

ASSESSING THE ADEQUACY AND RELEVANCE OF THE SENIOR SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULA FOR ACTUALIZING ITS OBJECTIVES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This paper examined the relevance and adequacy of the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) for actualizing its objectives in Kogi State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprises of all Senior Secondary School (SSS) teachers in Kogi State. 192 Senior Secondary School teachers were selected from twelve schools using the multi stage sampling procedure involving stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The State was stratified along the existing three senatorial districts. From each of the senatorial districts, four Senior Secondary Schools made up of two urban (one public and one private) and two rural (one public and one private) and one Federal Government College were purposively selected for the study. Also, in each of the selected senior secondary schools, the teachers used for the study were chosen using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Stratification of the teachers was done along the following: the core subjects, the fields of study and the trade subjects. Data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages to provide answers to the research questions raised for the study. The findings revealed that the SSS curriculum is adequate and relevant in the preparation of learners for the world of work and for their future role; but more current thinking and practices in the different subjects that address relevant emerging/contemporary issues were highlighted to be included in the SSEC. Also, the selections of 3-4 subjects from the student's field of study are not adequate, though relevant to the desired needs. It was therefore recommended that the Senior Secondary Education Curriculum contents should be considered for review to address relevant emerging/contemporary issues and prepare of learners for the world of work.

Keywords: Adequacy, Assessment, Curriculum, Relevance, Senior Secondary Education Curricula.

Introduction

Education in the generic and global context has been identified as a strategic instrument for social and economic transformation (NERDC, 2012). Education is the bedrock within which skills are acquired, basic and relevant knowledge are received for moulding of character and the curriculum remains the blue print in which every expected behavioural change is hidden. Experiences of educational reform almost all over the world have shown that curriculum is at the same time a policy and a technical issue, a process and a product, involving a wide range of institutions and actors. The word curriculum is a technical term. As such, it has attracted diverse definitions from different scholars, curriculum experts, theorist, and educators. Curriculum is all planned and unplanned activities that are employed for learning (Odiagbe, 2015). Olaitan, Alaribe and Okeme (2010) defined curriculum as a structured series of intended learning experience through which educational institutions endeavour realize the hopes of the society.

According to Obioma (2012), the teachers' exposition to the curriculum is expected to represent the total experience or views which all learners should acquire with regards to the contents, performance objectives and instructional activities. Educational system at every level depends heavily on teachers for the execution of its programmes. Teachers are highly essential for successful operation of the educational system and important tools for the educational development for without teachers, educational facilities cannot be expanded. Undoubtedly, the success and quality of any educational system depends on the quantity and quality of teachers' input into the system. Politicians and policy makers at all levels may institute vast new legislated reforms but without the understanding, support, and inputs of teachers, they will end up in the same dead end as such past reforms (Meier in Odiagbe, Okeke, & Moyinoluwa, 2018). Since there is no educational system that can improve better than its teachers, the commitment of teachers to the system is a vital issue (FGN, 2013). The teachers interpret the aims and goals of education and educate the students in accordance with the policy.

The Federal Government reform in education was planned in line with the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), which is an off shoot of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) summarized as: value-reorientation, poverty eradication, job creation, wealth creation and using education to empower the people. In context of this paper, the Nigerian educational system is structured into Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) and Tertiary education. These levels of education are made up of lower basic (Primary 1 – 3), middle basic education (Primary 4 – 6), upper basic education (JSS 1 – 3), (SSS 1-3) and tertiary institution. The underlying philosophy of the SSEC was to ensure that every senior secondary school graduate is well prepared for higher education, and has acquired relevant functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation; and in the process strengthen further the foundations for ethical, moral

and civic values acquired at the basic education level. The SSEC was essentially to address the ideals for actualizing the needs agenda in the educational context.

The National Policy on Education of 2013 defined senior secondary education as post-basic education and career development and supported education as an instrument per excellence for realizing national advancement. The SSEC is supposed to cover such knowledge and skills that are necessary for the attainment of the philosophy and objectives of senior secondary education. The philosophy of senior secondary education (which is derived from the philosophy of Nigerian education) emphasizes “the development of individual into a sound and effective citizen and the provision of equal opportunities for all the citizens of the nation” (FRN, 2013:2).

As cited in Odiagbe (2016), the fundamental philosophy of the senior secondary education curricula was to ensure that every senior secondary graduate is well prepared for higher education, acquire relevant functional trade/entrepreneurship skills needed for poverty eradication, job creation and wealth generation; in the process strengthen further foundations for ethical, moral and civic values earlier acquired at the basic education level.

In order to achieve the above objectives of the secondary education curricula, a student is expected to offer subjects in any of these fields of study-- Science and Mathematics, Technology, Humanity and Business Studies. There are four compulsory cross-cutting subjects that a student must offer. They include: English Language, General Mathematics, Trade/ Entrepreneurship subject and Civic Education. In addition, there are specified subjects in each field of studies from which students are required to select some to make up the required eight minimum or nine maximum subjects at WAEC or NECO examination. The SSEC emphasized the skills as well as academic development of learners. The skills components are being pursued through the teaching and learning of 34 trade/entrepreneurship subjects. The subjects are taught side by side with the academic oriented school subjects and enable students to acquire specific vocational skills in one trade/entrepreneurship subject area.

The Nigerian educational system has gone through various development and changes viz-a-viz curriculum issues. The implementation of this SSEC started in 2011 in SSI across the Country and even after over a decade since the first public examinations took place in 2014 after the implementation in line with transformation agenda, is the SSEC still adequate and relevant in line with the desired change of this administration? Some studies carried out to determine if this SSEC developed in 2011 is adequate or relevant to the desires of this present government. According to Odutuyi (2014), Nigerians have been questioning the relevance of the curriculum vis-à-vis the current and future demands of secondary school graduates in the Nigerian society and this has led to restructuring and reforming of the curriculum in the country for decades now. Despite these changes and reforms, the situation has remained critical and alarming in Nigeria. This problem has been attributed to the

poor curriculum structure and implementation, poor policy and attitude of employers of labour (Omeje, 2017 & Odiagbe, 2016). It is the desire of the researchers to find out the perceptions of teachers in Kogi State on the adequacy and relevance of the SSEC to meet the desired change and drive the development of appropriate skills for social and economic transformation. Objectives of this Study are to:

- i. Determine the relevance of the curricula to the philosophy and objectives of the senior secondary education;
- ii. Determine the adequacy of the curricula content for actualizing the objectives of the senior secondary curricular;

Research Questions

The research questions are:

1. To what extent are the curricula relevant to the philosophy and objectives of the senior secondary education curricula?
2. What are the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the curricula contents for actualizing the objectives of senior secondary education curricula?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study because it is capable of eliciting respondents' opinions on the relevance and adequacy of the senior secondary school curricula contents with the aim of establishing the feasibility of the implementation as well as its appropriateness in terms of structure, content and resource availability. Out of the population of 4,132 SSS teachers, a total of 192 Senior Secondary School teachers were selected from Kogi State. A multi stage sampling procedure involving stratified, simple random and purposive sampling techniques were used in the study. Kogi State was stratified along the existing three senatorial districts. From each of the senatorial districts, four Senior Secondary Schools made up of two urban (one public and one private) and two rural (one public and one private) and one Federal Government College was purposively selected for the study, making it all twelve (12) schools in the State. Also, in each of the selected senior secondary schools, the teachers used for the study were chosen using stratified random sampling techniques. These teachers were sampled across the core subjects, the four (4) fields of study and 34 entrepreneurship/trade subjects offered at senior secondary education level. Stratification of the teachers was done along the following: the core subjects, the fields of study and the trade subjects. From each school, sixteen teachers were selected, that is, a teacher from each of the 4 core compulsory and cross-cutting subjects(4); Two teachers from each of the four Fields of Study(8); and four from the Entrepreneurship/Trade Subjects(4) were selected.

For this study, Quantitative data were sourced through the administration of questionnaires. The Teachers' Questionnaire was made up of three sections; Section A consisted of fourteen items eliciting background information, which includes gender, school type, school location, school ownership and Senatorial District.

Section B addresses the adequacy and relevance of the curricula contents for actualizing the objectives of the senior secondary curricular. Section C was the open-ended structured to accommodate challenges and suggestions. The instrument was trial tested in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja which did not form part of the selected state used for this study. The Cronbach's alpha was used to establish reliability and coefficient of 0.63 was obtained.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentages to provide answers to the research questions raised for the study.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent are the senior secondary education curricula relevant to the philosophy and objectives of the curricula?

Teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they assess the curriculum of the subject they teach to be relevant to the stated philosophy and objectives. Summary of their responses could be found on Table 1:

Table 1: Relevance of Senior Secondary School Curricular Contents to Philosophy and Objectives

Relevance of Curricula to Objectives Secondary Education.	Frequency	Percentage
Low	21	10.9
Moderate	71	37.0
High	100	52.1
Total	192	100.0

Summary on Table 1 shows that 52.1% of the sampled teachers indicate that there is high level of relevance of the senior secondary school curricula to the philosophy and objectives, 37% indicated a moderate and only 10.9% indicated a level of relevance.

Results showing the response pattern by sampled teachers on relevance of specific components of the philosophy and objectives of the senior secondary education curriculum alongside are shown on Table 2

Table 2: Teachers' Response on Relevance of Curriculum Content to Philosophy and Objectives

PHILOSOPHY & OBJECTIVES	RESPONSES	Total	
		Freq.	%
Prepare learners for higher education	Highly Relevant	118	61.5
	Moderately Relevant	57	29.6
	Not Relevant	17	08.9
Prepare learners for future roles in the society	Highly Relevant	92	47.8
	Moderately Relevant	83	43.3
	Not Relevant	17	08.9
Prepare learners for the world of work	Highly Relevant	102	53.1
	Moderately Relevant	67	34.9
	Not Relevant	23	12.0
Helping students acquire skills for wealth creation	Highly Relevant	81	42.2
	Moderately Relevant	71	42.3
	Not Relevant	40	21.0
Helping students acquire skills for Job Creation	Highly Relevant	80	41.8
	Moderately Relevant	74	38.7
	Not Relevant	38	19.5
Inspiring students for self-improvement	Highly Relevant	93	48.7
	Moderately Relevant	69	35.8
	Not Relevant	30	15.5
Equipping Students for Job Specific skills	Highly Relevant	99	51.6
	Moderately Relevant	65	33.8
	Not Relevant	28	14.6
Fostering patriotism	Highly Relevant	82	42.3
	Moderately Relevant	77	40.3
	Not Relevant	33	17.4
Fostering national unity	Highly Relevant	70	36.6
	Moderately Relevant	88	45.6
	Not Relevant	34	17.8
Fostering national security	Highly Relevant	83	43.2
	Moderately Relevant	79	41.0
	Not Relevant	30	15.8
	Highly Relevant	82	42.7
	Moderately Relevant	74	38.7
	Not Relevant	36	18.6

Responses on Table 2 reveal that the greatest level of relevance between senior secondary education curricula philosophy, objectives and subject contents was considered by 61.5% of the sampled teachers as relating to preparing learners for higher education. Teachers also feel that the next philosophy and objectives in terms of relevance is in preparing students for their future role (53.1%) and inspiring students for self-improvement (51.6%).

Aspects of the philosophy and objectives of senior secondary education curriculum that teachers considered not to be relevant are those on preparation of learners for the world of work (21%); acquisition of skills for wealth creation (19.5%); fostering national security (18.6%) and fostering patriotism (17.8%).

Research Question Two: What are the opinions of teachers on the adequacy of the curricula contents for actualizing the objectives of senior secondary education? Summary of teachers' response on the extent to which the curriculum of the subject taught by them is adequate for actualizing the objectives is presented on Table 3:

Table 3: Adequacy of Contents for Actualizing the Objectives of Senior Secondary Education Curricula

Adequacy of Contents for Actualizing Objectives.	Frequency	Percentage
Low	32	16.8
Moderate	105	54.7
High	55	28.5
Total	192	100

As shown on Table 3, the sampled teachers expressed that the contents of the curriculum are either moderately or highly adequate for actualizing the objectives of senior secondary school education curricula was 83.2%. On the other hand, 16.8% of the teachers were of the opinion that the senior secondary school curricular contents are low in terms of their adequacy for actualizing their objectives. A more detailed breakdown of responses is shown on Table 4

Table 4: Adequacy of Curriculum Content for Actualizing the Objectives of Senior Secondary Education in Kogi State

Curriculum Contents:	RESPONSES	TOTAL	
		Freq.	%
are adequate for 3 years of SSSE.	Strongly Agree(SA)	68	35.4
	Agree(A)	60	31.3
	Disagree(D)	55	28.6
	Strongly Disagree(SD)	09	4.7
can lead to the achievement of the set objectives.	SA	56	29.2
	A	89	46.4
	D	40	20.9
	SD	7	3.5
place emphasis on critical thinking.	SA	28	14.6
	A	93	48.4
	D	63	32.8
	SD	8	4.2
reflect current thinking & practices in my subject area.	SA	60	31.3
	A	88	45.8
	D	40	20.8
	SD	4	2.1
address relevant emerging/contemporary issues.	SA	30	15.6
	A	97	50.5
	D	58	30.2
	SD	07	3.7

Results on Table 4 indicate that 77.1% of the teachers indicated that they agreed that the senior secondary education curriculum contents reflect current thinking &

practices in their subject area, 75.6% indicated that the curriculum contents could lead to the achievement of the set objectives, and 66.7% said that the curriculum contents are adequate for 3 years of SSSE. On the other hand, 37.0% of the teachers disagreed with the claim that the senior secondary education curriculum contents curriculum reflects current thinking and practices in the different subjects, 33.9% disagreed that the curriculum addressed relevant emerging/contemporary issues and 33.3% do not agree that the curriculum are adequate for the three years of secondary education.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that the SSS curriculum is adequate and relevant to the desired needs in Nigeria and can lead to the achievement of its set objectives. The finding revealed the teachers that responded to research question one agreed that the aspects of the philosophy and objectives of senior secondary education curriculum are considered to be relevant in the Preparation of learners for the world of work and for their future role; Inspiring students for self-improvement, acquisition of skills for wealth creation, fostering national security and fostering patriotism. This finding is in agreement with the findings of several studies especially the study carried out by Odiagbe, Okeke and Moyinoluwa (2018) on the relevance of SSCE Curriculum. The finding is also in tandem with the submission of Ethe, (2012), Odiagbe and Okeke, (2014) on the relevance and importance of mathematics to science and technology in the curriculum as mathematics continued to remain a prime subject among the subject in schools.

The findings also revealed that the curriculum contents lead to the achievement of its set objectives with emphasis on critical thinking hence, the new SSS curriculum is adequate and relevant to the desired change in Nigeria. The findings on research question two revealed that the teachers that responded to this item 1 agreed that the subjects that made up Science and Mathematics as a field of study of the new SSEC is adequate and relevant to the desired change in Nigeria. The finding further revealed that the teachers that responded to this item 2 agreed that the curriculum contents reflected current thinking and practices in their subject areas and addressed relevant emerging/contemporary issues, supporting the fact that the SSEC is adequate and relevant to the desired needs in Nigeria.

Conclusion

From the findings, it can be concluded that the new Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) are adequate and relevant to the desired needs agenda of this present administration. The new senior secondary education curriculum contents and structure are adequate and relevant to the change mantra of the present democratic government of Nigeria that is diversify its focus oil to agriculture, skills acquisition, science and technology. The teachers agreed that the selections of 3-4 subjects from the student's field of study are not adequate though relevant to the desired needs.

Recommendations

Based on findings of this study, the following recommendations can be made:

1. The senior secondary education curriculum contents curriculum should be reviewed to reflect more on the current thinking and practices in the different subjects, address relevant emerging/contemporary issues and reflect more on the preparation of learners for the world of work
2. The government should do more sensitization and advocacy on SSEC especially in area of Subject selections.

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