

Nigeria in 2030

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Introduction

Education is the driver of sustainable development, and curriculum is the vehicle through which educational endeavours are achieved. Nigeria has many hurdles to overcome, but they are not insurmountable. What is required is positive and supportive political will. This article briefly surveys key challenges as we throw our gaze forward to the year 2030, with a focus on curriculum development and implementation at different educational levels.

Early childhood education

The Nigeria National Policy on Education (FGN, 2004) recognises the importance of preschool education – crèche, nursery and kindergarten – in the development of children. UNICEF and the National Commission for Colleges of Education (NCCE) have developed the Early Childhood Curriculum to be implemented by schools. The principal areas of the curriculum are: social norms; spirit of enquiry and creativity; co-operation and team spirit; good habits; and the rudiments of numbers, letters, colours, shapes and forms. These are

taught through play, song, rhymes and toys (the Play Way Method). Unfortunately, many schools in Nigeria are yet to implement the curriculum and teachers are not trained to teach at this level.

NCCE has enforced the implementation of the curriculum in most federal colleges of education to produce qualified, effective and competent teachers for early childhood education. Most faculties of education have not introduced the programme in the universities. By 2030, Nigeria should have produced specialists in this level of education to teach children and not birds-of-passage as teachers, as seen in today's schools. The learning environment will also be improved by the provision of quality educational resources to give children a solid foundation that will promote successful transition to primary school.

Basic and senior secondary education

Basic education comprises six years of primary and the first three years of secondary school. It includes 'adult and non-formal education programmes at primary and junior secondary education



Invenco

A curriculum for the future would include agriculture, creativity, ICT and entrepreneurship as additional core subjects



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levels for the adults and out-of-school youths' (FGN, 2004).

Naturally, Nigerians should be multilingual, communicating in English, French and/or any of the three or all the major indigenous languages: Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba. This is not the case, however. English, French, the three vernaculars, peace education and citizenship/civics should be core subjects at the primary and secondary levels. In 2030, the Nigerian Language Policy would have been successfully implemented by training and employing an adequate number of motivated teachers of English, French and the vernaculars. Peace education and citizenship/civics will be integrated in the core subjects – in the content of social studies at the basic education level, and in history at the senior secondary level. These will impact on language learning and behaviour of many Nigerian youths who will be communicating in any of the languages. Language is an instrument for effective communication, leading to harmonious and peaceful co-existence between speakers – and as such will contribute to nation-building for Nigeria.

The essence of basic education lies in literacy, numeracy and life skills. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2010) indicates that 58.3 per cent of Nigeria's primary school children are not learning;

Box 1

Mechanic Village schools

The Mechanic Village (out-of-school vocational) schools were initiated by the United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF) as an intervention to mitigate the adverse educational effects of male drop-out in south-eastern Nigeria. These schools are located inside the massive work area, Mechanic Village, allocated to auto mechanics, allied trades and artisans, some of whom had no formal education or dropped out of primary/junior secondary school without having acquired basic literacy and numeracy skills. These schools were part of UNICEF's initiative to address the problem of male drop-out in five south-eastern states of Nigeria where the Igbo people have shown practical dissatisfaction in the rate of return on investment in formal education, which is clearly manifested in low enrolment of young men and youth. This laudable initiative of out-of-school vocational programmes ran outside the formal school system, but has suffered a serious set-back because of the rigid school structure that requires learners to attend school three times per week from noon to 2:00pm in some instances while others attend from 4:00pm to 6:00pm.

Fortunately, the Education Trust Fund, Abuja, commissioned the Skills for Life's Seasons Educational and Health Center (SLSEHC) to sustain the programmes of Mechanic Village schools by redesigning the curriculum and exploring ways of improving its implementation by use of ICT. Beyond the basic literacy and numeracy subjects studied in these schools as introduced by UNICEF, more vocational subjects like metalwork, auto-mechanics, basic electricity and business studies have been included in the redesigned SLSEHC curriculum. The introduction of ICT has provided more flexibility for students who can take on the school work at their convenience and would not have to attend classes as often as was previously the case.

Ben Ogwo, Pennsylvania State University.

Source: www.norrag.org

65.7 per cent are not learning to read; and 51 per cent are not learning mathematics. These figures are attributed to teacher quality, instructional media and the learning environment. It calls for the re-training of teachers and a review of the teacher education curriculum to emphasise hands-on experience and practical skills, especially in languages and mathematics. Primary school teachers must be adequately trained and motivated to be able to deliver the curriculum efficiently and competently, as no nation can rise above the quality of its teachers. They must also be well remunerated in order to attract the best brains to the profession.

In Nigeria, ten million students are out of school, while globally this figure currently stands at around 60 million (UNESCO, 2008). Equity addresses equality in the provision of education to all children, irrespective of ability, status, gender, location or religion. It has been observed that attainment of equity in Nigeria has to do with access to education. In the north of the country, more males have access to education than females. In this predominantly Muslim region, girls' access to education is constrained by patterns of very early marriage and related cultural expectations. The reverse is the case in the south-east of Nigeria, where there are more females in schools than males. For example, 53.4 per cent of males and 57.1 per cent of females in Anambra state were enrolled in primary and secondary schools in 2008. The males abandon schools to seek wealth. This is a big problem for Nigeria, and that is why the Federal Ministry of Education is focusing on girl-child education, while state governments are formulating new policies to enhance equity. Curriculum at these levels should be gender unbiased and include entrepreneurial skills.

Nigeria is currently facing the problem of unemployment. Joblessness leads to anti-social behaviour, especially among the youth. The curricula of basic education will have basic science and technology, cultural and creative arts, and information and communication technology (ICT) as core courses. The secondary education curriculum should include sciences, mathematics and technology as the core subjects, as well as agriculture, creativity, ICT and entrepreneurship. The dignity of labour should be emphasised in the courses. The mode of teaching these subjects should be interactive and hands-on (practical) rather than theoretical education. Resources will be readily available, and competent and motivated teachers will be in place in all the schools to implement these programmes.

The desire is that well-equipped skills centres and youth centres, built in every local government area for youth (males and females) empowerment and to equip those who are not academically inclined with the necessary life skills, will be common features by 2030 (SLSEHC, 2008). The programme will also be inclusive, accommodating young people of all abilities. The curriculum of the centres will include entrepreneurship, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), ICT, creativity, business management, peace education, sports and games, family life education, vocational and technical education, health education and languages (see Box 1).

In 1986, Nigeria formulated a policy on ICT that was supposed to have been effectively implemented in primary and secondary schools. To date, there has been little or no ICT infrastructure set up in the schools; many teachers are not even ICT compliant. The dream for Nigeria is that by 2030, all teachers will be computer literate through in-service and pre-service training. The training curriculum will contain computer appreciation and applications. ICT

will be employed in teaching and learning in schools at all levels of education, and globalisation will be facilitated (Offorma, 2006). Computers will be common instructional materials in the classroom, and there will be a constant and uninterrupted power supply. With these changes in place, Nigeria's youth will be equipped with the ICT skills necessary to enable them to adapt to the 21st-century competitive market economy and technology. Furthermore, by 2030, Nigeria should have developed the required human capacity in ICT to tackle the socio-political and economic challenges inherent in the country.

There are many Nigerians who are interested in being educated but, due to some hitches in their lives, have been unable to complete their schooling. They are out of school but are still interested in lifting themselves up through education. In 2030, Nigeria should have improved the provision of open and distance learning (ODL) to create opportunities for such people to have access to education. The National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) should extend its activities to rural areas. Students and teachers will need to be ICT literate to benefit fully from the ODL programmes.

Tertiary education

The mainstay of Nigeria's economy is petroleum. However, before the 1970s, the agricultural sector and the production and export of groundnuts, palm oil, cocoa, cotton, rubber, etc. were the main bedrock of its economy. Today, this sector has become very much neglected. Nigeria is blessed with rich soil and should be able to solve the problem of food insecurity and at the same time export agricultural products to increase its foreign revenue. It should not put all its eggs in one basket (the oil sector). In 2012, Nigeria experienced great disaster after flooding affected many of its people. Homes, farm land, factories, market places and schools were submerged and all economic activities and schooling came to a halt for months until the floods receded. Flooding adversely affected agriculture and food security. Agriculture and climate change, mitigation, adaptation and resilience should be introduced in the curricula of secondary and higher education as general courses to create awareness and equip people with the necessary knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to tackle and cope with climate change issues (Offorma and Obi, 2012). A trans-disciplinary approach should be taken to facilitate learning in these subjects.

Nigeria is also rich in solid minerals, such as coal, tin, zinc, bitumen, silicon, columbite, tantalite, lead and many others that, if explored, could advance the country's technological development. In 2030, the higher education curriculum in engineering and geology will include exploration and extraction technologies. It will also include application technologies that will facilitate conversion and transformation of these minerals into materials that are sustainable, eco-friendly and cost-effective.

Institutions of higher education will also embark on e-education to accommodate the teeming numbers of young people seeking higher education in Nigeria. In 2013, 1.7 million candidates were competing for 520,000 spaces in Nigeria's universities. Though more universities are being opened, access is still a big problem at the university level. In 2030, there will be a variety of modes for attaining higher education; synchronous or asynchronous. These modes can be extended to nomadic education, adult education and extramural studies. It is hoped that the infrastructural gap

between the rural and urban environments will be bridged so that people can access education and other facilities from any background. Adult education programmes, like those for nomadic communities, should reflect specific needs and promote every Nigerian's functional integration in society.

Conclusion

In 2030, tertiary education in Nigeria will be linked to industry, which will be the end user of higher education research results and will fund the institutions through grants. This is another way of combating unemployment. The implication of this symbiotic relationship between the two is that there will be collaborative curriculum planning, innovations and implementation. Students will be rendering service to the industries involved on a volunteer basis, and from that they will acquire the necessary skills and work attitudes, which are co-curricula.

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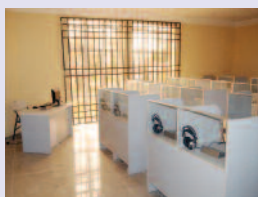
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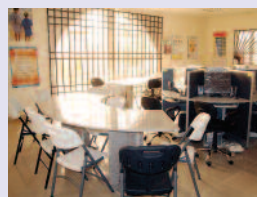
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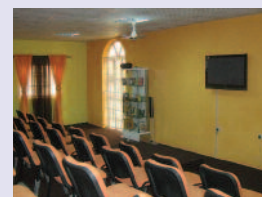
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- National and state champion 2012 and 2013 French Language Drama competition – the first of its kind in northern Nigeria.