

Curriculum Innovation in Nigerian Tertiary Institutions

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Abstract:

This paper focused on curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. The examined the various roles of tertiary institutions' supervisory agencies in curriculum innovation. The barriers to curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria were identified and discussed. Using secondary data collected from both print and online publications, the paper identified poor funding, opposition of trade unions, opposition from religious institutions political instability and weak public institutions as some of the barriers to curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that the governments at all levels should increase the funding of tertiary institutions and especially supervisory institutions in Nigeria. It was also recommended that tertiary institutions stakeholders should join hands together and partner with supervisory institutions in the areas of curriculum innovation.

Keywords: Curriculum Innovation, Tertiary Institutions.

Introduction

The Federal Republic of Nigeria its National Policy on Education (2013), defined tertiary education as an education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), Colleges of Education, Mono-technics, Polytechnics and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology as well as National Teachers' Institutes (NTI). Ogunode, (2020) and Ogunode, Haliru, Shehu and Peter (2023) viewed tertiary education as the post-secondary school education designed for the production of manpower. Higher education is an education that awards certificates after the completion of the programme.

Tertiary education/ higher education is the peak of educational institutions and it is an organized educational system that is meant to support the social, economic and political development of the country (Arokiasamy, Tat, & Bin-Abdullah, 2013; Ogunode, 2020; Ogunode, Ayoko, & Orifah, 2023; Ogunode & Garba 2023).

In the view of Ogunode, Edinoh & Okolie (2023), tertiary education is conceptualized as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and for the total transformation of the society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education can also be viewed as post basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced teaching, research and community service (Ogunode & Olaitan, 2023). Tertiary education is an advanced educational system meant for human capital development through teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education is the third tiers of education that is designed for the production of skilled and professionals for the socio-economic and technology advancement (Ogunode & Ade 2023).

The realization of tertiary institutions objectives depends on sound and implementable curriculum. Ogunode and Abubakar (2020a) and Ogunode (2020) observed that tertiary institutions are saddled with the responsibilities of curriculum implementation. Curriculum according to Ejike and Ejike (2018) is a course of study or training. It consists of the list of topics to be taught (syllabus), the content of instruction or subject matter/content embracing ways and means of instruction. Curriculum is a powerful tool used by schools to actualize the educational objectives of any nation. Curriculum is a vehicle through which education is attained (Offorma, 2005). According to Akudolu (2011), curriculum covers educational goals, the content or fact to be learnt, the learning experiences, outcome of learning encounters and the learning environment. Esu and Emah (2014) see curriculum to consist of the knowledge, skills, values, activities and many more, which students learn through various school subjects. Bobbitt (2008), defined curriculum as the course of deeds and experiences through which learners become the adults they should be for success in adult society. In other words, Olofu and Olofu (2021) curriculum encourages the entire scope of formative deed and experience occurring both within and outside school for the purposeful formation of adult members of society.

The sustainability of curriculum to meet up with current socio-economic reality depends on curriculum innovation and changes. Curriculum innovation according Dorgu (2020) is regarded as a crucial element for the future of education development. Indifon, Edu, Olofu and Adie (2021) maintained that innovations should be inspired by necessity to update the content and teaching methods in the country's educational system. It should be stated that in this educational system; educational goals, teaching materials and technological relevance in every subject differ over time as a result of the country's technological advancement.

Curriculum innovation affords the teacher the opportunity of developing specific learning context. In the classroom, the implementations of such innovation are guided by the development resources. Many schools have seen positive results due to changes made to their curriculum. Thus, curriculum innovation deals with exploring the flexibility in the curriculum by introducing new ways of subject content management and adaptation of teaching approaches (Daramola, 2008).

Curriculum innovation may imply meaningful shifts in teaching and learning processes. Careful planning and management of curriculum change are keys to successful implementation. Innovation in curriculum requires a lot of meticulous planning and efforts must be made to prevent a natural death. Curriculum includes content, objectives pursued and structure. Content relates to areas of knowledge and disciplines (Olofu & Ukpubre (2014). Objectives include purpose of programme, knowledge and skills to be acquired by students while the structure relates to years of study, pattern of study and arrangement of units of study. Innovation relates to the country concerned, for example, in this case, Nigeria. These include practices and approaches introduced at least ten years before the new proposals (Dorgu, 2020). Curriculum innovation is viewed as an attempt to revise or do a complete overhaul of the framework of the system of education so that new ideas, structure or framework will replace the old ones that are no longer relevant. Innovation in a curriculum would endow individuals with the skills and understanding necessary to cope with the challenges in learning. It takes time to plan for the desire innovation which comes through relevant discussion and illustrations (Glasgow, 2012).

Dorgu (2020) observed that innovation is not effective when it is imposed even by the government. Thus, there are so many forces that bring positive change in the society which may in turn help to bring the expected change(s) in the school curriculum. In the view of Olofu and Odey (2017), for innovation to occur in a curriculum, the process of schooling has to be reordered in relation to goal, content, strategies and human/material resources for the purpose of improvement in education. Olofu and Oko (2020) therefore concluded that more effective direction in schooling is provided through curriculum change in anticipation of more functional and structural adequacies.

The following according to Jackson (2014) should be considered to bring about effective curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions:

- a. Ascertaining the need for curriculum innovation;
- b. Conference, symposia and workshop have to be held at different times to be abreast of intending innovation;
- c. Problems identified in the existing curriculum must be tabled to avoid committing the same error;
- d. The objectives that will make the intending curriculum real must be known; and
- e. learning experiences that will help in the achievement of the new stated/formulated objectives must be rightfully selected.

To enhance successful curriculum innovation in higher institutions, Daramola in Dorgu (2020) pointed the following points:

1. Teacher preparation is necessary and adequate materials must be made available. Teachers must be teachable and ready to embrace new skills, focus and competencies that will make them relevant;
2. The objectives of innovation must be clear so as not to bring about complications;
3. For the achievement of excellence, there is need for encouragement, motivation that will assist those involved to be committed;
4. The Vice-Chancellors of University, Provost of Colleges of Education, and Rectors of Polytechnics and even the States and Federal Ministries of Education must support the innovation; and
5. Every other person connected with moves on innovation must be well groomed and carried along with clear understanding. They should be made to see the innovation as helping to improve teaching and learning. Different individuals with different personal priorities and opinions have to be brought together with encouragement so as to embrace quality undergraduate education.

Apart from the listed guidelines, attention should also be given to teaching methods because teachers will implement the curriculum that has been designed. Whenever the curriculum is changed, the stakeholders should be invited for a forum. The essence according to Olofu, Agbo and Ogodo (2005) is to familiarize them with methods of teaching the new curriculum, its demands and content. Managing curriculum change requires skilled leadership. As a result of this, all those that will take up leadership role in the quest for change must be accommodating, understanding and full of leadership qualities that will make the change notable. Change always involves human and emotional factors.

In order to ensure effective supervision of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, Ogunode, Yiolokun, & Akeredolu (2019); Ogunode, and Mcbrown (2022); Ogunode and Ahmed (2022); Ogunode and Adihikon (2023) submitted that the Nigerian government established the following agencies:

National Universities Commission

The NUC is a parastatal under the Federal Ministry Education (FME). The commission was established in 1962 with the task of developing and managing university education in Nigeria. Its functions include: granting approval for all academic programmes in Nigerian universities; granting approval for the establishment of all higher educational institutions offering degree programmes; and ensuring quality assurance, through regular accreditation, of all academic programmes in universities. The purpose of the National Universities Commission (NUC) are: to co-ordinate the activities of the entire universities in the countries, to plan a balanced and co-ordinate development of universities to meet national needs, to advise the government on the financial needs of the universities and distribute such funds to universities when made available to them by government, to collect, collate, analyze and store data from the universities for use in advising the government on planning, creating new universities, conditions of service of university staff, setting up of visitation panels to universities etc (Ogunode, 2020).

National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE)

The NCCE is a parastatal of the FME established by Decree 13 of 1989. The establishment of the commission was a resultant effect of the utmost importance accorded to quality teacher education by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Since its inception, the Commission has continuously pursued the goals of quality assurance in teacher education. It has continuously reviewed and standardized the curriculum of colleges of education in the country through programme accreditation, which is carried out once in five years. The purpose of establishing the National commission for Colleges of Education include; to coordinate the activities of all colleges of education and other tertiary institutions offering teacher education programmes apart from the universities, to advise the Federal Government through the Minister on all the aspects of teacher education falling outside the universities and Polytechnics, to make recommendations to the government on matters affecting teacher education, to manage the financial affairs of the colleges of education, to develop Scheme of National Certification for the various products of Colleges of Education, to collect, analyze and publish information relating to teacher's education.

National Board for Technical Education (NABTE)

Established by Act No. 9 of 1977, the NABTE is a parastatal of the FME specifically created to handle all aspects of technical and vocational education falling outside university education. The Board supervises and regulates, through an accreditation process, the programmes offered by technical institutions at secondary and post-secondary school levels. It is also involved in funding of polytechnics owned by the Government of Nigeria. The purpose of National Board for Technical Education includes; to prepare periodic master plans for the general programmes to be pursued by polytechnics, to make recommendations on the establishment and citing of Polytechnics, to review methods of assessment of students and trainees and to develop a scheme of national certification for technicians, craftsmen and other skilled personnel in collaboration with ministries and organizations having technical training programmes, to undertake periodic reviews of terms and conditions of service of personnel in polytechnics and to make recommendations thereon to the Federal Government.

Barriers to Curriculum Innovation in Tertiary Institutions

They are many barriers to curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Some of the barriers includes; poor funding, opposition of trade unions, opposition from religious institutions political instability and weak public institutions.

Poor Funding

Poor funding is a major barriers to curriculum innovation in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Poor funding of education and in particular institutions established for curriculum planning and development in Nigeria has affected curriculum innovation. Curriculum innovation process and project is very expensive and capital intensive. Curriculum innovation involves a lots of

activities and programme that includes the use of human and materials resources. Curriculum innovation project require a lot of consultation and expertise. Curriculum innovation is time consuming. Curriculum innovation is one of the aspect of curriculum that is very critical and sensitive to start. Curriculum innovation require a lot of financial resources that is not adequately provided for the various institutions that are responsible to carry out the task. Ogunode, Chijindu and Jegede (2022); Ogunode, Johnson and Olatunde-Aiyedun (2022); Ogunode, and Adanna (2022); Odukoya, Bowale, and Okunlola, (2018), Ololube (2013) and Ogbonnaya (2010) submitted that public educational institutions in Nigeria are underfunded and it has affected their programme implementation. Dorgu (2020) noted that fund is necessary in all areas if there is going to be development. Facilities for innovation are very important, they should be placed on the appropriate places, but where there is no fund, this may not be possible. Eventually the innovation will be an illusion.

Opposition of Trade Unions

Opposition from trade unions in tertiary institutions is another challenge to tertiary institutions curriculum innovation. In Nigeria, the power to review and plan curriculum in various tertiary institutions is wholly the responsibilities of various agencies established by the federal government. National Universities Commission for universities, National Commission for Colleges of Education for college of education and National Board for Technical Education for polytechnics. Union groups in tertiary institutions especially the universities have demand for full autonomy from the federal government. Core curriculum minimum academic standards (CCMAS) is a product of curriculum innovation in university education and it is opposed by Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) because they felt they were not fully involved in the preparation and planning. Recently, The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) kicked against the core curriculum minimum academic standards (CCMAS) developed by the National Universities Commission (NUC). The CCMAS usually prepared by the NUC, universities, and relevant education stakeholders stipulates the minimum academic requirements for the training of undergraduates in various programmes. The NUC recently designed CCMAS for 17 programmes in universities across the country. But in a statement, Emmanuel Osodeke, ASUU president, said the process leading to the curriculum threatens university autonomy. Osodeke said the NUC had 70 per cent input in the curriculum while universities who are statutorily responsible for academic programme development — contributed only 30 per cent. This, according to him, has made “university senates to become mere spectators in their own affairs”. The ASUU president added that the curriculum developed by the NUC “left out essential courses in university programmes which would make Nigerian graduates globally uncompetitive.

The Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) has received several complaints on the threats posed by the Core Curriculum Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) to quality university education and the erosion of powers of university Senate in Nigerian universities,” the statement reads. “ASUU cannot turn deaf ears to widespread protests against CCMAS. It is inexplicable that the National Universities Commission’s (NUC) pre-packaged 70% CCMAS contents are being imposed on the Nigerian University System (NUS); leaving university Senates, who are statutorily responsible for academic programme development, to work on only 30%! “ASUU is not unaware that setting academic standards and assuring quality in the NUS is within the remit of the NUC. Section 10(1) of the Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act, Cap E3, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria 2004 enjoins the NUC to lay down the minimum standards for all universities and other degree awarding institutions in the Federation and conduct the accreditation of their degrees and other academic awards. “However, the process of generating the standard is as important (if not more important) than what is produced as ‘minimum standards’. In this instance, the NUC has recently, through some hazy procedures, churned out CCMAS documents containing 70% curricular contents in seventeen academic fields with little or no inputs from the universities. The academic disciplines covered are: (i) Administration and Management, (ii) Agriculture, (iii) Allied Health Sciences,

(iv) Architecture, (v) Arts, (vi) Basic Medical Sciences, (vii) Computing, (viii) Communication and Media Studies, (ix) Education, (x) Engineering and Technology, (xi) Environmental Sciences, (xii) Law, (xiii) Medicine and Dentistry, (xiv) Pharmaceutical Science, (xv) Sciences, (xvi) Social Sciences, and (xvii) Veterinary Medicine. “ASUU posited that CCMAS portends serious dangers for quality university education in Nigeria (Ogunode, Ohibime & Jedege 2023; the Cable 2023). Ogunode & Ibrahim, (2023) concluded that the lack of autonomy of public universities in Nigeria has weakened their operations and development.

Opposition from Religious Institutions

Opposition from religious institutions is a major barrier to curriculum innovation in Nigeria. Opposition from religious institutions on curriculum innovation and changes that did are not in line with religious values and beliefs are always opposed by religious institutions in Nigeria. For instance, sex education was introduced into Nigerian school curriculum from basic schools. Religions institutions in Nigeria opposed it and it was removed. Gazettengr.com (2022) reported that the Association of Christian Schools in Nigeria (ACSN) commended the former education Minister-Adamu Adamu for ordering the removal of sex education from the primary education curriculum. ACSN gave the commendation in a communique issued at the end of its fifth general assembly with the theme Christian Education and the Challenges of our Time: Need to be Focused and Productive. “We thank the minister of education for directing the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to remove sex education from the basic education curriculum,” the association said in the communique, signed by its national president, Ekaete Ettang, on Friday in Jos. The association maintained that, if allowed, sex education in schools would promote moral decadence among minors in society. It insisted that sex education should be taught at home by parents instead of in schools, adding that the supposed sex education to be included in the curriculum was alien to Nigerian culture. “No doubt it is an attempt at globalization, for which we may see some benefits in terms of preparing our children to compete favourably in the global market, but it cannot be at the expense of the moral values that hold us together as a people,” added the ACSN statement. It further stated that “we are not against foreign ideas, but we have seen the effects of allowing sex education to be taught in schools, we have seen what it did to families over there, and we don’t want it here”. Dorgu (2020) asserted that people may resist change when they don’t see any reason for it. Once they are recording success in the existing ideas, they may not see any need for any other idea. Real change, by nature is a slow process but many people don’t understand it.

Political Instability

Political instability in Nigeria is another problem that has affected curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Political instability is another problem facing the curriculum planning and innovation in Nigeria. The problem of politics also includes administrative instability. Most times, what is obtainable is that new administration comes in with another style of decision-making and therefore, already formulated plans of curriculum innovation or implementation as well as those in the formulation process are disrupted or discontinued (Ogunode & Ohibime, 2021; Ogunode & Musa, 2022). Political instability is a very serious problem facing the development of curriculum planning and innovation in Nigeria. Ogunode (2021) argued that political instability is a major problem that has prevented effective curriculum planning and innovation in Nigeria. The Nigerian political structure and system is designed for change of government in every four years. This changes in government affect curriculum innovation processes because different political party have their different agenda and programmes. Noun (2007); Gbenu (2012); Ololube, (2013) and Ogunode, Ajape and Jegede (2020) observed that the existing political arrangement has influenced the control over educational programme and policies in Nigeria and as affected educational programme implementation.

Weak Public Institutions

Many public institutions in Nigeria established for policies designed, policies innovation and programme development are weak in discharging their responsibilities. Most public institutions are weak and this affects their performance. Ogunode, and Adanna (2022) concluded that supervisory institutions in Nigeria seem not active and effective in carrying out their functions. Ogunode, Yiolokun and Akeredolu (2019) and Eze, (2018) identified weak institutions as one of the factors that have affected development in the public institution in Nigeria. Also, Punch (2021) reported that stakeholders identified that Nigeria has made several signs of progress in the development of the higher education system, however, policies, innovations, and practices seem disconnected or disjointed. Nigeria has one of the most robust education policies, but a major challenge is the weak institutions. Dorgu (2020) observed that if there is a leadership that lacks vision and mission, such leadership will not be competent to successfully handle the processes involved.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper examined curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Using secondary data collected from both print and online publications the paper identified poor funding, opposition of trade unions, opposition from religious institutions political instability and weak public institutions as barriers to curriculum innovation in Nigerian tertiary institutions. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Governments should increase the funding of tertiary institutions and especially supervisory institutions in the country.
2. Tertiary institutions stakeholders should join hands and collaborate and partner with supervisory institutions in the areas of curriculum innovation and canes.
3. Education especially higher education must be placed in a strategic position and given priority in development. This implies that the curricula must be restructured, reorganized and refocused to serve the social, economic and political needs of the recipients of education and the society in general.
4. Higher education curricula must take cognizance of the dramatic change in the world of works and labour industry in order to produce graduates that are relevant in the work place, multi-skilled and possess the ability to transform skills to different tasks.

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