



EXAMINING THE CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UPPER BASIC CURRICULUM IN NIGERIA

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This study sought to examine the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level in Nigeria: challenges and way forward. Three research questions and three hypotheses were generated to guide this study. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 4361 respondents made up of 66 principals and 4295 teachers from the 66 public secondary schools in Gombe State. Sample for this study was 44 principals and 200 teachers selected from public secondary schools in Gombe state of Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for data collection. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test. The findings of this study showed that the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level are that it boosts the reputation of schools, enhance upper basic education, determines the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes, helps in the realization of educational objectives, helps teachers and instructors deliver quality content that is properly arranged among others. The findings of the study disclosed that the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level include inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, non-involvement of teachers in the planning stage of the curriculum, non-payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, inadequate supply of human and materials resources in the school among others. The findings of the study unveiled that the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level include adequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, teacher's involvement in the planning stage of the curriculum, regular payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, adequate supply of human and materials resources in the school among others. The study recommended that the government should ensure better conditions of service, remuneration, job mobility and promotion for teachers. The government must ensure better funding of education to guarantee adequate infrastructure, school materials, supply of equipment to the laboratories and workshops.

Keywords: relevance, curriculum, foundation, education, upper basic education**Introduction**

Education is the foundation of a successful career, financial freedom, the ability to think and reason critically and to make informed decisions. Education has become one of the most powerful weapons known for reducing poverty and inequality in modern societies. It is used to lay the foundation for a sustainable growth and development of any nation. It is the medium for transferring values, entire, knowledge and experience that make for proper molding and adjustment of an individual to his domain. Abba (2021) stated that education is the most important means for individuals to improve personal endowments, build capability levels, overcome constraints and enlarge their

available set of opportunities. Education accomplishes these goals through the utilization of the curriculum. The curriculum of an educational system contains the aspirations projections and dream of the inhabitants of the system. Education and curriculums are connected and share a relationship in which both of them are enhanced. Education is highly recognized when its foundation is that of an effective curriculum. Foundation is the basis (such as a tenet, principle, or axiom) upon which something stands or is supported. In the context of the present study, foundation is regarded as the basis (such as a tenet, principle, or axiom) upon which education at the upper

**Samuel, A. B.**

basic level is anchored. Thus, “curriculum” is the foundation of education at the upper basic level.

Basic education is the education given to pupils within the ages of 6 to 14 years. It is the education given right from the grass roots as soon as the child can count. It is necessary to educate children nowadays. To this effect, the government has a big role to play to enhance the quality of education in our schools. As the basic education system in Nigeria which was 6-3-3-4 and now transformed to 9-3-4, education from primary school level to Junior Secondary School 3 (Primary One to JSS 3), it is the role of the government to provide an enabling environment for teachers and learners; such as good classrooms in a quiet and serene environment to accommodate pupils.

Lower Basic Education (primary 1-3) and Middle Basic Education (primary 4 -6) in Nigeria is compulsory, but free under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme introduced by President Olusegun Obasanjo on September 30, 1999. Education at this level is mainly financed by the government. But after the primary school education, parents and guardians are made to bear the full costs of sending their children/wards to secondary schools or tertiary institutions. At lower level and middle basic education, pupils have to put on school uniforms throughout the country. Every school has its own uniform as a way of distinguishing its pupils from the other school pupils within the same locality. Successful pupils at the primary school level - those in possession of First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC) and who have passed the entrance examination to Upper Basic Education (JSS 1 – 3) also known as junior secondary schools, the Common Entrance Examination, can then proceed with the Upper Basic Education (JSS 1 – 3)/junior secondary school education, usually at the age of twelve.

Upper Basic Education (JSS 1 – 3) is the first phase of the secondary education, which lasts for three years, is provided at the Junior Secondary Schools (JSS). At the end of these three years, students sit for Junior Secondary School Examination (JSSE) and the successful ones are awarded the Junior Secondary School Certificate (JSSC). A successful completion of

the JSS is a prerequisite for Senior Secondary School (SSS), which also lasts for three years. At the end of these three years, students obtain the Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSSC) after writing and passing the final examination, which is the Senior Secondary School Examination. The SSSC is equivalent to the former West African School Certificate (WASC). It is worthy to note that basic education at any level is derived by curriculum. The term curriculum refers to the lessons and academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or program. Yusuf (2012) defined a curriculum as the totality of student experiences that occur in the educational process. The term often refers specifically to a planned sequence of instruction, or to a view of the student's experiences in terms of the educator's or school's instructional goals. Luciano (2017) alleged that curriculum is the total learning experiences of individuals not only in school but society as well. It is seen as all the learning experiences which are planned and guided by the school whether carried out in groups or individually. It can be said to be the sum total of activities which is planned and directed by the school for the attainment of educational goals. Olaitan and Alli (2007) stated that curriculum involves all the activities that a student has under the auspices or direction of the school. It comprises the sum total of the school's effort to influence learning, whether in the classroom, on the playground or out of school. Curriculum of a school is the formal and informal content and process by which learners gain understanding, develop skills, and alter attitudes, appreciations, and values under the auspices of that school. Hence, the relevance of curriculum cannot be over-emphasized.

Relevance is the quality or state of being closely connected or appropriate. It is the degree to which something is related or useful to what is happening or being talked about (cambridge.org). Relevance is how appropriate or important something is to what's being done or said at a given time. In the light of the present study, the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level indicates that it helps teachers and instructors deliver quality content that is properly



Samuel, A. B.

arranged. It aids in the economy of the state and curriculum encourages innovation. Administrators, teachers, and students are able to follow a detailed structure, which helps them to easily tackle their tasks and successfully complete the course. The curriculum prepares students for the next chapter in life; whether higher education or a job. They are also able to sharpen their crafts and improve on their skills. It helps in the recognition and preservation of the nation's identity. Ehindero (2014) asserted that curriculum boost the reputation of schools, decide the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes. Above all, it helps in the realization of educational objectives. The School system runs on a certain curriculum and it can never run without acknowledging the importance of curriculum. Without a proper curriculum, a school cannot run smoothly. As there would be no defined idea of what the plan is to teach students studying at the institution. There are many challenges bedeviling the Nigeria educational sector. Many of these challenges are traceable to inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum. Teachers are the agents who implement the curriculum. Ifeobu (2014) is of the view that, no matter how well a curriculum is planned, if it is not properly implemented, the desired results cannot be achieved. The teachers in the past have been left out of the planning stage and are brought in during the implementation stage. However, Babo (2015) opined that to ensure effective curriculum implementation, enough funds should be allocated to the educational sector through the upward review of yearly budget. Schools are to be properly equipped and renovated. Curriculum is to be reviewed to make school graduates become self-reliant rather than depending on government work which is not available and thus increasing the number on labour market. Teachers are to be motivated through prompt payment of their salaries, remunerations and fringe benefits and in-service-training/workshops granted them as these will make them happy to carry out their duties effectively as should be down.

Statement of the Problem

Curriculum changes that have been implemented over the years are adversely affecting upper basic level of education in Nigeria. Some teachers argue convincingly that it is easier to continue with familiar teaching methods instead of paying lip service to the new policies. This implies that involvement of teachers is essential in the successful implementation of any curriculum change as they are the main role-players in promoting quality education. Nonetheless, inadequate training regarding curriculum implementation, lack of guidelines for the implementation of curriculum changes and the complexity of managing the new and the old curriculum simultaneously, created a challenge to the upper basic level of education in Nigeria. Many primary and secondary schools in Nigeria are experiencing acute shortage of infrastructures, non-payment of teachers' salaries and security problems. The instructional materials needed to aid teaching-learning activities are not available. Some primary schools have not enough classrooms and furniture to the extent that classes are held under shades of trees, some pupils carry-homes their branches and desks and bring term to school the next day. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level in Nigeria, considering the challenges and way forward.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. What is the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level?
2. What are the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level?
3. What is the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study, and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.



Samuel, A. B.

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Ho₃: There is no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Research Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. The target population for this study was 4361 respondents made up of 66 principals and 4295 teachers from the 66 public secondary schools in Gombe State (Source Post Primary Schools Management Board (PPSMB) Gombe, 2019). The reason for choosing principals and teachers was because they were the categories of people that can give correct information with respect to the subject matter in this study. The sample of this study was drawn from principals and teachers in the public secondary schools through a stratified random sampling technique. The state was stratified along the 11 local government areas and four public secondary schools were randomly selected from each local government area, thus, making a total of 44 secondary schools. From the 44 secondary schools, 44 principals and 200 teachers were randomly selected for the study. The instrument for data collection was a questionnaire structured on a 4 – point rating of

Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points and Strongly Disagree (SD) 1 point.

The instrument was face validated by two experts from curriculum studies in the Department of Educational Foundations, and one expert from Measurement and Evaluation in Science Education Department, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha formula. The reliability coefficient value yielded 0.86 on average which was considered adequate for the study. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researcher and three research assistants. A total of 244 copies of the questionnaires were administered and collected on the spot from the respondents. Data obtained were analyzed using mean score and standard deviation. In addition, the null hypotheses were tested using t-test statistics at 0.05 level of significance. Any mean score lower than 2.50 implied disagree while equal to or higher than 2.50 implied agree to the items. Similarly, for the testing of null hypotheses. t-calculated values less than critical t-value, were accepted, while t-calculated values are more than critical t-value, were rejected.

Results

The result in table 1 shows that the mean ratings of the principals for item numbers 1-5 are 3.41, 3.28, 3.23, 3.20 and 3.09. On the other hand, the mean ratings of the teachers on the above items are 3.21, 3.23, 3.17, 3.11 and 3.10. This shows that the respondents agreed that all the items in the table are the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Table 1: Mean ratings on the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Items Curriculum:	Principals			Teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	REM	\bar{X}	SD	REM
1	boost the reputation of schools, attract learners and enhance upper basic education	3.41	0.70	A	3.21	0.98	A
2	determines the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes.	3.28	0.91	A	3.23	0.88	A
3	helps in the realization of educational objectives	3.23	0.86	A	3.17	0.82	A



Samuel, A. B.

220-227

4	helps teachers and instructors deliver quality content that is properly arranged	3.20	0.74	A	3.11	0.81	A
5	encourage all students to achieve their spiritual, intellectual and social potential	3.09	0.87	A	3.10	0.87	A

\bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Rem = Remarks, A=Agree

In the table, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 242, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated

values for all items were less than critical t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level was accepted.

Table 2: t-test of the two groups on the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	df	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1	Principals	44	3.24	0.82	242	1.42	1.96	Not significant
2	Teachers	200	3.16	0.87				

SD = Standard Deviation, Degree of Freedom = df, t calculated = t.cal

The result in table 3 shows that the mean ratings of the principals for item numbers 6-10 are 3.04, 3.09, 3.24, 3.44 and 2.65. On the other hand, the mean ratings of the teachers on the

above items are 3.18, 3.05, 3.13, 3.26 and 2.93. This shows that the respondents agree that items in the table three above are the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Table 3: Mean ratings on the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Items	Principals			Teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	REM	\bar{X}	SD	REM
1.	Inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum	3.04	0.81	A	3.18	0.79	A
2.	Teachers are not involved in the planning stage of the curriculum	3.09	0.83	A	3.05	0.88	A
3.	Non-payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives	3.24	0.84s	A	3.13	0.87	A
4.	Inadequate supply of human and materials resources in the school	3.44	0.90	A	3.26	0.91	A
5.	Poor maintenance, supervision and learning environment	2.65	0.96	A	2.93	0.94	A

\bar{X} = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Rem = Remarks, A=Agree

In the table 4, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 242, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated

values for all items were less than critical t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level was accepted.



Samuel, A. B.

220-227

Table 4: t-test of the two groups on the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	df	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1.	Principals	44	3.09	0.87	242	0.51	1.96	Not significant
2.	Teachers	200	3.11	0.88				

SD = Standard Deviation, Degree of Freedom = df, t calculated = t.cal

The result in Table 5 shows that the mean ratings of the principals for item numbers 11-15 are 3.27, 3.06, 2.85, 2.65 and 2.99. On the other hand, the mean ratings of the teachers on the above items are 3.19, 3.11, 3.22, 3.11 and 3. This shows that the respondents agree that

items in the table five above are the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level.

Table 5: Mean ratings on the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Items	Principals			Teachers		
		\bar{X}	SD	REM	\bar{X}	SD	REM
1.	Adequate planning and implementation of the curriculum	3.27	0.69	A	3.19	0.59	A
2.	Teachers are to be involved in the planning and implementation stage of the curriculum	3.06	0.60	A	3.11	0.63	A
3.	Regular payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives	2.85	0.71	A	3.22	0.80	A
4.	Adequate supply of human and materials resources in the school	2.65	0.78	A	3.14	0.67	A
5.	Ensuring proper maintenance, supervision and learning environment	2.99	0.61	A	3.04	0.60	A

X = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, Rem = Remarks, A= Agree

In the table, the t-calculated value of each item was obtained; the degree of freedom of all items was 242, while the critical t-table of 1.96 was obtained at 0.05 level of significance. From the table, it can be seen that the t-calculated values for all items were

less than critical t-value. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean ratings of principals and teachers on the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level was accepted.

Table 6: t-test of the two groups on the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level

S/N	Group	No.	Mean	SD	df	t.cal	t-value	Decision
1.	Principals	44	2.96	0.68	242	0.86	1.96	Not significant
2.	Teachers	200	3.14	0.66				

SD = Standard Deviation, Degree of Freedom = df, t calculated = t.cal

Findings of the Study

The findings of this study revealed that:

(a) The relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level include: it boosts the reputation of schools,

enhance upper basic education, determines the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes, helps in the



Samuel, A. B.

realization of educational objectives, helps teachers and instructors deliver quality content that is properly arranged among others.

(b) The challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level include: inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, non-involvement of teachers in the planning stage of the curriculum, non-payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, inadequate supply of human and materials resources in the school among others.

(c) The way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at the upper basic level include: adequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, teacher's involvement in the planning stage of the curriculum, regular payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, adequate supply of human and materials resources in the school among others

Discussion of Findings

The findings with respect to research question one and hypothesis one shows that both principals and teachers share or have a similar view on the relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level. They agreed that curriculum: boost the reputation of schools, attract learners and enhance upper basic education, determines the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes, helps in the realisation of educational objectives, helps teachers and instructors deliver quality content that is properly arranged and encourage all students to achieve their spiritual, intellectual and social potential. These findings are in consonance with the assertion made by Ehindero (2014) that curriculum boost the reputation of schools, decide the principles and procedures which will help educators in selecting and arranging instructional programmes. Above all, it helps in the realization of educational objectives.

The findings with respect to research question two and hypothesis two shows that principals and teachers have similar view on the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level. They agreed that

the challenges of curriculum include: inadequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, teachers are not involved in the planning stage of the curriculum, non-payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, inadequate supply of human and materials resources in the school and poor maintenance, supervision and learning environment. These findings are in line with view of Ifeobu (2014) that, no matter how well a curriculum is planned, if it is not properly implemented, the desired results cannot be achieved. The teachers in the past have been left out of the planning stage and are brought in during the implementation stage.

The findings with respect to research question three and hypothesis three show that the principals and teachers have similar view on the way forward to the challenges of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level. They agreed that the way forward include: adequate planning and implementation of the curriculum, teachers are to be involved in the planning and implementation stage of the curriculum, regular payment of teachers' salaries and other incentives, adequate supply of human and materials resources in the school and ensuring proper maintenance, supervision and learning environment. These findings are in line with the opinion of Babo (2015) that to ensure effective curriculum implementation, enough funds should be allocated to the educational sector through the upward review of yearly budget. Schools are to be properly equipped and renovated. Teachers are to be motivated through prompt payment of their salaries, remunerations and fringe benefits and in-service-training/workshops granted them as these will make them happy to carry out their duties effectively as should be down.

Conclusion

The relevance of curriculum as the foundation of education at upper basic level cannot be over-emphasized considering the fact that the overall organisation of education is based on the curriculum. Thus, the curriculum is the means for achieving the educational objectives. It provides the guidelines to the teachers as well as to students, what a teacher has to teach and what the students to learn. Every subject's

**Samuel, A. B.**

content has its wide structure which is to be taught lower level to the higher level. Thus the main task of curriculum development is determining structure of content for a particular stage teaching. Thus the curriculum of different subjects is designed from primary level to university level. The curriculum is designed to help in development of physical, social and moral qualities of students. It provides the guide line and bases for preparing text book for the use of students and subject teacher. The teaching and learning situation are organized in view to the curriculum and teaching work is also assigned with help of curriculum. The instructional method is selected and used in view of the curricular. Finally, curriculum is basis of teaching, learning and testing. Hence, the nature of curriculum provides the basis for the developing knowledge, skills, attitude and creative ability. It also helps in developing leadership qualities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of this study:

1. The upper basic education curriculum should be properly planned and implemented to ensure effective utilization.
2. Teachers should be carried along in the planning and implementation stage of the curriculum because they are the major curriculum implementers in the upper basic education.
3. Teachers' salaries, allowances and other incentives should be reviewed upward, payed regularly to keep them motivated in their jobs.
4. Human and materials resources should be properly supplied in the various schools under upper basic education programme.
5. All the schools under upper basic education programme should be properly maintained, supervised and learning environment should be upgraded.

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