

Teachers, Curriculum Reform for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria: Issues and Consequences

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ABSTRACT Nigeria's education sector is challenged with unqualified teachers, poor education infrastructures, outdated curriculum, poor policy commitment and lack of quality education. Furthermore, the targets set by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 expect countries around the world to achieve sustainable development in all sectors including education by 2030. Specifically, the SDG 4: Quality education for all and lifelong learning is expected to be achieved by national governments through their education systems in 13 years. This makes it paramount to examine Nigeria's education system and its challenges. Therefore, this research paper employed a literature review of relevant academic and policy research on teachers, curriculum reforms and entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. Additionally, a critical analysis of literature provided insights on issues and consequences of curriculum reform for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. The findings of this paper reveal that teachers are agents capable of determining the success or failure of any educational reform. Furthermore, in Nigeria, curriculum reform for entrepreneurship education that was implemented failed to achieve set goals because of factors that were not considered by the government when making such reform. These factors include an inadequate understanding of teacher challenges, lack of adequate resources and poor policy commitment. This research paper concludes that for entrepreneurship development through curriculum reform to be realized in Nigeria, there is a need to improve teacher welfare and training, recognition of teachers' inputs in education reforms processes and provision of resources to effectively implement reforms.

Keywords: Teachers, Curriculum Reform, Entrepreneurship, Education, Nigeria, Unemployment

Introduction

The recent United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Education Monitoring Report (GEMR), establishes that teachers are key to realizing SDG 4: Education 2030 agenda (UNESCO, 2017). Furthermore, the invaluable role of teachers in the success of curriculum reforms in any country cannot be overemphasized (Assie-Lumumba, 2012; Bantwini, 2010). Teachers are

the nexus between policy makers and the receiver of policies, and they significantly determine how education or curriculum reforms are implemented in classrooms. In addition, “curriculum is the organized knowledge which the society presents to the learner in order to achieve pre-determined goals of education. Hence, the curriculum becomes relevant if it addresses current and anticipated needs, problems and aspirations of the learner and society” (Godfrey-Kalio, Duruamaku-Dim and Kalio, 2015, p. 379). In other words, a curriculum is meant to fill both the knowledge and skill gaps that exist in any society.

In the history of Nigeria's education system, curriculum reforms have been observed to evolve from the need to provide citizens with the required skills and knowledge to be productive members of the society, as well as to live a fulfilled life (Oyekan, 2016). Furthermore, the process of curriculum reform involves several consultations with stakeholders such as parents, educational stakeholders, industries and other members of the society. These consultations are done to ensure that ideas and recommendations are in line with the need of the education system and the society (Oyekan, 2016). In addition, curriculum reforms in Nigeria aim at ensuring that education becomes a useful mechanism that unlocks potentials in the lives of an individual for sustainable socio-economic development (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012).

Even though curriculum reforms are geared towards ensuring better educational outcomes, many developing countries, especially in the Sub-Saharan African (SSA) region disregard some factors that negate its successes. Factors created by existing classrooms and teachers' realities are often not given consideration when these curriculum reforms are being formulated and implemented. Furthermore, research shows that policy makers are mostly ignorant of teachers and classroom realities when making related educational policies (Altinyelken, 2010; Balarin and Benavides, 2010; Lopes Cardozo, 2015).

From the foregoing, this research paper adopts the analytical framework of critical analysis of literature on the subject, taking a specific look at teachers and their role in curriculum reform for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria. In addition, the paper identifies issues, consequences and proffer recommendations for the success of curriculum reform for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

The paper firstly, provides an overview of Nigeria's education system, highlighting its structure and challenges. The paper then continues with exploring curriculum reforms in different contexts. This is to allow a possible glimpse into the common challenges of curriculum reforms more broadly. Furthermore, the subject of teachers and their agency is briefly touched upon to enable a deeper understanding of the issues being examined by this research paper. In addition, the relationship between teachers and curriculum reforms is explored; identifying issues associated with teachers and curriculum reforms. Thereafter, the paper addressed teachers, curriculum reforms and entrepreneurship education in Nigeria: issues and consequences. From the findings, the paper concludes with implications for teaching and learning, and entrepreneurship education curriculum in Nigeria. In addition, the research paper provides recommendations for making curriculum reforms successful, especially for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria.

Nigeria's Education System Overview

The western education system in Nigeria was introduced by the early Christian missionaries in the mid-nineteenth century, with a significant acceptance in Southern Nigeria (Obomanu, 2011). However, with the advent of the British rule in Nigeria in 1850, and subsequent independence in 1960, Nigeria's education system adopted the style of America's education system in 1982. Nevertheless, British examinations such as Ordinary Level and Advanced Level were still offered in high schools (Obomanu, 2011). Due to several political and social instabilities that plagued Nigeria's history, the education sector suffered from inadequate qualified or trained teachers, poor education infrastructures and lack of quality education. In recent years, the Nigerian government through the introduction of several reforms have worked towards ensuring that the benefits of quality education are realized in Nigeria (Nuffic, 2017).

According to the United States (US) Embassy (2012), Nigeria has a literacy rate of 61 percent, with a lot of out-of-school children and youth unemployed without necessary skills to function or required in the labour market. Further, in Northern Nigeria which is predominantly Muslims, about 72 percent of primary age student are out-of-school and this is higher compared to other regions in Nigeria (US Embassy, 2012).

Nigeria operates a 6-3-3-4 education system, which was introduced in 1982 to replace the former 6-5-4 system. This new system of education demands six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary education, three years for senior secondary education or technical education for those interested in technical vocation skills and the last four years is for tertiary education. Tertiary education in Nigeria can be acquired through colleges, polytechnics and universities (Tomei and Wang, 2014). However, a former Minister of Education, Dr. Oby Ezekwesili pushed for a new system of 9-3-4, with educational privatization gaining more prominence at that time. Unfortunately, the new system of 9-3-4 failed to address the existing challenges (poor teacher training and motivation, poor teaching and learning outcomes, and inadequate education infrastructures) in Nigeria's education system. In fact, the new reform worsens the system, which caused a reversal to the old system of 6-3-3-4 (Tomei and Wang, 2014).

Furthermore, it has been identified that the failure of education reforms in Nigeria is "due to non-availability of personnel, materials, funds and administrative will. This programme has failed to achieve much not solely because of lack of human and material resources but largely due to poor implementation" (Tomei and Wang, p. 1057). In other words, lack of required human and material resources and poor implementation are core to educational reforms failure in Nigeria.

Development of Curriculum Reforms in Different Contexts

Reforms within any education system are formulated with the purpose of solving identified problems in such system. Therefore, the reason for curriculum reforms in most cases is to ensure quality changes and outcomes in the educational system. Also, in the same process, improve teaching and learning outcomes (Bantwini, 2010).

In recent years, there has been a shift in curriculum reforms universally, a move from subject-based to competency-based curriculum, bringing about a strong focus on skills, attitudes, select competencies and teachers as ‘tools’ to meet the curriculum reforms goals (Anderson-Levitt, 2008). Additionally, this shift in curriculum trend is pushed with the dynamic growth of Global Managerial Education Reforms (GMERs) movement, which “emphasizes a mix of market and managerialist policy solutions as the most effective way to solve old and new educational problems” (Vergier and Altinyelken, 2013, p. 1). However, a move for a universal curriculum has proved difficult to achieve due to peculiarities of classrooms setting, as well as, social and political configurations in different parts of the world (Anderson-Levitt, 2008).

In Peru, Balarin and Benavides (2010), point out that curriculum reforms are fashioned after scripts provided by international institutions that assume authority in providing the ‘best’ approaches to address educational problems in the country. Furthermore, these ‘best’ approaches fail to achieve expected results due to lack of adequate understanding and recognition of local context and social peculiarities. Sadly, this is the situation with curriculum reforms in many developing countries (Altinyelken, 2010).

For China, “examination-oriented education has long been deeply embedded in Chinese culture and society. For well over 1000 years in imperial China, formal education revolved around the hierarchical highly centralized series of government examinations which were the stepping-stones to official status and power” (Dello-Iacovo, 2009, p. 241). Therefore, educational or curriculum reforms introduced in China, were geared towards improving people and these reforms are often referred to as *suzhi jiaoyu* translated as ‘quality education’. These reforms are planned to be a panacea to the negative impacts of *yingshi jiaoyu*, translated as ‘examination-oriented education’ in the system. Recently, China’s educational reforms have been closely linked with reform discourses of influential Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea, and Singapore (Dello-Iacovo, 2009).

In the global south, especially SSA countries, curriculum reforms have mostly been designed to improve teaching and learning outcomes, but the wrong implementation of these reforms make the whole process less fruitful and a waste of resources (Bantwini, 2010; Altinyelken, 2010). In addition, the goals of these reforms are never brought to reality owing to some factors such as poor teacher motivation, lack of adequate educational facilities, institutional deficiencies, poor working conditions and environment for teachers (Altinyelken, 2010). In the work of Altinyelken (2010), on the new curriculum implemented in Uganda, she concluded that the ‘thematic curriculum’ had high hopes of improving the teaching and learning outcomes but the hopes were truncated by “systemic problems within the Ugandan education system, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching and learning aids, inadequate number of textbooks, and low teacher’s motivation” (p. 160). These systemic problems make the implementation of the new curriculum difficult in Uganda.

Understanding Teachers and their Agency in Education Reforms

No doubt, teaching in the history of man has been the oldest profession, and every other profession today are products of the teaching profession (Aklaheyl, Ibrahim

and Bawa, 2014). When we talk about teachers' agency, we often associate this to the technical role and capacities of teachers within the education system (Priestley et al., 2015). Further, it should be noted that teachers are agents capable of playing a key role in promoting quality teaching and learning outcomes in any educational system (Lopes Cardozo, 2015). The case of the competency-based curriculum in Turkey, which introduces student-centred pedagogy into Turkey's education system, clearly shows that if teachers were duly consulted and their inputs recognized in the process of the curriculum reform, many of the challenges that arose from the implementation of the curriculum would have been easily avoided (Altinyelken, 2013).

Therefore, this research paper argues that teachers should be seen as 'transformative intellectuals' because they possess knowledge and knowledge-practices to make any education system work (Giroux and Granby, 1988). Regrettably, the failure of policy makers to adequately consider the classroom realities as well as other subjective and objective realities of teachers is not uncommon in SSA (Altinyelken, 2010). "At the heart of the debate over the main danger of any policy are the humanistic considerations of choice and diversity. It is dangerous for policies to exclude the deep, complicated perspectives of the local policy makers—teachers" (Samoukovic, 2015, p. 42). If we really want to achieve the 'beautiful' curriculum reforms and global education goals, we must begin to see teachers differently and rightly.

In Bolivia, according to Lopes Cardozo (2015), an investigation on the possible roles of teachers in ameliorating the effects of conflicts on students, show that teachers were expected to act as agents of change and 'soldiers of liberation'. In other words, teachers were projected to create a sense of peace consciousness among students in Bolivia. In addition, teachers were enjoined to engage in the decolonization of students minds through the recognition of indigenous languages and cultures in Bolivia. However, this was far from happening as teachers "face numerous structural constraints, including a low social status; long working hours in multiple jobs to support their families; and a lack of proper pre-service and in-service training and support" (Lopes Cardozo, 2015, p. 16). And as Cochran-Smith, rightly said "those that have been forced to memorize the world are not likely to change it" (2004, p. 206). Strictly speaking, one is limited to cause a change in a system that such individual is a part and product of. Individuals are only enabled to recreate what they are made of. These are some of the issues associated with teachers and their agency that produces unplanned consequences in curriculum reforms.

Teachers and Curriculum Reforms

Teachers are individuals, identified and selected to be responsible for teaching and learning in schools and designated institutions (UNESCO/ILO, 2008). Furthermore, in different contexts, teachers have been observed to determine the success or failure of any curriculum reform. A case in point, the curriculum reform in Turkey meant to improve teaching and learning outcomes met a great deal of resistance from teachers. Teachers perceived the new curriculum as having an empty content and therefore supplemented the content; also, they saw the training offered on the usage of the curriculum as ineffective and not very useful. In addition, the teachers observed that the curriculum stressed greatly on competencies development, and making

knowledge attainment less important. The teachers “believed that the revised curriculum aggravated existing inequalities since it increased the demand for private tutoring and reduced the chances of pupils succeeding in the exams without supplementary private coaching” (Altinyelken, 2013, p. 118). Consequently, the curriculum change in Turkey was not successful because of resistance from teachers.

Bantwini (2010), on the new curriculum reform in South Africa, argues that teachers’ perspectives and acceptance of the new curriculum introduced into the educational system were the determining factors that influenced the results of the curriculum when implemented in schools. According to Bantwini, a good majority of the teachers were resentful to the reform and never expected it to produce positive outcomes. It is worthy of note that a likely reason for this perspective by South African teachers about the new curriculum, will likely be the result of teachers not been involved in the curriculum formulation processes. This was pointed out by Bantwini in his paper.

According to Bantwini, policy makers ignored existing classrooms and teachers’ challenges when drafting the curriculum. “One of the teachers’ common perceptions of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) was that it was simply work overload for them. The new curriculum was viewed as a burden rather than a simplified and streamlined curriculum intended to facilitate the goals of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE)” (2010, p. 85).

For this reason, Bantwini (2010), concluded that to avoid these challenges, curriculum reforms must take into account teachers’ challenges such as insufficient teacher education, low motivation, lack of educational facilities, obsolete pedagogical practice, absent of classroom support and poor social status. Furthermore, Bantwini added that adequate plans must be underway in addressing these problems even as reforms are being implemented. In addition, he advised that teachers should be duly involved in reforms formulation processes.

Teachers in Nigeria

In Nigeria, teachers are seen as models and counsellors to their students, keeper of culture, and link between the schools and society (Aklahyel, Ibrahim and Bawa, 2014). The teaching profession has been very crucial in Nigeria’s national development and the role of teachers is seen in every facet of the Nigerian society (Ogunyinka, Okeke and Adedoyin, 2015).

According to Osai (2016), teachers in Nigeria are mostly unmotivated due to low salaries, poor working conditions and lack of adequate training. This influences quality of teaching and learning outcomes in schools. Further, Osai (2016), argues that the type of teachers that exists in the classrooms determine the calibre of students that will be released to the society.

No doubt that the success of any educational system depends on the quality of teachers. Hence, this paper argues that quality teachers produce quality teaching, which can contribute to sustainable socio-economic development. This implies that teachers must be properly equipped and their welfare is taken care of to fully deliver their expected professional obligations (Akindutire and Ekundayo, 2012).

In Nigeria, many teachers are professionally incompetent and lack the zeal to implement national mandates. Also, the teaching profession in Nigeria is seen as a last resort for tertiary institutions graduates that are unable to find white-collar jobs, and some graduates that go into the teaching profession are often not skilled enough to work in other industries (Aklahyel et al., 2014).

Curriculum Reform for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria

The New Secondary School Curriculum (NSSC) was introduced to Nigeria's secondary schools to ensure that students graduating from secondary schools are equipped with basic entrepreneurial and Information Communication Technology (ICT) skills that will make them more relevant in the labour market (Alabi, 2014). It is the intention of the Nigerian government that NSSC will produce more qualified boys and girls that will be equipped and motivated to identify and address challenges in their respective communities and proffer solutions to societal problems. This in the long run is expected to reduce the level of youth unemployment in Nigeria, which will lead to improved national economy and sustainable development in the country (Oyekan, 2016).

However, the success of NSSC as a curriculum reform for entrepreneurship education has been hindered by limited infrastructural provision, teacher challenges, poverty due to a volatile national economy and corruption within the education system (Oyekan, 2016). Furthermore, "a number of factors that culminate in crises in education and consequently hinder curriculum reforms are often precipitated by inadequacies of students, parents, governments, educational supervisory agencies, regulatory professional organisations, examination bodies, private sector, and the Nigerian society" (Oyekan, 2016, p. 23). In other words, these inadequacies that exist within Nigeria's education system and society must be duly addressed before the benefits of curriculum reforms can be fully realized. Godfrey-Kalio, et al. (2015), argues that it is pertinent for policy makers in Nigeria to learn from past experience when it comes to curriculum reforms. They posited that the need of the Nigerian society, students and teachers must be given due consideration when drafting and implementing the curriculum. Due to the failure of the Nigerian government to put in place necessary structures and provision of resources, the NSSC reform was very unsuccessful and youth unemployment remains on the increase in Nigeria (Fems, Agada, Godsave and Poazi, 2017).

Teachers and Curriculum Reform for Entrepreneurship Education in Nigeria: Issues and Consequences

In education and curriculum reforms processes, it is established that teachers are limited to majorly working as 'high-level technicians' following the whims and caprices of policy makers or expert that are usually far from the classroom realities (Giroux and Granby, 1988; Lopes Cardozo, 2015; Bantwini, 2010). Furthermore, teachers in curriculum reforms, simply put are not seen as worthy of contributing to the policy formulation process. Their responsibility is to do the bidding of the reforms. Strictly speaking, policy makers see themselves as 'experts' and the teachers as 'non-experts' (Altinyelken, 2010; Lopes Cardozo, 2015). Shawer (2010, p. 173),

in a study of the different ways teachers approach curriculum, posits that teachers' approach to curriculum can be classified into 'curriculum fidelity, curriculum adaptation, and curriculum enactment'. Furthermore, teachers' involvement in curriculum can be mainly to carry out what is written in the textbooks and curriculum. They act as transmitters (curriculum fidelity). Teachers can also take part in curriculum through making inputs alongside policy makers. The teacher can adjust the curriculum based on his/her classroom context (curriculum adaptation). Lastly, teachers' involvement in curriculum can be a situation where the curriculum making process is influenced by the experiences of students and teachers. Both teachers and students jointly make inputs to the curriculum from their individual experiences (curriculum enactment).

While entrepreneurship education has become very vital to Nigeria's sustainable development, the rate of youth unemployment has increased coupled with a volatile national economy and development challenges (Fems et al., 2017). Despite that the practice of entrepreneurship in Nigeria can be traced back to the days of 'trade by batter', many Nigerian youths and students possess low-level entrepreneurial skills (Fems et al., 2017). The increasing rate of youth unemployment requires urgent steps to be taken by the Nigerian government to address the problems of education and youth unemployment. Every year thousands of Nigerian graduates are released to the labour market with majority of them not getting jobs years after graduation (Ogwu, Omeje and Nwokenna, 2014).

The failure of curriculum reforms for entrepreneurship education in Nigeria has led to many Nigerian youths not possessing skills required by employers, and incapable of self-employment via entrepreneurship (Ogwu, et al., 2014). Just as it is the case with curriculum reforms in other SSA countries, an obstacle to the effective implementation of the NSSC is the ineffective consideration of teachers' challenges in Nigeria (Alabi, 2014). In addition, several entrepreneurship initiatives introduced by the Nigerian government have failed to be sustainable due to poor policy commitment and lack of adequate resources for effective implementation.

Conclusion

The findings of this research paper show that curriculum reforms in Nigeria, especially for entrepreneurship development, will not be successful if necessary policies that will address the challenges embedded in Nigeria's education system are not implemented. Challenges such as insufficient teacher education, low teacher motivation, lack of educational facilities, obsolete pedagogical practice, absent of classroom support and poor policy commitment will continue to remain a bane to entrepreneurial development through education in Nigeria. Furthermore, another implication of the above challenges is that Nigeria is less likely to meet the SDGs and specifically goal 4 targets by 2030 with its current education system.

Recommendations

With the increasing rate of youth unemployment in Nigeria, the need for entrepreneurship education to be well developed in Nigeria is very vital for its sustainable development. Therefore, addressing teachers' challenges should be a priority in Ni-

geria's education reforms. Teachers' inputs and recognition need to be emphasized upon in curriculum reforms processes. This research paper also recommends a paradigm shift in the understanding of teachers and their role in curriculum reform processes. The implications of this paradigm shift include better teachers' salaries, more resources toward the education system, opportunities for representation of teachers in education processes, recognition of teachers' autonomy and differences and improved professional status in public eye. Furthermore, Nigerian teachers must first be trained in entrepreneurial development and on how to implement entrepreneurship education. In addition, it becomes necessary to make the schools wealthier with adequate funds, state of the art infrastructures, skilled, knowledgeable and experienced teachers who will come up with new strategies that will result into sustainable development.

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