3-4 system of education is lack of proper implementation. The introduction of Curriculum 2007 is one way of further concretising the implementation of the 6-3-3-4 system of education. It is expected that the coming on board of Curriculum 2007 would help in inculcating in the learners such higher-order cognitive skills as analysis, synthesis and evaluation which are requisites for tertiary studies. The approved three-level structure for the curriculum implies that Nigeria still have primary school and junior secondary school but that the basic education curriculum is only broken into three

parts of lower basic, middle basic and upper basic for the purpose of achieving the goals of the 9-year basic education programme.

In contrast to the belief of some people, the introduction of the 9-year basic education curriculum does not entail that a child will remain in one school for 9-years learning the 9-year basic education curriculum. Instead, a child is expected to successfully complete primary school before proceeding to the junior secondary school. Although entrance examination into the junior secondary school had been abolished based on the national policy on education requirement, transition from primary school to junior secondary school is now automatic; as basic education terminates at the junior secondary school level. Emphasis is now placed on effective continuous assessment, while final examination and certification will now be done at the end of the nine-year basic education programme. The disarticulation agenda propagated by the Universal Basic Education Programme is to systematically unite the junior secondary school with primary school through functional 9-year basic education curriculum. The curriculum subject contents a pupil has learnt in primary six will lay the foundation for curriculum content in junior secondary school as the primary six subject curriculum contents are connected systematically to junior secondary school subject curriculum contents.

6. Constraints to the Implementation of Curriculum 2007

From all indications, Curriculum 2007 can be regarded as laudable project capable of ushering in a curricular reform in Nigeria. However, two major factors that could mar the effective implementation of Curriculum 2007 and which of course had been a bane of most curricular reforms before now are lack of financial clout and inadequate personnel. Lack of adequate personnel is a serious challenge to the implementation of Curriculum 2007. In many schools, there are no qualified teachers to teach the newly introduced subjects such as Computer Studies/ICT, Civic Education and the 35 Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects. Most Faculties of Education in the nation's universities and Colleges of Education in the country are not running programmes leading to the award of degrees or certificates in the subjects. More worrisome is that there is no attempt on the part of the government to mass produce teachers in these subject areas. The implementation of the new curriculum structure for the 3-year senior secondary education may suffer set back in the area of personnel. Each senior secondary school in the country may not be able to cope with the demand of institutionalizing the four fields of study since there is a dearth of qualified teachers in the core subjects in specialized fields of study. However, if standards are set for Curriculum 2007 and there are no teachers to execute it, it becomes irrelevant to organize quality control. The present lack of financial clout which the NERDC has found itself has made the task of organizing advocacy and sensitization workshops on the Curriculum 2007 for teachers across the country difficult. Teachers in the country need to be adequately informed about the Curriculum 2007 and its implementation in the classrooms since no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. However, for financial reprieve to come the way of the NERDC following its successful completion of the review of the new 9-year basic education curriculum, the State Government in the thirty-six states of the country should find it more expedient to collaborate with the NERDC in the implementation of the reviewed 9-year basic education curriculum. The review of the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum by the NERDC was based on the 3-years of pilot testing (September 2008 – August 2011) of the 9-year basic education curriculum across the country and this gave stakeholders and teachers of various school subjects other than those who participated in the development of the curriculum the opportunity to articulate their positions which they did based on empirical observations of the missing elements in the curriculum which were collated and forwarded to the NERDC.

7. The Way Forward

In order to effectively implement the Curriculum 2007 to the letter there is need for specialists in Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects to be provided. As a start, teachers in relevant Trade/Entrepreneurship subject could be produced at Nigerian Certificate Examination (NCE) level at Colleges of Education. The Faculties of Education in the nation's universities should also consider it expedient in mounting B.Ed or B.Sc(Ed) degree programmes in Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects. This is also ditto for Computer Studies/ICT and Civic Education where there is a shortage of qualified teachers. The establishment of specialized universities of education by some state governments namely Ogun and Rivers is not only commendable but laudable in the area of mounting B.Sc(Ed) degrees in Trade/Entrepreneurship courses. For instance, Tai Solarin University of Education is at present the only specialized university in the country that is running programme leading to the award of B.Sc(Ed) Telecommunication and graduates of this programme are expected to teach Radio, Television and electrical work as one of the 35 Trade/Entrepreneurship subjects in senior secondary school. Other trades subjects include: Auto body repair and spray painting; Auto Electrical work; Auto Mechanical work; Auto parts merchandising; Air conditioning refrigerator; Welding and fabrication, engineering craft practice; Electrical installation and maintenance work; Block laying and concrete work; Painting and decorating; Plumbing and pipe

fitting; Machine woodworking; Carpentry and Joinery; Furniture Making; Upholstery; Catering craft practice; Garment making; Textile trade; Dyeing and Bleaching; Printing craft practice; Cosmetology; Leather Goods manufacturing and repair; Keyboarding; Short hand; Data processing; Store Keeping; GSM maintenance; Photography; Tourism; Mining; Animal Husbandry; Fisheries; Marketing; and Salesmanship (NERDC, 2008). More funds should be allocated to the NERDC to specifically organize advocacy and sensitization workshops for teachers on the newly reviewed 9-year basic education curriculum aspect of Curriculum 2007 in each State of the Federation. The implementation of the reviewed 9-year Basic Education Curriculum aspect of Curriculum 2007 which will begin in September, 2013 in all primary and junior secondary schools nation-wide should be adequately funded.

8. Conclusion

The quest for a homegrown curriculum capable of reinvigorating the education sector towards making Nigeria compete educationally with other educationally developed nations of the world, meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and the target of being one of the 20 most developed countries in the world by 2020 should be sustained. Government at all levels should display necessary executive will and support for the proper implementation of Curriculum 2007 scheduled to commence in September 2013 and its review thereof at all levels.

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