

Quality Curriculum Implementation Strategies for Lecturers and Students Amidst the Rising Insecurity and Economic Hardship

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Abstract

This paper examined quality curriculum implementation strategies for lecturers and students amidst the rising insecurity and economic hardship in Nigeria. It is therefore important to note that the implementation of quality curriculum in higher institutions in Nigeria is faced with numerous challenges, exacerbated by rising insecurity and economic hardship. This study explores the impact of these challenges on lecturers and students, and identifies effective strategies to navigate them. Despite efforts to improve curriculum quality, insecurity and economic hardship hinder effective implementation, leading to compromised academic standards and student outcomes as evident in the produce of our schools. This research therefore provides insights into the experiences of lecturers and students, highlighting innovative approaches to mitigate these challenges. Key strategies include collaborative learning, technology-enhanced instruction, and community engagement. This write - up however identified significant challenges which includes: insecurity: frequent campus attacks, kidnappings, and violence disrupting academic activities; economic hardship: inadequate funding, high costs of living, and poverty affecting lecturer and student well-being; poor infrastructure: inadequate classrooms, libraries, and technology hindering effective teaching and learning. Despite these challenges, innovative strategies emerged which includes collaborative learning: peer-to-peer learning, group projects, and community engagement fostering academic resilience; technology-enhanced instruction: online resources, digital tools, and blended learning improving accessibility and engagement; community engagement: partnerships with local organizations, industry collaborations, and outreach programs promoting relevance and application. Recommendations include: institutional support for lecturer training and student welfare; investment in technology and infrastructure; community partnerships and outreach programmes and policy reforms addressing insecurity and economic hardship.

Keywords: Curriculum Implementation, Economic hardship, Quality, Insecurity

Introduction

Quality curriculum implementation in Nigeria's higher education sector is vital for ensuring academic excellence and producing graduates equipped to meet the demands of a dynamic job market. This process requires a comprehensive approach that involves stakeholders' collaboration, continuous improvement, and adaptability to contemporary educational challenges. Notably, the foundation of quality curriculum implementation no doubt lies in robust curriculum development. In Nigeria, this process often involves collaboration among educators, industry experts, and policy makers to ensure relevance to societal needs and market demands (Obi, 2017). The integration of national educational standards, such as the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2013), and global best practices is essential to foster competitive and responsive programmes.

There is no gainsaying that implementation of curriculum in Nigeria's higher educational institutions faces significant challenges due to rising insecurity and economic hardship. These issues not only affect the quality of education but also the accessibility and relevance of academic programmes to the current socio - economic landscape. As Nigeria grapples with persistent violence, economic instability, and a high unemployment rate, it is crucial to understand how these factors impact positively or otherwise to curriculum implementation. The rising insecurity, manifested through terrorism, banditry, and communal conflicts, has created a perilous environment for educational institutions in Nigeria.

This insecurity disrupts academic activities, leading to the closure of schools and often times displacement of students and staff (Umar, 2020). Simultaneously, economic hardships hinder both lecturers and students, limiting resources and motivation. Addressing these issues requires a concerted effort from the government, institutions, and communities to ensure a safe and supportive environment for educators and students alike. Arising from this, the study under investigation has become essential at no other time than now to examine challenges in quality curriculum implementation: strategies for lecturers and students amidst rising insecurity and economic hardship.

Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Higher Education

Curriculum implementation unlike other concepts in education has been subjected to diverse connotations by different scholars. Kelly (2004) define the term "curriculum implementation as the process of translating curriculum design into practice". Fullan (2007) on his part argues that implementation is the process of putting innovations into practice." In essence, curriculum implementation refers to the process of translating curriculum plans, designs, and intentions into actual teaching and learning practices in educational settings. Mkpa and Izuagba (2009) went further to define curriculum implementation as the actual engagement of the learners with the planned learning opportunities. This means that curriculum implementation is that stage of the curriculum process where the learner through the guide of

a teacher interacts with learning activities so as to maximize learning as will be noticed in the learners new behaviour/new approach to issues.

On the other hand, Quality curriculum implementation refers to the effective and efficient translation of curriculum plans into practice, ensuring that teaching and learning processes achieve desired learning outcomes. For any curriculum which has been implemented at any level of education to be adjudged as qualitative, the following indicators must be present. Clear curriculum goals and objectives, well-defined assessment and evaluation processes, effective teacher training and support, adequate resources and infrastructure and lastly continuous monitoring and improvement. Quality curriculum which is said to be implemented will be characterized by:

- (i) Alignment: Curriculum aligns with educational goals, standards, and policies, (ii) Coherence: Logical and consistent structure, sequencing, and pacing,
- (ii) Relevance: Curriculum connects to real-world contexts and student interests, (iv) Rigor: Challenging and engaging learning experiences and
- (v) Flexibility: Adaptability to diverse learner needs and interests.

Curriculum implementation passes through the following stages as planning, design, development, dissemination, adoption and evaluation respectively (Bara'u & Uyagu, 2019). In all of these, it is the teacher that executes these curriculum activities/curriculum actions/documents and so the teacher and the curriculum move side by side. This implies that one cannot discuss elaborately on curriculum without the mention of the teacher who is the curriculum implementer. As a curriculum implementer it means that the teacher is the one who brings the curriculum documents to limelight and to reality.

Strategies for Effective Curriculum Implementation

To navigate these challenges, Nigerian higher education institutions can adopt several strategies:

1. **Community Engagement:** Institutions should collaborate with local communities and industries to design curricula that reflect local needs and economic opportunities (Nwosu, 2021). This approach can enhance the relevance of education and promote local development.
2. **Flexible Learning Models:** Implementing blended learning and online education can help mitigate disruptions caused by insecurity. Such models offer students the flexibility to continue their education even in challenging circumstances (Akanbi, 2020).
3. **Strengthening Support Systems:** Providing mental health support and counseling services can help students cope with the trauma of insecurity and economic hardship, thereby improving their academic performance (Ibrahim, 2021).

4. **Government and Institutional Support:** Increased government funding and policies aimed at reducing educational costs can alleviate some economic pressures. Additionally, institutions can seek partnerships with NGOs and private sectors to enhance resource availability (Adeyemi, 2020).

Insecurity and Its Impact on Education

The issue of rising insecurity in the Country is manifested through terrorism, banditry, and communal conflicts, has created a perilous environment for educational institutions in Nigeria. This insecurity disrupts academic activities, leading to the closure of schools and displacement of students and faculty (Umar, 2020). According to Adesoji (2019), such disruptions have profound implications for curriculum delivery, as they limit access to education and create an atmosphere of fear that inhibits learning. The kidnapping case of Chibok girls in Borno state in 2014 where Leah Sharibu is still been held till date cannot be forgotten so soon in a hurry. Institutions may struggle to implement curricula effectively when students are unable to attend classes regularly, and faculty members face safety concerns. Furthermore, the fear of violence can result in reduced enrolment, particularly in regions most affected by insecurity. This decline in student numbers can hinder the financial viability of institutions and limit their capacity to deliver quality education (Ibrahim, 2021). As a result, the intended learning outcomes of curricula may not be achieved, exacerbating educational inequities and leaving graduates ill-prepared for the workforce.

Relevance of Curriculum in the period of Economic Hardship

Economic hardship in Nigeria is characterized by high inflation rates, unemployment, and poverty, with significant influences on curriculum implementation. With many families struggling to afford basic needs, the cost of higher education thus becomes a barrier for prospective students (Adeyemi, 2020). This economic strain leads to decreased enrolment and retention rates, challenging institutions to maintain a diverse and capable student body. Moreover, the economic context necessitates a re-evaluation of curricula to ensure they align with market needs. Many graduates therefore are faced with difficulties of finding employment, prompting a call for curricula that emphasize practical skills and entrepreneurship (Odukoya, 2021). Institutions on their part must re-direct their programmes to include relevant skills training and experiential learning opportunities to prepare students for the job market effectively. However, the economic challenges faced by institutions, including limited funding and resources, can hinder these necessary adaptations. Recently, the issue of power failure cum arbitrary electricity bills have become a dilemma for institutions of higher learning to attempt to key into the entrepreneurship skill programme of the government to achieve that part of secondary school goal of self - reliance.

Challenges faced by Lecturers and Students in the implementation of Curriculum amidst Rising Insecurities and Economic Hardships in Nigeria

In recent years, it is not out of place to identify that Nigeria is faced with escalating insecurity and economic hardships that significantly impact the educational landscape. Lecturers and students in higher educational institutions encounter numerous challenges in effectively implementing curricula under these conditions. The interplay of violence, instability, and economic pressures complicates their roles and responsibilities, ultimately affecting educational quality and student outcomes.

A. Challenges by the Lecturers in the Implementation of Curriculum

1. Impact of Insecurity: Rising insecurity, characterized by terrorism, banditry, and communal violence, poses significant threats to the safety and well-being of lecturers and students alike. Many institutions have experienced closures due to violent attacks, resulting in disrupted academic calendars and lost instructional time (Umar, 2020). Lecturers often find themselves in precarious situations, forced to adapt their teaching methods to accommodate fluctuating student attendance and engagement (Adesoji, 2019). Additionally, the pervasive atmosphere of fear can lead to reduced morale among educators. The anxiety related to personal safety can hinder their ability to deliver effective instruction and engage with students (Ibrahim, 2021). In some cases, lecturers may be compelled to relocate or abandon their roles altogether, further exacerbating the shortage of qualified educators in affected areas (Akanbi, 2020).

2. Economic Hardships: Economic difficulties also significantly impact curriculum implementation. High inflation rates and rising costs of living create financial strain for both lecturers and students. Many educators struggle with inadequate salaries that do not keep pace with inflation, leading to diminished motivation and job satisfaction (Adeyemi, 2020). This financial pressure can result in reduced commitment to curricular innovation and professional development, limiting lecturers' ability to stay current with educational trends and methodologies. Moreover, students facing economic hardship may prioritize work over education, impacting their engagement and performance. This situation places additional stress on lecturers, who must find ways to motivate and support students who are struggling to balance academic and financial responsibilities (Odukoya, 2021). The need for practical, relevant curricula becomes even more pressing in an environment where students seek immediate employability after graduation.

3. Resource Constraints: The challenges of implementing curriculum are further exacerbated by resource constraints. Many Nigerian higher education institutions operate with limited funding, affecting their ability to provide necessary teaching materials, technology, and infrastructure (Afolabi, 2019). Lecturers often have to rely on outdated resources or improvisation to deliver their courses effectively, which can hinder the quality of education (Nwadiani, 2020). The lack of adequate support and facilities can discourage lecturers from

fully engaging in curriculum delivery, as they may feel ill-equipped to meet the learning needs of their students. Furthermore, the economic situation can limit opportunities for professional development, leaving educators without access to training that could enhance their teaching skills and curriculum implementation strategies (Akanbi & Afolabi, 2020).

5. **Resistance to Change:** In light of ongoing challenges, many lecturers may resist adopting new teaching methods or curricular innovations. This resistance can stem from a lack of confidence in their ability to implement new strategies effectively amid insecurity and economic pressures (Ibrahim, 2021). Furthermore, the fear of backlash or additional burdens can inhibit the willingness to experiment with innovative practices that might enhance learning outcomes.

B. Challenges faced by Students in the Implementation of Curriculum

1. **Insecurity and Its Effects on Access to Education:** The surge in insecurity across Nigeria, driven by terrorism, banditry, and inter-communal violence, has created a volatile environment for students. Many educational institutions have faced closures or interruptions due to attacks, particularly in regions like the North-east and Northwest (Umar, 2020). This instability has led to increased drop-out rates, as students may feel unsafe attending classes, resulting in a loss of critical learning opportunities (Adesoji, 2019).

Additionally, the fear of violence can deter prospective students from enrolling in institutions located in high-risk areas. This not only limits educational access but also contributes to educational inequities, as marginalized groups are disproportionately affected (Ibrahim, 2021). The psychological toll of insecurity can further hinder students' ability to focus on their studies, leading to poor academic performance (Akanbi, 2020).

2. **Economic Hardships and Financial Barriers:** Nigeria's economic challenges, characterized by high inflation and unemployment rates, significantly affect students' ability to implement their curricula effectively. Many families struggle to afford tuition fees and other educational expenses, leading to increased financial pressure on students (Adeyemi, 2020). As a result, students often resort to part-time work to support themselves, which can detract from their academic focus and performance (Odukoya, 2021). The rising costs of living also mean that students must navigate financial hardships while trying to complete their education. Limited access to scholarships and financial aid further compounds these challenges, as many students are unable to find the necessary support to continue their studies (Nwadiani, 2020). This financial strain can lead to increased stress and anxiety, further impacting students' overall well-being and academic outcomes.

3. **Resource Constraints:** Insecurity and economic difficulties have led to significant resource constraints within educational institutions. Many schools and universities struggle with inadequate infrastructure, lack of learning materials, and limited access to technology (Afolabi, 2019). Students in poorly resourced institutions may find it challenging to engage

with the curriculum effectively, as they lack the tools necessary for a quality education. Moreover, the closure of institutions due to security concerns can result in a reliance on outdated teaching methods and materials, limiting students' exposure to current knowledge and skills (Adesoji, 2019). In such environments, students may feel unprepared for the workforce, contributing to feelings of frustration and helplessness regarding their future.

4. Reduced Engagement and Motivation: The cumulative effects of insecurity and economic hardship can lead to reduced engagement and motivation among students. When faced with constant instability and financial pressures, many students may struggle to maintain their academic commitment (Ibrahim, 2021). The need to balance work, study, and safety concerns can create overwhelming stress, making it difficult for students to fully participate in their educational experiences.

Additionally, the disconnect between the curriculum and students' immediate realities such as the need for practical skills relevant to the job market—can further diminish motivation. Students may perceive their education as irrelevant in the face of widespread unemployment and economic instability, leading to disengagement from their studies (Odukoya, 2021).

The Way Forward

The challenges posed by rising insecurities and economic hardships in Nigeria have severely impacted the implementation of quality curricula in higher education. To ensure effective curriculum delivery, it is essential to undertake the followings both as lecturers and students aimed at overcoming these obstacles.

- 1. Enhanced Safety Measures:** To address the issues of insecurity, higher education institutions must prioritize the safety of both students and lecturers. This can be achieved by establishing robust security protocols, collaborating with local law enforcement, and implementing surveillance systems (Adesoji, 2019). Creating safe learning environments will encourage attendance and participation, ultimately improving curriculum delivery.
- 2. Prioritise Infrastructure Development:** Investing in infrastructure is critical. Institutions should seek partnerships with government and private sectors to improve facilities, such as libraries, laboratories, and digital resources. Adequate infrastructure will not only enhance the learning experience but also provide lecturers with the tools necessary for effective curriculum implementation (Afolabi, 2019).
- 3. Continuous Training and Capacity Building:** Regular professional development programs are essential for equipping lecturers with the latest pedagogical strategies and curricular innovations. Institutions should prioritize training that focuses on online teaching methodologies, curriculum design, and student engagement techniques

(Ibrahim, 2021). This continuous learning can enhance lecturers' effectiveness and improve the overall quality of education.

4. **Peer Collaboration and Support Networks:** Encouraging collaboration among faculty members through peer support networks can foster a culture of sharing best practices and resources. Faculty can learn from one another's experiences in dealing with the challenges of insecurity and economic hardship, leading to improved teaching strategies and curricular delivery (Akanbi and Afolabi, 2020).
5. **Advocacy for Policy Support:** Institutions must advocate for policies that address educational funding, security, and economic stability. By engaging with policymakers, educators can contribute to discussions that prioritize the needs of higher education in Nigeria, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively to support quality curriculum implementation (Adeyemi, 2020).

Conclusion

The interplay between rising insecurity and economic hardship poses significant challenges to curriculum implementation in Nigeria's higher education sector. In an attempt to therefore address the challenges of quality curriculum implementation amidst rising insecurities and economic hardships in Nigeria, the use of multifaceted approach is thus required. By enhancing institutional support, providing financial assistance, promoting professional development for lecturers, fostering community engagement, and prioritizing student well-being, Nigerian higher education institutions can create an environment that supports effective learning and teaching. These strategies will not only improve curriculum delivery but also empower students and lecturers to navigate and thrive in the face of adversity.

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