

DEFICIT FACTORS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL POLICIES AND REFORMS IN BAYELSA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This paper focuses on deficit factors in the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. It is reasoned that the education sector in Bayelsa State has undergone certain reforms guided by public policies at all levels in recent years. However, much as these policies are actions by public officials, there is a significant absence of corresponding results in productivity and performance index. This perhaps may be as a result of the deficits occasioned by exclusion of the policy holders (teachers and students) who are critical to the implementation and reform process that are expected to drive positive educational outcomes. This paper takes an analytical view on the merits of the educational policies and reforms from 2012 till date viz-a-viz teachers' (personnel), exclusion factors, wastages and corruption that have attended these policies and reforms among others. The conclusion is that, these educational policies and reforms in the state do not have a buy-in of the critical stake- holders with resultant effects of apathy, absence of commitment, indifference attitude and stagnation in performance. The paper recommends among others that, there must be deliberate engagement of the critical stakeholders on the types of educational policies and reforms that would ultimately benefit the state without any form of exclusion elements in its planning and implementation.*

KEYWORDS: Curriculum, Deficit Factors, Educational, Implementation, Policies, Reforms.

INTRODUCTION

One of the uses of comparative education is for planning, development and implementation of curriculum. This is however within the context and framework of the aggregate factors that affect educational policies and reforms in relation to curriculum from time to time. Operationally and technically, curriculum refers to the sum total of all the experience provided to the learners under the guidance of the school (Bishop, 1985.). Curriculum is the totality of learning experiences provided to students so that they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites. It entails all the experience that learners have in the course of living (Marsh & Wills, 2003). Educational reforms are actions or recommendations by those in authorities that are intended to make education provision better or to put right any faults or errors in the provision of education. Policy therefore depicts authoritative allocation of values, operational statements of values and statements of prescriptive intent for which Ball (1999) noted that, its' (policy) implementation is generally held to be the step that follows policy formulation conceived as the process of carrying out a basic policy decision. According to Bhola (2004) policy implementation refers to the process of actualizing, applying and utilizing a policy in the world of practice. Consequently, Hope (2002) submits that education policy implementation is a process of transforming educational policy into practice.

Reforms in education issues (including curriculum) particularly in most countries is aimed at making education an effective instrument for national development. Such reforms must be reflected in funding, teaching, manpower development, staffing, school plant, instructional materials and the overall contents delivery system which is the curriculum initially conceived as the totality of learning experiences, provided to students so that they can attain general skills and knowledge at a variety of learning sites (Marsh & Willis, 2003).

It is therefore obvious that, within the framework of educational policy and curriculum reforms, the ultimate goal is to address curriculum, be it curriculum-in-use (Cuban, 1992), received curriculum (Cuban, 1992; Schoenfeld (1990), rhetorical curriculum (Cuban, 1992), societal curriculum (Cortes, 1981), concomitant curriculum and phantom curriculum (Longstreet & Shane, 1993) and the null curriculum (Eisner, 1985, 1994). Since all educational policies are designed to bring about reforms that are considered inevitable actions or recommendations intended to make education provision better, it becomes curious of this paper to ask, to what extent have education policies and reforms in curriculum brought about better education provision and delivery in Bayelsa State in recent years? Is there no evidential disconnect between rhetorical curriculum and education reforms framework in Bayelsa State in recent years? How can it be explained that recent educational reforms have not ensure that educational opportunities reach all segments of the population especially those living in economically disadvantaged areas in Bayelsa State? Are these reforms that have incurred tens of billions of naira disaggregated to exclude Bayelsan?

Recall that no education policy will ensure a better educational provision and delivery if teachers are excluded, because, the implementation of curriculum reforms which is derived from or built in such policy depends, squarely on the teachers. Practically, as education practitioner, there is no quantum of infrastructure, classification of schools by model nomenclature, attendant provision of other hard infrastructure can make education provision better when teachers are excluded, under remunerated, subjected to several months of unpaid salaries and allowances, and lacking in welfare, deprived of statutory promotion among other welfare related incentives that teachers have to content with in recent years.

Issues of Concern in Educational Policies and Curriculum Reforms

While writing on Ghana Colleges of education social studies curriculum experience, Quashigah, Duke, Bekoe, Eshun and Bordoh (2014) wrote that there have been various initiatives that were used to structurally transform (reform) the education system and also helped to improve considerably access, quality teaching and learning, infrastructure delivery as well as management efficiency. Besides Aboagye (2002) states that, the quality of teacher education is inseparable in any reforms process. Quality teacher has been seen as a crucial factor for effective educational outcomes. This means that, educational policies and curriculum reforms are effective to the extent that, the developments of teachers' factors are prioritized.

In fact, reforms in education could not be successfully done without looking at the teachers' elements and the training acquired. This fact underscores importance of the teachers' factors in curriculum reforms. Curriculum reform provides teachers, students, administrators and community stakeholders with a measurable plan and structure for delivery of quality education. As evident in any education system, curriculum identifies the learning outcomes, standards and competencies that students must demonstrate before advancing to the next level. Teachers play significant impact in developing, implementing, assessing and modifying the curriculum.

Teachers are crucial to the implementation of curriculum reforms as the impact of curriculum reform is evident on teachers, administrators, students and other stakeholders.

Curriculum informs tell the teachers what skills must be taught at each grade level and ultimately, prepare students for the next grade level or job specification. The teacher's curriculum conception of a subject has become a matter of urgency in the sense that Bekoe and Eshhun (2013), who assert that different modes of teaching a subject may tend to influence students as to what the subject is, in terms of its' contents and why it is worth studying.

Cognizance of the various conceptions of curriculum and its' education policy objectives, the humanistic, social reconstructionist, systemic and academic curricula has its own way of affecting the reforms (Young, 2011). Therefore, with curriculum implementation, the teacher is supposed to build relationship with the students and promotes individual learning. Consequently, Quashigah et al (2014) concluded that indeed, the importance of the teacher in the successful implementation of curriculum reforms has been revealed in studies both in the West (Fullan, 2001), and the East (Adanson, Kwan, & Chan, 2000). It is true to state that, rather than focusing education policies implementation just on hard infrastructure, the main issue of concern is the teachers' elements in the provision of regular training and re-training, prompt salary payment, promotion, welfare incentives and other attendant motivational elements that are expected to drive their orientation and commitment toward the implementation of policy reforms in the state. Presently, there are deficits in the education policy outcomes in Bayelsa state. These deficits are evident in factors of implementation of education policies and curriculum reforms.

Deficit Factors in Education Policy Implementation and Curriculum Reform

Teachers play key role in developing, implementing, assessing and modifying the educational curriculum which is inseparable from the education policy. Teachers experience lots of deficits in the implementation of curriculum reforms and educational policies in schools in Africa and Bayelsa state is no exception. Empirical evidence shows that in Kenya, poor economic growth, politics, lack of facilities, school leadership, ability and inability to evaluate, lack of proper social amenities and infrastructure, ignorance and illiteracy constraint teachers' implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms. (Syomwene, 2013).

However, the findings of Syomwene (2013) are bereft of critical elements, which are the teachers' contextual factors. Recall that, in the two factors theory of motivation to work, the hygiene factor placed emphasis in individual's internal motivation as drive to improved productivity and performance (Herzberg, Mausner and Synderman, (1957).

The theory assumes that, given that for example, all infrastructural facilities are put in place, with positive political will or commitment, coupled with adequate provision of learning materials, social amenities, among others, without teachers motivation, educational policies and curriculum reforms become deficit in implementation no matter how well thought out such interventions are classified and propagated by government.

The theory notes that, given that for example, all infrastructural, facilities are put in place, with positive, social amenities, high level of awareness among others, without teachers motivation, educational policies and curriculum reforms become deficit in implementation no matter how well thought out such interventions are classified. The aggregate of teachers' motivational

elements in relation to the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms as constituents of deficit factor are discussed in this paper.

Lack of Teachers Engagement

The first deficit factor in teachers' implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms in the state is the absence of teachers' deliberative civic engagement in the development of educational policies. Take for example, the policy of sowing of school uniforms for pupils/students in public schools from China, good as the government wishes to provide free uniforms to pupils and students, but at what cost? This clearly is a policy that promoted capital flight from the state. Such policy could not have achieved the buy-in of teachers who are to teach the students reformed curriculum. This is because, such a policy defeats the essence of local capacity building, and local content drive through educational policy reforms which negates commitment to productivity as the attendant perception holds that, the government has not demonstrated transparency, integrity and accountability in the use of funds with relations to reforms in the education sector.

Meanwhile, it is obvious that teachers are not engaged in educational policies and curriculum reforms. This is justified by the rhetorical curriculum elements which emanate from educational ideas offered by policy makers, school officials, administrators, or politicians, professionals who are involved in policy formation and content changes, educational initiatives resulting from decisions based on national and state reports, among others. These reforms in curricula are teacher deprived and as such, the implementation cannot be seen through by the same teachers who hitherto were excluded from the process.

Another educational policy that lacks teachers' engagement is the establishment or perhaps the restructuring of some existing schools into models colleges (schools) in the eight local government areas of Bayelsa state without a corresponding employment of qualified teachers to man these restructured schools. Rather, there is massive transfer and redeployment of teachers from existing schools, (where shortages already exist) into these model schools. This policy has left many schools particularly in the rural areas of the state without teachers and other relevant man power. This policy negates the implementation of whatever educational policy that subsists in the state.

Lack of Teachers welfare

Syomwene (2013) reported that there is a correlation between teachers' qualification, training, retraining, remuneration, job security, promotion, locational incentives and the implementation of educational policies and reforms in Kenya. According to the researcher, although the government of Kenya has recently reviewed upward teachers' salaries, it was discovered that, the income is still wanting because of current economic demands in Kenya. This has negative impacts on the implementation of educational reforms and policies in Kenya. Given that, in a setting where teachers salaries were reviewed upward, teachers are still negatively impacted in the implementation of educational reforms, what then is expected in another setting, where for over six (6) years teachers are not regularly paid their salaries, coupled with backlog of unpaid salaries, no corresponding promotion or upgrade remunerations, no regular training or retraining and where there is no relocation incentives to motivate rural school based teachers? Rather, there is stagnation in salaries and allowances, with unfortunate attendance of salary deductions under the guise of education taxes and forced health insurance schemes. Generally

and specifically, teachers at all levels of education in Bayelsa State are lacking in welfare and this is impeding on the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms.

At its best, teachers can only provide what they have and recall that no curriculum is greater than the teacher who is to implement it. Given this fact, no matter the numbers of school buildings or model schools that are renovated or constructed, when the teachers are lacking in welfare incentives, they are demotivated to implement reforms and so, the buildings and facilities cannot implement the curriculum reforms as they are only tangential to the successful implementation of educational policies and reforms. The components of teachers welfare that correlate with successful implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms in the view of this paper are:

- Regular promotion with corresponding remuneration
- Training and retraining
- Provision of relocation incentives
- Timely recruitment of qualified teachers to replace retired personnel
- Accommodation, mobility, and contingency allowances
- Regular engagement in educational policy dialogue (engagement)

At present all these elements are lacking as teachers' factors with resultant outcomes in the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms as evident in (teachers')

- absentism,
- indifferent attitude to the teaching profession
- corruption (exploitation)
- poor maintenance
- low school-community relation
- poor institutional profiling
- poor results (internal and external examinations)
- lack of job satisfaction.
- low morale/low confidence rating

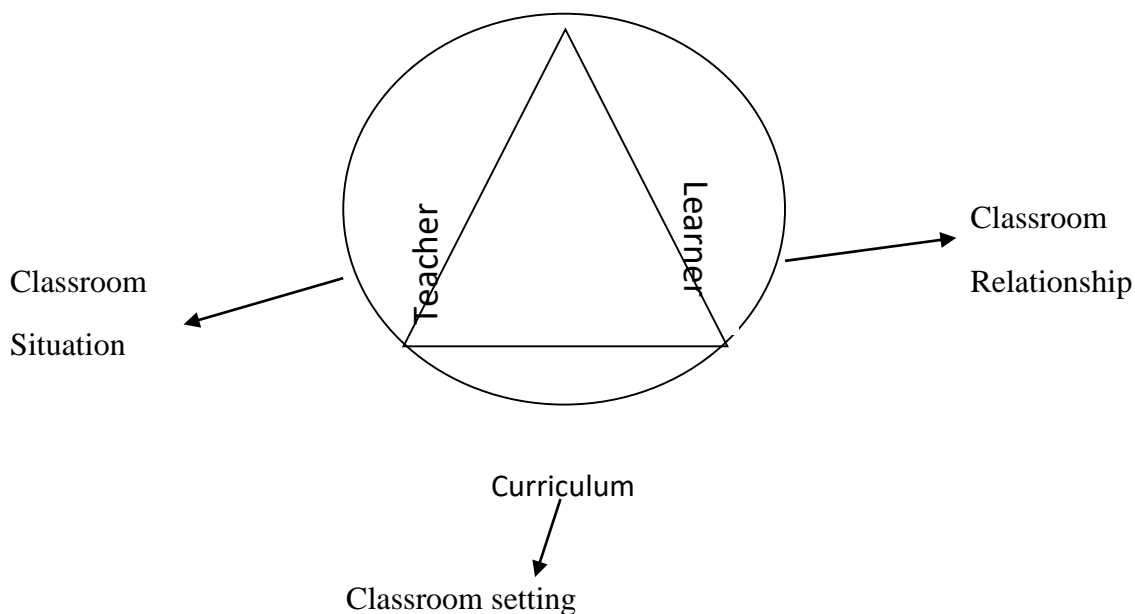
Lack of Understanding of Policies and Reform

Educational policies and curriculum reforms have been contextualized differently, as the humanistic, social reconstructionist, systemic, and academic curricula which have its own way of affecting the curriculum (Young, 2011). With curriculum implementation, the teacher is supposed to build relationship with the students and promote individual learning. According to Young (2011) such relationships and beliefs inspire students to innovate, confidently take risks in learning whereby failure is regarded as progress. Under the school-based curriculum

development policy, the importance of teachers to the implementation of integrated programme of study in schools is even more obvious.

In general, Quashigala et al (2014), wrote that, teachers' understanding of the subjects they teach (implementation process) have shown that those conceptions affect the way they teach and assess (Eitner, 2005; Processer, Martin, Trigwell, Ramsden & Lackenhausen, 2005, Bekoe & Eshun, 2013, Quashigah et al, 2013). It is therefore significant that a classroom practitioner knows what is involved in implementing the prescribed curriculum. The implementation of curriculum entails putting in practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subjects (Urabu, 1955). This process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or competencies. The learner is therefore seen as a central focus in the curriculum implementation process. This again, is dependent on the understanding of the teacher who is to help the learner. So the teacher comes first in the triangle of teacher, learner and the curriculum that is to be implemented in the school setting.

Figure 1: Curriculum Implementation Triangles



Without the understanding of the teacher, learners find it difficult to acquire knowledge and competence from the classroom relationship, setting and situation. Unfortunately, how motivation is a factor that thwarts teachers understanding of the policies and attendant reforms in the curriculum implementation process.

CONCLUSION

This paper focused on deficit factors in the implementation of educational policies and curriculum reforms in Bayelsa state. The central theme is on those factors that impinge on the teachers who implement the educational reforms associated with the curriculum based on the policy. Inconsistencies in education policies framework abound, socio-economic and environmental exclusion, deceit, hypocrisy and wastages are all elements of corruption and

they impact negatively on teachers welfare, teachers engagement in policies, and reforms; teachers understanding of what the policies and reforms entail in educational sector in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Sustainable educational policies and curriculum reforms must factor in all teachers variables, curriculum factors and the learners' elements. All these constitute integrated approach to the achievement of educational development that does not exclude the teachers welfare factors in policy formation, implementation and curriculum reforms.

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