

## EVALUATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM MODULES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

**Uffia Inyang Ogo**  
**Eyo Okon Eneyo**  
**Elizabeth Anthony Akpan**  
University of Calabar

### Abstract

*The purpose of this paper was to evaluate the implementation of basic education modules in Nigeria. The paper is divided into three major themes: the universal basic education curriculum modules, individuals involved in universal basic education curriculum module implementation, and factors affecting effective curriculum implementation at the basic education level. The paper pointed out many factors, if put in place can enhance curriculum implementation at the basic education level such as: adequacy of resources, facilities and school equipment, professional development training and workshop organized for teachers and headmasters on regular basis, and the teachers also need knowledge regarding the new curriculum and different ways of teaching to foster students learning. All these factors are dependent on the availability of funds for successful implementation. The paper recommended that there is need therefore for government at all level to increase its budgetary allocation for education. These funds should be made available and accessible to foster the implementation process.*

**Keywords:** Evaluation, Implementation, Basic education, curriculum module

### Introduction

It is a known fact that primary education is the foundation upon which the other education system is built. Education is the bedrock within which skills are acquired, basic and relevant knowledge are received for molding of character. In context of this paper, primary education in Nigeria comprises lower basic education (Primary 1 – 3), middle basic education (Primary 4 – 6) and upper basic education (JSS 1 – 3). This is also known as 9 – year Basic Education Program. The curriculum at any level, including basic education level is a structured series of intended learning experiences which embraces purposeful experience provided and directed by educational institutions to predetermined goals. (Afangideh, 2009).

Curriculum however, is a plan that consists of learning opportunities for a specific time frame and place, a tool that aims to bring about behavior changes in students as a result of planned activities and includes all learning experiences received by student with the guidance of the school (Goodlad & Su, 1992). Similarly, Hass (1987:5) provides a broader definition, starting that a curriculum includes “all of the experiences that individual learners have in a program of education whose purpose is to achieve broad goals and related specific objective which is planned in terms of a framework of theory and research or past and present professional practice”.

Curriculum implementation refers to the execution or the putting into effect curriculum plans and programs. Esu, Enokoha & Umoren (2009). Olofu (2003) sees curriculum implementation as valid actions (through participation, resources provision or creating enabling environment) in the execution of planned program or translating theory into practice, with a view of yielding expected result. Loucks and Lieberman (1983) defines curriculum implementation as the trying out of a new practice and what it looks like when actually used in a school system. Curriculum implementation is bringing about change and hopefully improvement. Implementing the curriculum does not only focus on the actual use but also on the attitude of those who implement it (Alonsabe, 2009).

The Federal Government of Nigeria through its agency Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) lunched the new curriculum as the new basic education curriculum for primary and junior secondary schools in November 8, 2007. The new curriculum is said to address amongst other things, issues of value re-orientation, poverty eradication, critical thinking, entrepreneurship and life skills. Also seeks to correct the abnormalities of the former one which is lacking in the area of human capital development. However the goals of the 9 – year basic education program include:

- Developing in the entire citizenry a strong consciousness for education and a strong committed to its vigorous promotion.
- Providing free and compulsory, universal basic education for every Nigerian child of school-going age.
- Reducing drastically the incidence of early leaving from the formal system (through improved relevance, quality and efficiency).
- Catering for the learning needs of young person who, for one reason or another, have had to interrupt their schooling through appropriate forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education.
- Ensuring the acquisition of appropriate level of literacy, numeracy, manipulations, communication and life-skills as well as the ethical, moral and civil values for laying a solid foundation for life-long learning (Obioma, n.d.).

### **The universal basic education curriculum modules**

The UBE curriculum modules emphasize the functional literacy, numeracy and strategic skills of primary students. Infusion of relevant and functional entrepreneurial skills using the relevant subjects contents as driver. According to Obioma (n.d.), identification of minimum competencies and aligning transaction (including pedagogical skills needed), instructional materials and suggested evaluation activities. He further highlighted that learning will be linked to the world of works of learners in the cultural context. The module is the consolidation of some contents and subjects in the basic context thus reducing subject/content overload. The inclusion of strategic life-long skills as well as positive national values, civic, moral and ethical education as a course of study. Today, in our primary school civic education have been introduced. The essence is to inculcate the patriotic citizens' consciousness in the minds and character of the students.

The UBE curriculum also harbors emerging issues such as HIV/AIDS education, anti-corruption studies, capital market studies etc. The curriculum is made flexible such that adaptation to the socially marginalized (including nomadic and migrant groups), vulnerable communities, adult and special needs learners are not left out.

Consequently, the UBE curriculum is structured as follows:

1. Lower Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 1 – 3) has the following core subjects:
  - 1) English studies
  - 2) Nigerian language (Hausa/Igbo/Yoruba)
  - 3) Mathematics
  - 4) Basic Science and Technology
  - 5) Social studies
  - 6) Creative and cultural arts (CCA)
  - 7) The religions (CRK and IRK)
  - 8) Physical and Health Education PHE
  - 9) Civil Education
  - 10) Computer studies ICTElective subjects which students must offer 1 but not more than 2 are:
  - 1) Agricultural science
  - 2) Home economics
  - 3) Arabic language.
2. Middle Basic Education Curriculum (Primary 4 – 6) is the combination of the 10 subjects offered by Lower Basic Education with the addition of French language. Same elective subjects are also offered with options.
3. Upper Basic Education Curriculum (JSS 1 – 3) has the following subjects:
  - 1) English studies
  - 2) Nigerian language (Hausa/Igbo/Yoruba)
  - 3) Mathematics
  - 4) Basic Science
  - 5) Social studies
  - 6) Creative and cultural arts (CCA)
  - 7) The religions (CRK and IRK)
  - 8) Physical and Health Education PHE

- 8) French language
- 9) Civil Education
- 10) Computer studies/ICT

Elective subjects which students must offer one but not more than three include:

- 1) Agricultural science
- 2) Home economics
- 3) Arabic language.
- 4) Business studies

Sequel to this, assessment policy for the implementation of Basic Education curriculum module is that pupils who successfully complete primary 6 will proceed to JSS 1 without a selective (placement) examination thereby leading to the abolition of terminal examination for primary 6 pupils into JSS 1. Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) at the end of the 9 – year basic education schooling in June every year to replace junior secondary certificate examination.

A feature of the new curriculum is the phasing out of primary science and integrated science for what is known as Basic Science and Technology which prepares the child adequately for the higher studies by providing a solid foundation on which to build upon. However, Information Communication Technology (ICT) has been introduced into the primary curriculum, alongside culture and creative art all to build the child for the hazards of the future. The introduction of additional subjects is in line with the vision of National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) which is for job creation and wealth generation. According to Obioma (n.d.), the UBE curriculum implementation strategy is that the new curriculum which commenced in September 2007 for primary 1 will gradually phase out the old primary school curriculum module by 2012 and concurrently have commenced the new curriculum in JSS 1 in September, 2007 which will gradually phase out old JSS curriculum by 2010. Review of old school texts in compliance with the new curriculum, is to be adopted. The hope is that by the end of school year 2015 the entire curriculum will have been implemented for all pupils and class whole sensitization of teacher and stakeholders in the contents of the new curriculum module will commence. This will be champion by Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in collaboration with Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), National Commission for College of Education (NCCE), and National Commission for Nomadic Education (NCNE).

### **Individuals involved in universal basic education curriculum module implementation.**

Curriculum implementation requires the involvement of many different people without the coordinated involvement of these individuals, the implementation of the UBE curriculum module will encounter many problems. These key players or stakeholders are: teachers, students, headmasters, curriculum developers, academics, parents, interested political officers, communities.

#### **Teachers**

There is no doubt that teachers are the most important person in the curriculum implementation process. Regardless of which philosophical belief the education system is based on, there is no denying that teachers influence students' learning. Teachers are well-vested with the necessary and requisite knowledge about the practice of teaching and are responsible for introducing the curriculum in the classroom. Teachers as McGee (1997) believed are the key curriculum decision-makers who need to be extended professionals. This means that teachers are not only skilled in dealing with the classroom situation, but with issues wider than that. The key to getting teachers committed to an innovation is to enhance their knowledge of the programme. This means teachers need to be trained and workshops have to be organized for professional development. Hence, professional development of teachers is as important factor contributing to the success of curriculum implementation.

However, in designing professional development opportunities for teachers who are implementing a new curriculum programme are as follows:

- Programme philosophy: It is important for teachers to understand both the philosophy behind the programme as well as how the new programme may impact students, parents, administrators and other stakeholders.

- Content: Teachers may find the curriculum introduces content with which they are unfamiliar, which they have not taught in a whole, or is familiar but presented in an unfamiliar way. For example, using a problem-solving approach rather than a topical approach.
- Pedagogy: Teachers need opportunities to become familiar with the new programmes pedagogical approach. They may need to work on particular teaching skills emphasized in the new curriculum, such as teaching values.
- Components of the programme: Teachers will need opportunities to learn about the components of a new programme early in the implementation phase. For example, the new curriculum might place greater emphasis on school-based assessment while teachers are more accustomed to natural and centralized assessment.

### **Students/learners**

Students are the primary participants in education (Raihani, n.d). The student/learner is very vital in the implementation of curriculum. According to Olufu (2003), this is because the curriculum aims, constants, organization, resources, methods, evaluation are geared at transforming the learner.

There is a tendency among curriculum implementators to ignore the role of students as agents of change. Increasingly, there is the realization that every primary school children can contribute to meaningful change (implementing the school curriculum, n.d) if student do not see the relevance of the new curriculum there is the likelihood that they will not be motivated to participate or learn. It is therefore importance for the consideration of the student in the implementation process as some of them are enriched in their thinking

### **Headmasters**

Headmasters are important player in the curriculum implementation process in the school. They should have in-depth knowledge about the planned change and of the implementation process. They should be familiar with the goals and components of the curriculum and also be able to see a shift in teacher's role in the classroom and the ways in which teachers interact with student. Headmasters should be able to convince parent on the importance of the new primary school module and how the new teaching strategies can become more meaningful for their children. In transmitting the new curriculum, they need to employ a variety of leadership strategies to meet the needs of teachers vis-a-viz building on the strength of their staff and being positive about the planned change.

### **Parents**

The importance of parents in curriculum implementation cannot be overemphasized. When parent see s subject being taught in a way that is unfamiliar to them, they naturally have questions about what is going on. In addition, when children bring homework from school, their parent feel unable to help, confused and lost. To be successful, parents need to embrace the new curriculum. To reach out to the parent workshops, seminars should be organized focusing on the new curriculum and their role in the implementation.

### **Factors affecting effective curriculum implementation at the Basic Education level.**

Inadequacy of resources, equipment, facilities and general resources required for implementing a new curriculum is one factor that affects curriculum implementation at the basic level. Esu, Enuokoha & Umoren (2009) stressed that for any curriculum to be implemented, resources are require, namely: human, materials, time and space. However, time should be made available for preparing and delivering the requirements of new curriculum. For example, teachers need enough time to develop their own understanding of the subject they are required to teach. Failure to make these resources available in right quantity and quality will lead to failure in the implementation.

There is also the problem of overloading the curriculum and curriculum content. For instance, at the lower basic level 10 core subjects are offered with 1 or 2 elective to be added by student. At the middle basic level 11 core subjects with the option of student picking 1 or 2 elective subjects while at the upper basic level, 12 subjects are offered with the options of pick 1, 2 or 3 elective subjects. These subjects must be taken before their certification.

Overcrowded classroom in our primary schools is becoming very obvious. According to National Policy on Education (2004), the recommended class size is 30. Afangideh (2009) highlighted that the awareness of the advantage of education have contributed to overcrowded classroom as everybody wants to go to school to be educated. Many states in Nigeria offered education at this level free thereby increasing the population of student ratio to the teacher. This issue hampers effective implementation of new curriculum module as this will cost the teachers being over stretch in order to accommodate both slow and fast learners.

Poor professional attitude and interest towards the new curriculum also affect the implementation of new Basic education curriculum module. Example: not being keen to teach the newly introduced subject. Afangideh (2009) noted that curriculum implementation at basic education level cannot be effectively carried out if the teachers variables such as competence, availability, attitude, dedication and remuneration are faulty. Teachers with poor professional attitude and self motivation will definitely slow down the implementation process. Inyang-Abia (2005) opined that teacher is the single most significant factor in the successful implementation of any educational innovation and a prime mover of human resources development. Therefore, their inadequate motivation can affect their spirit and commitment.

However, many factors, if put in place can enhance curriculum implementation at the basic education level. Adequacy of resources, facilities and school equipment will go a long way in the implementation. Professional development training and workshop should be organized for teachers and headmasters on regular basis on areas that will foster and enhance their competency and understanding of the new curriculum. Teachers also need knowledge regarding the new curriculum and different ways of teaching to foster students learning. All these factors are dependent on the availability of funds. There is need therefore for government at all level to increase its budgetary allocation for education. These funds should be made available and accessible to foster the implementation process.

## Conclusion

For successful implementation of universal Basic Education curriculum module in Nigeria, there is need for a strong political will and economic support. There is also need for the establishment of regulating agencies at federal, local government level to monitor the progress of implementation. Universal Basic Education Commission need to work closely with State Universal Basic Education Boards and Local Government Education Authorities in the transmission of philosophy and pedagogical of the curriculum module. The success of the new 9 – year basic education (e.g. mathematics) in Nigeria will be judged in part with the performance of student in both internal and external examinations (Awofala, 2012).

It is also imperative for Universal Basic Education Commission to organize regular workshops, training and retraining of primary school teachers to improve on the quality of instructional delivery at this level, improve their teaching effectiveness and sustainability of the curriculum module goals and objectives. Revision of the National policy on Education to reflect the new basic education program is also worthy of note. The achievement of the primary education objectives in Nigeria depending on the adequate implementation of primary school curriculum module, which depends on the provision of basic facilities (Oghuvbu, 2011). Facilities such as desk, instructional materials, classroom blocks etc. will enhance curriculum implementation. It is therefore important for government at all levels to increase its budgetary allocation for education if the curriculum implementation must succeed.

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#### **Author Information**

**Uffia Inyang Ogo (corresponding author)**

[uffiaogoburg@yahoo.com](mailto:uffiaogoburg@yahoo.com)

**Eyo Okon Eneyo**

**Elizabeth Anthony Akpan**

Department of Curriculum and Teaching

University of Calabar

Nigeria