

## SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION ARCHITECTS: UNVEILING TEACHERS' ROLE IN OGUN STATE'S PRIMARY CURRICULUM

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the importance of a sustainable primary education curriculum in Nigeria. The paper argues that the primary level of education is crucial to the success of the educational system, and that a sustainable curriculum is essential for its long-term success.

The paper begins by defining the term "curriculum" and discussing its importance in primary education. It then discusses the challenges facing the implementation of a sustainable curriculum in Nigeria, such as inadequate funding, lack of qualified teachers, and poor infrastructure. The paper concludes by proposing a number of strategies for overcoming these challenges and implementing a sustainable primary education curriculum in Nigeria.

### Introduction

Primary education is universally accepted as the foundation of other levels of education all over the world. It is on it that all other levels of education are built since it provides the structure on which the quality of other levels of education is anchored. In Nigeria as in many other countries, primary education refers to the education given to children aged about 6 to 11 years in primary schools and it is the key to the success or failure of the whole educational system since higher levels of education are built upon it (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013). This statement emphasizes the fact that the primary level of education is crucial to the success of the educational system. Hence, there is a need for the stakeholders to do everything possible to lay a solid foundation for its sustainability through the formulation and implementation of a sustainable primary education curriculum.

The term "*curriculum*" is differently defined by different educators. According to Alade (2012), the term was derived from the Latin word *currus*, which means "to run" a race. It however refers to the totality of the learning experiences offered by a school or an institution of learning. The curriculum includes school subjects and out-of-class activities, all of which are geared towards the physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral development of the child. Curriculum encompasses the objectives of instruction, the various learning experiences offered to the learner, and the evaluation of everything involved in the planning and execution of a school teaching-learning programmes. Hence, Dada (1999) defines curriculum as a programme of learning planned for a target group of learners for a specific period of time in order to achieve certain predetermined educational goals. In the educational context, curriculum could be defined as all the planned experiences provided under the auspices of the school to assist the learners in attaining certain desired learning outcomes.

Since education is dynamic, curriculum requires continuous revisions which look at the objectives to ensure that they are in line with the needs of the learner, the society and that they are in consonance with the changing

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educational policies. Primary education curriculum therefore involves continuously adjusting content, materials, instructional and evaluation strategies, and learning experiences to meet needs brought about by the changing and emerging issues in education and the society. From these and many other definitions of curriculum, it is obvious that certain characteristics are important: Curriculum is learning oriented, planned, and has a target audience. The behavioural outcomes to be addressed by a curriculum cover the three domains of educational objectives: Cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

Prior to the coming of the missionaries to what later came to be known as Nigeria, there was Islamic education in the Northern parts of the country in addition to a system of traditional or indigenous education in its various communities. Indigenous education focused on children learning the mores and practical skills of their ethnic groups by imitating the elders; there were no teachers or schools as we have in formal settings; everybody was a teacher and instruction went on everywhere — at home, in the neighbourhood, market, on the road, etc. The curriculum was the life experience and the future of the society depended on carrying on the traditions that were successfully handed down to the children. There were changes in the curriculum from time to time depending on the changing needs of the society.

Historically, primary education curriculum development in Nigeria began with the arrival of the Christian missionaries in September 1842 and the establishment of missionary schools. Between 1842 and 1881 the Christian missions enjoyed the monopoly of opening, maintaining, controlling, and defining the objectives, contents, and instructional methods including the curricula of those schools. The major focus of the curriculum then was what came to be known as the four R's: Reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion.

The changes in technology and knowledge explosion daily brings about revolution in the curriculum. As such, there is a need for continuous revision and development of the curriculum in order to enhance the standard of primary education. Curriculum development is a continuous process of study and improvement through a revision and redesigning of the school curriculum. Primary school teachers are majorly responsible for the implementation of the curriculum at the primary school level. Hence, the need for their professional training and development on knowledge of the subject area and teaching techniques which could be achieved through workshops, seminars, Internet browsing, and extensive reading for personal development cannot be overemphasized.

Primary education curriculum is geared toward achieving the goals of education, which, as enumerated in the National Policy on Education (2004), are to:

- (i) inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy, and ability of communicate effectively;
- (ii) lay a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
- (iii) give citizenship education as a basis for effective participation in and contribution to the life of the society;
- (iv) mould the character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- (v) develop in the child ability to adapt to the child's changing environment;
- (vi) give the child opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child to function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity; and
- (vii) provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and craft of the locality.

Obviously, all these goals are mainly the responsibility of the teacher. Consequently, the success or failure of the curriculum lies squarely on their shoulders. After all, no educational system can rise above the quality of its teachers. Educational goals could only be achieved through effective teaching and learning of valuable knowledge, skills and desirable habits within and outside the school. Teachers are the prime executors of government policies on education and, as such, must be alive to their responsibilities by having a good understanding of the curriculum content and maintaining excellence in both the academic and non-academic aspects of school life. Uchendu (2015) attests to this view by affirming that the major duties of primary school teachers in Nigeria is to get the individual pupils to learn, remove barriers to learning, and identify and resolve weaknesses in learning. Teachers should be able to use the schools to inculcate in their pupils the skills required for effective citizenship and creative thinking. As such, the teachers have a significant role to play in the institution of an efficient and dynamic curriculum.

They should always promote democracy, harmony, competence and professionalism in the conduct of their teaching/learning activities in order to meet the prospects of efficient and dynamic curriculum development in modern time (Adebile, 2009).

The responsibility of contemporary primary school teachers is more extensive than in the past. They now play a major role that extends beyond the confines of the classroom or school setting to the larger community. Obayan's (2013) model is relevant here as it reveals which way and how the teacher can be involved in curriculum development. The model also itemizes other input, process, and output variables of programme or curriculum development and all that would make the implementation successful. Several studies have, however, pointed to the neglect or noninvolvement of teachers in curriculum innovations. For example, Carl (2014) affirmed that the voice of the teacher is to a large extent ignored or not heard. In Yigzaw's (1982) study, 85% of the 110 teachers used as sample indicated that they had not been involved in the development of curricula. Sixty-three percent of the participants reported that the most serious problem in this area was that materials were usually not sent on time or that they were not informed of the innovations beforehand. While teachers were recognized as sole implementers of curricula change, many times they received little or no orientation on innovations. This could be one of the factors responsible for the resistance or reluctance of teachers to key into or implement curriculum innovations. The implication of this is that in most cases, teachers are not carried along in making decisions affecting the curriculum, and yet they are expected to implement these unilateral, externally imposed decisions or changes. Expecting teachers to embrace new instructional approaches without sufficient training and information on why such changes are necessary or warranted, often results in inadequate adoption of the curriculum mandate (Oloruntegbe, Duyilemi, Agbayewa, Oluwatelure, Dele, & Omoniyi, 2010). To make it widely acceptable and therefore more easily implemented, innovations must be locally-driven and collaborative (Nomdo, 2015; Sallis, 2016). In other words, teachers must be actively involved in curriculum design, dissemination, and evaluation phases, which have not been emphasized particularly at the primary school level of education. Curriculum implementation can only be successful if teachers and communities are involved in the development and implementation of curriculum and structural changes.

Although teachers' involvement in curriculum development is advocated, many teachers are unsure of the specific roles they should play. Many of them, especially the older and more experienced teachers, are comfortable with the *status quo*; that is, with teaching the same topics in the same way, using the same materials, and most likely getting the same results year in year out. Even when a new curriculum is introduced, these teachers still stick to the old way (Sallis, 2016). Furthermore, inadequate funding of education is one general problem that has affected curriculum development and implementation in Ogun State primary schools. The Nigerian federal government annual budgetary allocation to education has consistently been less than 8% over the years. This is a far cry from the minimum 26% standard set by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The same situation prevails in the state and Local governments. The implication of this underfunding of education is that all categories of teachers are poorly represented in development and planning, poorly trained, and poorly remunerated (Oloruntegbe *et al.*, 2010), thereby threatening the role of teachers in the innovation process. Teachers hardly attend training programmes especially when the meager sponsorship is not forthcoming. How committed and innovative would such teachers be? This and similar other questions bothering on teachers' involvement in primary school curriculum development are part of the concern in this paper.

Primary school teachers have also been known to continue with the use of outdated methodology and instructional strategies. Many of them are not computer literate and cannot use Internet resources effectively. Although the Teachers' Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) that licenses teachers set transition periods for computer literacy and Internet compliance as criteria for licensing of teachers, the various period shave since expired yet a large number of the teachers are not computer literate. So far, the training of teachers in this respect has been sloppy. There were low attendance and lack of computer and internet facilities in schools, compounded by the lack of regular power supply or no power supply at all. The teachers themselves do not see this innovation as important (World Bank, 2007).

### **Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant combined influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.
2. There is no significant relative influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.
3. There are no significant bivariate relationships among teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, in-service training, and the sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.

## Method

### Research Design

A survey design of the *ex post factotype* was adopted for this study.

### Population of the Study

The population of this study consisted of all the primary school teachers in Ogun State, Nigeria.

### Participants

A sample of 200 teachers was chosen from the population through the stratified random sampling technique. The population was divided into three strata, which are the senatorial districts in Ogun State, namely, Ogun East, Ogun Central, and Ogun West. Teachers in each stratum were sampled across public and private primary schools.

### Instrumentation

A self-constructed validated questionnaire tagged Teachers' Role in Building a Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum Questionnaire (TRBSPECQ) was used. It contains 15 items formatted as a 4-point Likert-type scale with possible responses ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree. All the items on the scale are positively worded. Examples of items on the scale are *I search the Internet at least once a week to get more resources that can be used to enhance my teaching* and *I attend training workshops on curriculum development at least once in an academic session*.

The TRBSPECQ has been validated by its developers. It showed evidence of good internal consistency reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ) which indicates that the items on the instrument are internally consistent with one another. A test-retest reliability coefficient with a two-week interval of  $r = .75$  was also calculated. This provides evidence of stability of scores over time.

### Procedure

The instruments were administered on the participants personally by the researcher after meeting and obtaining permission from the head teacher in each school. The subjects were given directions on how to fill the questionnaires and an appeal was made for frank and sincere responses, with assurance that information obtained would be treated as strictly confidential and used only for the purpose of this study. The instruments were then distributed and later collected and scored. A 96% return rate was achieved.

### Method of Data Analysis

Data collected were tested by means of multiple regression analysis and Pearson's  $r$ . Tests were carried out at the 0.05 alpha level. All analyses were carried out with the aid of IBM SPSS Version 23 software.

## Results

### First Hypothesis

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant combined influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.

**Table 1: Model Summary and Coefficients of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Combined Influence of Teachers' Computer Literacy, Internet Use, and In-Service Training on Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum**

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	20516.048	3	6838.683	38.413	.000
Residual	34893.803	196	178.030		
Total	55409.851	199			
Model Summary $R = .541$ ; $R^2 = .293$ ; $R^2_{(Adj)} = .288$ ; Std. Error = 3.74861					

Dependent Variable: Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum

Predictors: (Constant), Computer Literacy, Internet Use, In-Service Training

Table 1 revealed significant results ( $F_{(3,196)} = 38.413$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The null hypothesis was consequently rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that there is a significant combined influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State. Table 1 further showed that computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training accounted for 28.8% of the variance in the level of primary education curriculum ( $Adj. R^2 = .288$ ).

## Second Hypothesis

Ho2: There is no significant relative influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.

**Table 2: Coefficients of the Multiple Regression Analysis for the Relative Influence of Teachers' Computer Literacy, Internet Use, and In-Service Training on Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum**

Model	Unstandardized B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	51.286	1.520		36.722	.000
Computer Literacy	.033	.043	.208	12.559	.000
Internet Use	.025	.021	.129	8.485	.000
In-Service Training	.018	.023	.134	9.106	.000

Dependent Variable: Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum

Predictors: (Constant), Computer Literacy, Internet Use, In-Service Training

Table 2 revealed significant results. The null hypothesis was consequently rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis, leading to the conclusion that there is a significant relative influence of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training on sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State. Specifically, computer literacy had the strongest influence on sustainable primary education curriculum ( $\beta = .208$ ,  $t = 12.559$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This was successively followed by in-service training ( $\beta = .134$ ,  $t = 9.106$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and Internet use ( $\beta = .129$ ,  $t = 8.485$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Third Hypothesis

Ho3: There are no significant bivariate relationships among teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, in-service training, and the sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State.

**Table 3: Correlation Matrix for the Relationships among Computer Literacy, Internet Use, In-Service Training, and Sustainable Primary Education Curriculum**

	Computer Literacy	Internet Use	In-Service Training	Primary Education Curriculum
Computer Literacy	1.000	.528*	.201*	.238*
Internet Use		1.000	.187*	.259*
In-Service Training			1.000	.376*
Primary Education Curriculum				1.000

\*Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The results in Table 3 were significant. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected while the alternative hypothesis was upheld. It was subsequently concluded that there were significant and positive bivariate relationships among teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, in-service training, and the sustainable primary education curriculum in Ogun State. Specifically, the strongest relationship was between computer literacy and Internet use ( $r = .528$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This was successively followed by the relationships between in-service training and primary education curriculum ( $r = .376$ ,  $p < .05$ ), Internet use and primary education curriculum ( $r = .259$ ,  $p < .05$ ), computer literacy and primary education curriculum ( $r = .238$ ,  $p < .05$ ), computer literacy and in-service training ( $r = .201$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and Internet use and in-service training ( $r = .187$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

## Conclusion

The implications of the findings from this study are that the familiarity of primary school teachers with information and communication technology (ICT) as well as their exposure to further training can go a long way in enhancing primary education curriculum in the study area. In other words, the greater the level of teachers' computer literacy, Internet use, and in-service training, the better primary education curriculum would be.

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