

Effective Implementation of Basic School Curriculum: The Role of Teacher-Motivational Factors

¹Grace O. Edu, Ph.D
drgraceedu65@gmail.com

¹Ademola Sanda
ademolasanda@gmail.com
¹Department of Curriculum and Teaching
University of Calabar, Calabar



Abstract

Over time, the public has had an outcry over the state of learners' performances apportioning blame on various stakeholders, especially the teacher. The teacher has been blamed for ineffectiveness in the implementation of the school curriculum. Looking at the work of the teacher, he/she is seen juggling through series of tedious complex activities in a bid to making the realization of educational goals through the implementation of the curriculum. However, teacher motivation, which is one of the most important factors in the effective implementation of the curriculum, remains somehow without much emphasis in societal and polity discourse. Rather, the teacher is faced with motivation-based challenges that tend to impinge on the effective implementation of the curriculum. Thus, this paper has identified outstanding teacher motivational challenges as well as suggested various ways for motivating teachers if the curriculum must be effectively implemented.

Keywords: implementation, basic, curriculum, motivational, factors

Introduction

Researches have been conducted on what effective teaching is and who an effective teacher is. Most of these researches have been centered on improving academic achievements through diverse strategies including enlarging governmental funding, equipping of schools with facilities and infrastructures as well as measures for supervision. However, teacher motivation, which is one of the most important factors in the effective implementation of the curriculum, remains somehow without much emphasis in literature discourse. Rather, the teacher is faced with motivation-based challenges that tend to impinge on the effective implementation of the curriculum.

Teachers are known to be implementers of the curriculum of the nation. Thus, their importance cannot be overemphasized. The teacher is the end user, the interpreter and implementer of the curriculum. The teacher remains a very important resource for effective implementation and realization of the educational policies and objectives at the classroom level. Omojuwa (2007) maintained that it is the teacher who ultimately interprets and implements the policy as represented in the school curriculum, which is designed to actualize educational goals. The obvious implication of this situation is the fact that the quality of a nation's education can only be as high as the quality of its teachers. No matter how much the curriculum captures the aspirations of the society, it takes good implementation processes for the attainment of its goals. These implementation processes involve the teacher in totality. Thus, for the curriculum to be effectively implemented, the teacher must be well prepared, equipped and motivated for the job. The lack of attendance of stakeholders to the motivation concerns of teachers cannot but cause continuous set back as far as the effective implementation of the curriculum is in question.

Teaching is a complex job with lots of accompanying tasking teacher-related activities pulled together for the attainment of certain goals. A teacher is expected to juggle through these activities effectively and produce needed results. Effective teaching can therefore be evident in the learning outcomes of the learners. Over time, the public has had an outcry over the state of learners' performances apportioning blame on various stakeholders, especially the teacher. The teacher has been blamed for ineffectiveness in the implementation of the school curriculum.

Curriculum implementation, according to Badiako (2019), refers to the translation of planned and officially designed course of study by the teacher into syllabuses, schemes of work and lessons for delivery to the learners. This process is to bring into existence an anticipated change in the learners. The curriculum, as it were, is a document that shows a selection and organization of learning experiences, subject matter and other activities to enable learners attain stated goals of the teaching process. The curriculum suggests the methods and ways of providing these experiences and evaluating learning outcomes. Thus, the curriculum is the road map for both teachers and learners towards academic success. It shows an outline where a teacher needs to go and how to get there with the learners, serves as a reference material that sets the teacher on the right track and makes sure that students progress from one level to another. The curriculum standardizes learning goals for all learners and ensures certification on graduation. It is also a means of updating the needs of the learners and the society by emphasizing skills that are needed by the society at any point in time. Through the curriculum, learners' knowledge on how to exist and contribute meaningfully to the world is enhanced. In achieving all of these benefits of the curriculum, the teacher is a star

factor. The place of teacher-motivation is therefore very important for effectiveness in the implementation of this all-important document of education.

Motivation is a theoretical construct used to explain behaviour. It gives the reason for people's actions, desires and needs. Motivation directs behaviour. That is, it causes a person to be willing to repeat an action or refuse to. The benefits of motivation to a worker are enormous. Motivation, which brings about commitment to doing something, leads to an increase in the urge to put in one's best into an activity consequent on the satisfaction derived from a successful accomplishment. As a result, motivation can lead to better output, tone down the rate of non-involvement in an activity, and make for good interpersonal relationship among establishments' staff as well as good reputation for the job. Consequently, motivated workers can often put into the job, the best of their efforts and so deliver far more than is expected of them. These explain the necessity for basic schools in Nigeria to have well motivated teachers if the well-planned curriculum is to be effectively implemented. Thus, this paper sets out to examine the effective implementation of Basic School curriculum in Nigeria with particular interest on the role of teacher-motivation factors.

Curriculum implementation: the place of the teacher

At the curriculum implementation level, the teacher is obligated to effectively help bring the learners into contact with learning experiences which are bound to lead to the attainment of educational goals. Thus, the position of the teacher towards the effective implementation of the curriculum is of utmost importance. According to Meire (2018):

The teacher holds the key to the curriculum process. Using a wide variety of techniques, teachers encourage learning by delivering content in creative and impactful way, hold group instructions, individualize attention ... using a global lens and methods that provide teachers with avenues for success in the curriculum process. (par. 1, lines 7-14).

Curriculum implementation, according to Badiako (2019), "is the actual engagement of learners with planned learning opportunities" (p.257). Offorma (1994) described curriculum implementation "as the stage in the midst of learning activities, teachers and learners are involved in negotiations aimed at promoting learning" (p.38). Also, Onyemerekaya (2001) refers to curriculum implementation as "the actual use of the curriculum plan or document in the classroom" (p.5). Based on the various definitions stated, it means that curriculum implementation is the processing or executing stage of a planned curriculum, which falls directly in the hands of the implementers, the classroom teachers.

The teacher is involved in series of activities in the quest for the attainment of the goals of the teaching/learning process. These activities range from planning for instruction to actual teaching, relating with the learner as well as evaluating learning outcomes, receiving and giving feedback, and above all, adopting appropriate teaching methods and materials to guide the students' learning. Teachers take responsibility for the teaching/learning process. Specifically, the teacher juggles through the following activities:

Planning for teaching: The teacher is responsible for interpreting the curriculum in its entirety. From the curriculum, the teacher identifies the syllabus, draws the scheme of work from which lesson plans are drawn and lesson notes prepared. This requires tedious efforts on the part of the teacher involving lots of researches and preparation of instructional materials.

Teaching: It is the place of the teacher to breakdown and translate each learning unit of the curriculum in concrete terms for actual teaching. This the teacher does by setting behavioural objectives and teaching priorities; strategizing and using appropriate teaching strategies; ensuring effective classroom management to avoid disruptive behaviours; maximize learning, organizing teaching/learning resources and managing the available and limited time allocated for the teaching/learning process.

Evaluating learning outcomes/feedback: The teacher gets involved in filling of weekly records, assessing the students using various tools; giving them feedback and getting feedback from them as well as ensuring that the feedback is used for restructuring the teaching process for better achievement of the goals of the teaching/learning process.

Further, for effective curriculum implementation, the teacher gets involved in activities such as:

- Organizing himself personally. For instance, staying on track with day-to-day schedule, managing records and lots of paper work and the time allotted to the teaching period.
- As limited as their budgets are, teachers need quite a lot of teaching aids, which they, most times, creatively and resourcefully improvise.
- Teachers are busy communicating with all stakeholders in the education of the pupils (parents, administration, fellow teachers, students and even the community).
- The teacher is also obligated to interact positively with the pupils, motivating them towards effective learning.
- Teachers are also involved in solving conflicts between students, counselling them individually and in groups, with the aim of creating conducive environments for effective learning to take place.

- They are involved in attending meetings that would put measures in place towards the realization of the goal of the teaching/learning process.

When a teacher is seen fulfilling these listed roles enthusiastically, the pupils may also tend to become active participants in the teaching/learning process, which may give rise to better understanding of the curriculum. Teachers are also involved in more work than can possibly be accommodated within the official hours. Outside of the official hours, teachers need much more grace to be able to attend to their personal needs. Juggling through these tasks successfully needs a motivated teacher, who through internal and external motivation is passionate for the job. All these activities are quite tasking. Consequently, the teacher needs more than just training for the job to be effective. Good motivational measures need to be put in place to prompt them to give in their best in the job. These measures may be based on a sound knowledge of motivation using motivational theories as framework.

How motivation works

A good understanding of how motivation works can be gotten from the various theories of motivation. This paper would examine two theories of motivation and a model. These are:

Theory of scientific management by Taylor: Taylor, in the theory of Scientific Management is of the proposition that workers are motivated mainly by pay. This theory propounded in 1909, posits that workers hate work generally and so should be supervised very closely; managers should break work into smaller tasks; appropriate training and tools for work should be given to workers so they can be efficient on the task; and that workers should be paid commensurate with the amount of work accomplished within a specific period of time (**Taylor, 1911**). Taylor believes that these would motivate workers to work hard and maximize productivity (Carlson, 1997).

Consequently, the essence of teacher motivation is to encourage the highest level of efficiency on the teaching job. Based on this theory, if teachers are expressly given their units of job, provided with required tools and materials for the job and given adequate and appropriate remuneration for the kind of work they do, then effectiveness in the performance of their job can be expected.

Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of needs theory: Maslow's theory focused on psychological needs of workers. The theory, which was propounded in 1943, comprised five hierarchical levels of needs starting with the physiological needs, then the safety needs, social needs, esteem needs and finally, the self-actualization needs. The proposition is that only once a lower-level need is fully met, would a worker be

motivated by having the opportunity of having the next need up in the hierarchy satisfied (McLeod, 2018).

To this end, teachers should be offered different forms of incentive in order to have each need fulfilled and progressively arrive at the level of self-actualization. Motivation embraces all factors in a teacher's development to accomplish personal as well as organizational goals. There are very many forms of incentives that can possibly appeal to different teachers at different times. These can be in the form of monetary value, a promotion for higher level of work, an award, a training, involvement in decision making as well as a commendation (Ivtzan, Gardner, Sokhon & Hart, 2013). All these can be utilized as motivational strategies for teachers at different levels of their career.

According to Peretomode (2003) motivation is the process of influencing or stimulating a person to take action that will accomplish desired goals. Thus, teachers' motivation is a way of empowering them in the occupation. It involves the perceptions, variables, methods, strategies and activities used by the management for the purpose of providing a climate that is conducive to the satisfaction of the various needs of the employees, so that they may become satisfied, dedicated and effective in performing their task. In education, if teachers are well motivated, their resolve for productivity, effectiveness and dedication in carrying out their work will increase. This is the beginning of quality assurance in education and effective delivery of instruction in the educational system. Consequently, the achievement of educational objectives would be enhanced.

Hackman and Oldham's job Characteristics Model

Hackman and Oldham's job Characteristics Model, developed in 1976, is based on the belief that a task itself is key to employee motivation. The conception is that a boring job stifles motivation while challenging job enhances motivation. Thus, the three ways to add challenge to a job are variety, autonomy and decision authority (Arches, 1991). For variety to a job, the concept of enrichment and job rotation can be used. Thus, the model argued that it is possible to design jobs that add to employee motivation. To predict job satisfaction for enhanced effectiveness, the model suggested five job characteristics that can be studied. These are:

- Skill variety where the number of skills and talents the job requires of a person as well as the nature of the skills are identified.
- Identification of the task where the worker is made aware of what is expected of him/her in the job indicating its beginning and the end.
- The significance of the task. Identifying the impact of the job to individuals as well as the society.

- Level of autonomy which enables the worker to schedule work and freedom to identify how to do the job.
- Job feedback where the worker is kept on the know about his/her performance on the job and is made aware of their performances whether good or poor (Betts, 2000).

In relevance to effective implementation of basic school curriculum, the model gives a clue for how the teaching job could possibly be designed to arouse motivation of teachers and job satisfaction and subsequent effectiveness. Teachers are already trained. Thus, they have acquired a good number of skills required for the job. There is need for them to be given tasks that are in line with their training. Based on the five job characteristics, teachers may likely feel motivated when they are given opportunity to get involved in the curriculum development process, are allowed an air of autonomy and a feeling of importance, then they would be motivated to get the teaching job done effectively.

Motivation-based challenges in curriculum implementation in Nigeria

There are series of motivation-based challenges hindering effective curriculum implementation in Nigeria. These include:

- Low and irregular payments of remuneration: Money helps stimulate job efforts. It is instrumental in achieving workers' needs and in obtaining higher order needs such as recognition, buying of goods and services like clothing, food and others (Mohamed & El-Jaja, 2019). However, teachers' remuneration tends to be very low compared to the tasking activities involved in the day-by-day jobs they are involved in. This serves as a source of discouragement. Teachers are consequently involved in several other activities that give them more and consistent funds at the detriment of the teaching job which ought to be their primary assignment.
- Lack of involvement in decision making: However, in the Nigerian educational system, the teacher is just an employee that does the will of the employer. They are deprived involvement at several levels beginning with designing the curriculum to its organization and the way it should be implemented. The autonomy is not there at all. This could serve as a serious inhibition to the effective implementation of the curriculum.
- Giving tasks outside of their area of training: Some Nigerian teachers are given subjects outside their area of training to teach without any exposure to retraining. This makes the job very difficult for them to handle. Consequently, some teachers skip topics resulting in inadequate and ineffective handling of the curriculum. This is far demeaning of the teaching profession.
- Lack of adequate provision of facilities and tools for the job: There is inadequacy of facilities and infrastructures for effective teaching. Teachers need

resources and tools as requirement for success in implementing the curriculum. These tools are not always available in the quantity sufficient for teacher effectiveness.

- **Stringent and unnecessary supervisory measures:** Supervision has as its major aim, improvement of teaching and learning. It ensures that standards set by the supervisory Ministry are adhered to. Through supervision, teachers' job performance is enhanced and monitored, and constructive corrective measures effected for improvement. Importance of supervision notwithstanding, there ought to be rules to adhere to without really subjecting teachers to undue pressures. From experience, supervisors are seen as authoritarians that scare teachers, tell them what to do and/or condemn their practices without recourse to their efforts. Consequently, teachers become resistant to such supervision and so, resistant to change in instructional innovations that would have enhanced their effectiveness in curriculum implementation.

- **Irregular promotions and lack of promotion implementations:** Promotions from lower levels to higher levels on the job that go along with a rise in pay, respect and greater opportunities rarely come to teachers as and when due. This deprivation causes them to feel disconnected, uncommitted and so, ineffective (Siburian, 2013).

- **Unconducive work environment.** The environment an individual works in can play a vital role on the level of performance made by that person. Despite this fact, the issue of unconducive learning environment has been worrisome in the educational sector in Nigeria (Ogedi & Obionu, 2017). Teachers are seen in dilapidated and poorly furnished offices, school environment without recreational facilities, shortage of facilities and unhygienic classrooms. This unconducive environment could deter the effectiveness of the teachers in implementing the curriculum.

- **Excessive large class sizes:** Class size refers to an educational tool that can be used to describe the average number of students per class in a school (Adeyemi, 2008). A smaller class size is likely to give a teacher an enhanced opportunity to have one-on-one interactions with the learner, thus, enhancing teachers' effectiveness in implementing the curriculum. However, schools in Nigeria are described as comprising classrooms that are overcrowded with learners, making it difficult for these one-on-one interactions to take place. Consequently, teachers lack the motivation to reach out to learners on individual basis.

- **Lack of in-service training and refresher courses:** In-service training is that which is given to people who are serving in an employment already in order to update or acquire skills that are necessary for effective discharge of their duties in the profession. In-service training can assist classroom teachers to improve on their teaching techniques, become aware of new trends in their area of specialization, handle new instructional materials especially those involving use of new technology and acquire information and skills that are required for effective classroom lesson delivery. It offers employees a boost in morale, improves their skills and gives them a sense of

satisfaction through a feeling that their employers are investing in their work. In-service training also gives the workers a platform for growth and the will for continuous loyalty and commitment without which, they may readily want to leave jobs. However, as important as these programmes are to all stakeholders in an establishment, in Nigeria, in-service training for teachers is rare. This serves as a demotivating factor leading to lack of commitment and brain drain in the educational system.

Teacher-motivation as a tool for enhancing curriculum implementation

There are many areas teachers can be motivated to exert the most of their efforts towards effective implementation of the basic curriculum. The following measures could be exploited as motivational strategies:

- **Providing financial resources:** Salaries which are monies paid to an employee for doing his/her job, should not only be commensurate with the job done but should be paid regularly. Armstrong (2012) observed that money is believed to have a great tendency of bringing out a higher performance in employee when he is adequately paid and that man being an economic being, his/her attitude can be influenced by money. Also, Hardienata and Sunaryo (2009) observed that what the low-income earning teacher yearns is a sizable salary increase that would significantly enhance their commitment and performance. All other financial benefits accruing to the teachers should be paid to them as and when due.

- **Opportunity for growth:** Promotion is a measure that can lead to job satisfaction. The concept of promotion has to do with an upward rise in the hierarchical levels of a job. The movement of teachers from a lower level to another as and when due, can go a long way to motivating them to do better at the implementation of the curriculum. Promotion tends to put a new energy in the individual and activate their knowledge, skills and level of commitment to the job (Swinton, 2010).

- **Providing learning opportunities:** Improving teacher professional development, which is a type of continuous education, helps teachers to improve their skills and in turn, boost students' outcomes. Thus, teachers should be exposed to conferences, courses, seminars, retreats and workshops. These would enlighten the teachers, refresh their professional knowledge and of course, expose them to new trends and techniques for effective teaching. This could be a panacea for effective implementation of the curriculum.

- **Providing support such as expertise, time and teaching/learning resources:** Provision of learning resources and expertise needed for effective implementation of the curriculum is necessary to enhance the job of the teacher. These resources could be in the form of equipping the libraries, laboratories, digital tools and other aids for challenging and engaging learning.

- Participation in decision making: Sarafidou and Chatziioannidis (2013) undertook a study on teacher participation in decision making and its impact on school. The researchers used a survey design and a Likert-type scale assessing 143 teachers working in primary schools. Finding showed that the strongest predictor of both teachers' sense of efficacy and job satisfaction was their participation in decisions concerning teachers' issues. This goes to show the need for educational managements to start promoting all forms of participation in decision making processes. Some level of autonomy should be allowed the teachers to maintain self-confidence and so feel motivated to act effectively towards the attainment of the objectives of the curriculum.
- Facilitating collaboration and networking among teachers: There should be a scheme in place to enhance teachers' collaboration and networking to share ideas.
- Provision of adequate resources and teaching aids: As a matter of priority, management or school administrations should subsidize the cost of procurement of the needed materials for adequate curriculum implementation.
- Providing a system of feedback: Strategizing on how to support the growth and development of teachers is very critical for effective implementation of the basic school curriculum. One of such strategies is through effective feedback for the improvement of instruction. According to Park, Takahashi and White (2014), adequate and appropriate feedback leads to improvements in instruction and students' learning and remains the lever for driving professional growth and improving the likelihood that teachers will persist in their careers.
- Making teachers teach in their area of specialization: Teachers should be scheduled for subjects in their areas of specialization except otherwise, for the sake of professional development. Where there is need for scheduling teachers outside of their areas of specialization, there should be a retraining plan to indulge the teachers into those new areas.

Conclusion

The implementation level of a curriculum is one of the most important aspects of the educational system. For this to be effective, the teacher is one of the most prominent factors. However good a curriculum is, if the teacher is not well motivated to act rightly towards its implementation, the goals of education would be unachieved. Good motivational strategies are needed to trigger the best from teachers as far as the implementation of the basic curriculum is concerned.

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