



SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Peer Reviewed Book Chapter



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CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

By

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Abstract

Curriculum implementation is a decisive stage in the educational process, as it determines how planned educational objectives are translated into actual teaching and learning experiences. In Nigeria, despite continuous curriculum reforms aimed at improving relevance, quality, and national development outcomes, effective implementation remains a major challenge across all levels of schooling. This chapter examines the concept of curriculum and curriculum implementation, with particular emphasis on the Nigerian school system. It identifies and analyzes key challenges militating against effective curriculum implementation, including inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor teacher motivation and welfare, insufficient instructional materials and facilities, overcrowded classrooms, weak supervision and monitoring, frequent policy changes, ineffective school leadership, and adverse socio-economic and environmental factors. The chapter further proposes practical and sustainable solutions to these



challenges, such as increased education funding, recruitment and proper deployment of qualified teachers, continuous professional development, improved supervision, policy stability, and strengthened school leadership. By critically discussing both the challenges and solutions, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of curriculum implementation issues in Nigeria and provides policy-relevant insights for improving teaching and learning outcomes. Ultimately, effective curriculum implementation is presented as a critical pathway to enhancing the quality of education and achieving national development goals in Nigeria.

Keywords: Curriculum, Curriculum implementation, Challenges

1.0 Introduction

Curriculum implementation is a critical component of the educational process, as it translates educational policies and planned curriculum contents into actual classroom practice. In Nigeria, the success of the school system largely depends not only on the design of a sound curriculum but also on how effectively it is implemented at various levels of education. Curriculum implementation involves the interaction of teachers, learners, instructional materials, school administrators, and the wider socio-economic environment in order to achieve stated educational objectives. However, despite several curriculum reforms aimed at improving the quality and relevance of education in Nigeria, the desired outcomes have remained largely unmet due to persistent implementation challenges.

Nigerian schools face numerous obstacles in implementing the curriculum effectively. These challenges include inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor teacher motivation, insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, weak monitoring and supervision, and inconsistencies between curriculum goals and available school facilities. In addition, external factors such as political interference, frequent policy changes, and socio-cultural influences further complicate the curriculum implementation process. As a result, there is often a wide gap between the intended curriculum and what is actually delivered to learners in the classroom.

Given the central role of curriculum implementation in achieving national educational goals, it is imperative to critically examine the challenges confronting Nigerian schools and explore viable solutions. This chapter therefore discusses the major problems affecting curriculum implementation in Nigeria and proposes practical strategies for addressing them. By identifying



sustainable solutions, the chapter seeks to contribute to improving teaching and learning outcomes and ensuring that the Nigerian education system effectively prepares learners for national development and global competitiveness.

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Concept of Curriculum

The curriculum is a comprehensive plan that guides teaching and learning in an educational system. It encompasses all the planned learning experiences, knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and competencies that learners are expected to acquire under the guidance of the school. Curriculum goes beyond the list of subjects offered in schools; it includes learning objectives, content, teaching methods, instructional materials, assessment strategies, and co-curricular activities designed to achieve educational goals. In Nigeria, the curriculum is usually developed by relevant bodies such as the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) in line with national educational philosophy and societal needs. A well-designed curriculum reflects the culture, aspirations, and developmental goals of the society it serves and provides a framework for orderly and purposeful learning (Isife, & Ogakwu, 2016).

Curriculum can be viewed from different perspectives, including the planned (intended) curriculum, the implemented curriculum, and the achieved curriculum. The planned curriculum refers to what policymakers and curriculum developers design, the implemented curriculum refers to what teachers actually teach in the classroom, while the achieved curriculum represents what learners eventually learn. These dimensions show that curriculum is a dynamic and continuous process rather than a static document (Akin-Ibidiran Yemi, Ogunode & Ibidiran John Akinbusoye 2022).

2.2 Concept of Curriculum Implementation

Curriculum implementation refers to the process of putting the planned curriculum into action in the classroom and school environment. It involves translating curriculum objectives and contents into meaningful learning experiences through effective teaching, use of appropriate instructional materials, classroom interaction, and assessment. Curriculum implementation is primarily the responsibility of teachers, but it also requires the support of school administrators, education inspectors, policymakers, parents, and the community. Effective implementation ensures that curriculum goals are achieved and that learners acquire the intended knowledge and skills (Ikechukwu, & George, 2023; Ejike, & Ejike, 2018).

In the Nigerian school system, curriculum implementation is influenced by several factors such as teacher competence, availability of resources, school leadership, class size, time allocation,



supervision, and the broader socio-economic environment. When these factors are favorable, curriculum implementation leads to improved learning outcomes; when they are inadequate, a gap emerges between what the curriculum intends and what is actually taught. Therefore, curriculum implementation is a crucial stage in the educational process, as it determines the success or failure of curriculum reforms and the overall quality of education in Nigeria (Olorundare, 2014; Okorie, 2010)..

3.0 Challenges Militating Against Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Schools

Curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools faces numerous challenges that hinder the effective translation of curriculum objectives into meaningful learning experiences. These challenges are interrelated and cut across human, material, administrative, and socio-economic factors. The major challenges are discussed in detail below.

Inadequate Funding of Education

One of the most significant challenges affecting curriculum implementation in Nigeria is inadequate funding. Insufficient financial resources limit the government's ability to provide essential teaching and learning facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and instructional materials (Ikechukwu, & George, 2023). Poor funding also affects teacher training, supervision, and curriculum support services. When schools lack adequate funds, curriculum contents that require practical activities, experiments, and fieldwork are poorly implemented, leading to theoretical teaching rather than experiential learning (Disciplines.ng 2024).. Inadequate funding remains one of the most fundamental problems confronting curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools. Effective implementation of any curriculum requires substantial financial resources to provide infrastructure, teaching and learning materials, teacher training, supervision, and evaluation. However, budgetary allocation to education in Nigeria has consistently fallen below international benchmarks such as the UNESCO recommendation of 15–20% of national budgets. Poor funding affects the construction and maintenance of classrooms, laboratories, libraries, workshops, and other essential facilities required for effective teaching and learning (Camosun College 2023; Babarinde, 2002). As a result, many schools operate in dilapidated buildings with limited space and poor learning conditions. Curriculum components that emphasize practical activities, experiments, fieldwork, and the use of modern technology are often ignored or poorly taught because schools lack the financial capacity to support them. Inadequate funding also limits the organization of teacher training programmes, curriculum review activities, and effective supervision, thereby widening the gap between the planned curriculum and what is actually implemented in schools (Ogunode Akin-Ibidiran & Ibidiran 2021).



Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Effective curriculum implementation depends largely on the availability of competent and qualified teachers. In many Nigerian schools, there is a shortage of professionally trained teachers, especially in specialized subjects such as science, mathematics, technical and vocational education (Offorma 2014; Offorma, 2005). In some cases, teachers are assigned to teach subjects outside their areas of specialization, resulting in ineffective delivery of curriculum content. This challenge reduces the quality of instruction and prevents learners from achieving the intended learning outcomes. The shortage of qualified and professionally trained teachers poses a serious challenge to curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools (Americal.edu 2024). Teachers are the principal agents of curriculum delivery, and the quality of implementation largely depends on their competence, subject mastery, and pedagogical skills. In many schools, especially in rural and underserved areas, there is an acute shortage of qualified teachers in key subjects such as mathematics, sciences, technical and vocational education, and information and communication technology (ICT). In some cases, unqualified or underqualified teachers are recruited to fill staffing gaps, while qualified teachers are assigned to teach subjects outside their areas of specialization (Akıncı, & Kurt, 2022).. This practice leads to poor interpretation of curriculum objectives, weak instructional delivery, and superficial coverage of curriculum content. Consequently, learners are unable to achieve the expected learning outcomes, and the overall goals of the curriculum are undermined.

Poor Teacher Motivation and Welfare

Poor teacher motivation and welfare significantly hinder effective curriculum implementation in Nigeria. Teachers' commitment to curriculum delivery is influenced by their working conditions, remuneration, job security, and opportunities for career advancement. In Nigeria, many teachers face challenges such as low salaries, delayed payment of wages, irregular promotions, lack of incentives, and poor working environments. These conditions negatively affect teachers' morale and productivity (Ogunode, 2023 et al). Demotivated teachers may show limited interest in lesson preparation, innovation, continuous assessment, and the use of learner-centered teaching methods encouraged by the curriculum. In extreme cases, teachers engage in absenteeism, moonlighting, or withdrawal from the profession altogether. When teachers are poorly motivated, the curriculum, no matter how well designed, cannot be effectively implemented. Low motivation among teachers is a major obstacle to effective curriculum implementation. Issues such as poor remuneration, delayed payment of salaries, lack of incentives (Femi, 2017), limited opportunities for promotion, and poor working conditions negatively affect teachers' commitment and productivity. Demotivated teachers may show little interest in lesson preparation, innovation, and the use of



appropriate teaching methods, thereby undermining the effective implementation of the curriculum (Shittu, & Olorundare, 2025)..

Inadequate Instructional Materials and Facilities

Instructional materials and facilities are essential tools for translating curriculum content into meaningful learning experiences. However, many Nigerian schools lack adequate and up-to-date instructional resources such as textbooks, teaching aids, laboratory equipment, workshops, computers, and internet facilities. Where such materials are available, they are often insufficient for the student population or obsolete and poorly maintained (Sangoleye, Adedapo, & Oloajo, 2022; Samuel, 2021).. This inadequacy forces teachers to rely heavily on verbal explanations and rote teaching methods rather than practical demonstrations and interactive learning activities prescribed by the curriculum. Subjects that require hands-on experiences, such as sciences, technology, and vocational studies, are particularly affected. The absence of appropriate instructional materials limits learners' exposure to real-life applications of knowledge and reduces the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. Many Nigerian schools lack adequate instructional materials such as textbooks, teaching aids, laboratory equipment, workshops, and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities. Where materials are available, they are often outdated or insufficient for the student population. This challenge makes it difficult for teachers to implement the curriculum as designed, especially in subjects that require hands-on learning, practical demonstrations, and the use of modern technology (Ohiare-Udebu, Ogunode, & Sarafadeen, 2021)..

Overcrowded Classrooms and High Student–Teacher Ratio

Overcrowded classrooms and high student–teacher ratios constitute another major problem affecting curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools. Rapid population growth, increased school enrolment, and inadequate expansion of school facilities have resulted in classrooms that accommodate far more students than recommended standards. Large class sizes make effective classroom management difficult and reduce opportunities for individualized instruction, assessment, and feedback (Ohiare-Udebu, Ogunode, & Sarafadeen, n.d.). Teachers are often compelled to adopt lecture-based methods, which contradict the learner-centered and interactive approaches emphasized in modern curricula. Overcrowding also affects classroom interaction, discipline, and the effective use of instructional materials, thereby limiting the successful implementation of the curriculum. Rapid population growth and increased school enrolment have led to overcrowded classrooms in many Nigerian schools. High student–teacher ratios make classroom management difficult and reduce opportunities for individualized instruction, assessment, and feedback. As a result, teachers may resort to lecture methods, which limit learner



participation and affect the effective implementation of learner-centered aspects of the curriculum (Ogunode, & Ohiosumua, 2021).

Inadequate Teacher Training and Professional Development

Continuous teacher training and professional development are critical for effective curriculum implementation, particularly in the face of curriculum reforms and evolving teaching methodologies. In Nigeria, many teachers do not receive adequate pre-service preparation or regular in-service training to equip them with the skills needed to implement new or revised curricula. Lack of workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes results in poor understanding of curriculum objectives, content, teaching strategies, and assessment techniques (.Njoku, & Njoku, n.d.). Teachers may continue to use outdated instructional methods that are inconsistent with curriculum expectations. Without continuous professional development, teachers are ill-equipped to adapt to innovations such as competency-based curricula, ICT integration, and learner-centered pedagogies, thereby weakening curriculum implementation. Continuous training and retraining of teachers are essential for effective curriculum implementation, especially when new curricula or reforms are introduced. In Nigeria, many teachers do not receive adequate orientation, workshops, or in-service training on curriculum changes, modern teaching strategies, and assessment techniques. This lack of professional development results in poor understanding and misinterpretation of curriculum objectives and content (Nwatalari, Onyemaobi, & Odogwu, 2025).

Weak Supervision and Monitoring

Effective supervision and monitoring are essential for ensuring that the curriculum is implemented according to established standards and guidelines. In many Nigerian schools, supervision by education authorities is weak, irregular, and ineffective due to inadequate personnel, poor logistics, and administrative inefficiencies. Weak supervision allows poor teaching practices to persist unchecked and reduces accountability among teachers and school administrators. Without regular monitoring, deviations from curriculum objectives go unnoticed, and feedback mechanisms for improvement are absent (.Nwafor, & Osuji, 2021). . Consequently, the quality of curriculum implementation declines, and learners' academic performance suffers. Effective supervision and monitoring help ensure that the curriculum is implemented according to set standards. However, in many Nigerian schools, supervision by education authorities is irregular and ineffective due to inadequate personnel, poor logistics, and administrative inefficiencies. Weak supervision allows poor teaching practices to persist and reduces accountability in the implementation of the curriculum (Ibrahim, & Gedawa, 2022).



Frequent Changes in Education Policies

Frequent changes in education policies and curriculum reforms pose a serious challenge to effective curriculum implementation in Nigeria. Successive governments often introduce new policies and curricular changes without adequate planning, pilot testing, or stakeholder involvement (Njoku, & Njoku, n.d.). These frequent policy shifts create confusion among teachers and school administrators, disrupt continuity in teaching and learning, and prevent the full implementation of existing curricula before new ones are introduced. Teachers may struggle to adjust to new guidelines, leading to inconsistent implementation and reduced effectiveness of curriculum reforms (Garba, 2004). Frequent changes in education policies and curriculum reforms without adequate planning and stakeholder involvement pose a serious challenge to curriculum implementation. Constant policy shifts create confusion among teachers and school administrators, disrupt continuity, and prevent full implementation of existing curricula before new ones are introduced (Nwatalari, Onyemaobi, & Odogwu, 2025). This instability negatively affects teaching and learning processes. School leadership plays a crucial role in coordinating and supporting curriculum implementation. In some Nigerian schools, ineffective leadership, poor management skills, and lack of instructional supervision by school heads hinder curriculum delivery. When school administrators fail to provide adequate support, motivation, and direction to teachers, the implementation of the curriculum suffers (Asebiomo, 2009; Nwafor, & Osuji, 2021)).

Socio-Economic and Environmental Factors

Socio-economic and environmental factors also play a significant role in hindering curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools. Widespread poverty, child labour, poor parental involvement, and limited access to learning materials negatively affect learners' participation and performance. Many students come to school without basic educational resources or supportive home environments, making it difficult for them to benefit fully from the curriculum. In addition, environmental challenges such as insecurity, conflicts, and natural disasters disrupt school activities in some parts of the country (Adeoye, Aremu, Ehindero, Ajape, Yahaya, & Jolaoye, 2024). School closures, teacher absenteeism, and displacement of learners adversely affect the continuity and effectiveness of curriculum implementation. These factors collectively widen the gap between curriculum intentions and actual learning outcomes. In some cases, the curriculum content does not adequately reflect the realities of the school environment and learners' needs. Curricula that require advanced facilities, technology, or specialized personnel may be difficult to implement in rural or under-resourced schools (Garba, 2004; Ibrahim, & Gedawa, 2022). This mismatch creates a gap between curriculum expectations and actual classroom practice. Socio-economic challenges such as poverty, child labour, insecurity, and poor parental support negatively



affect curriculum implementation. Learners from disadvantaged backgrounds may lack access to basic learning materials and supportive home environments. In addition, insecurity in some parts of Nigeria disrupts school activities, leads to teacher absenteeism, and limits effective teaching and learning. (Abubakar, 2025)

3.1 Solutions to the Problems of Curriculum Implementation in Nigerian Schools

Addressing the challenges militating against effective curriculum implementation in Nigerian schools requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving government, school administrators, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. The following solutions are proposed to enhance effective curriculum implementation.

1. Increased and Sustainable Funding of Education

The government should prioritize education funding by allocating adequate and sustained financial resources to the sector in line with international recommendations. Improved funding will enable the provision of modern classrooms, laboratories, libraries, instructional materials, and ICT facilities. Adequate funding will also support curriculum development activities, teacher training, supervision, and evaluation processes, thereby strengthening curriculum implementation.

2. Recruitment and Deployment of Qualified Teachers

There is a need for the recruitment of adequately trained and professionally qualified teachers across all subject areas, particularly in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and vocational subjects. Proper deployment of teachers based on their areas of specialization should be ensured to enhance effective curriculum delivery. In addition, teacher education institutions should be strengthened to produce competent teachers who can effectively implement the curriculum.

3. Improvement of Teachers' Welfare and Motivation

Improving teachers' welfare is crucial for effective curriculum implementation. This can be achieved through prompt payment of salaries, competitive remuneration, regular promotions, provision of incentives, and improved working conditions. Motivated teachers are more likely to show commitment, creativity, and dedication to curriculum delivery, leading to better learning outcomes.

4. Provision of Adequate Instructional Materials and Facilities

Governments and school proprietors should ensure the provision of adequate and up-to-date instructional materials such as textbooks, teaching aids, laboratory equipment, workshops, and



ICT tools. Regular maintenance of school facilities should also be encouraged. Availability of appropriate learning resources will enable teachers to implement the curriculum as designed and promote practical, learner-centered teaching.

5. Reduction of Class Size and Improved Teacher–Student Ratio

Efforts should be made to reduce overcrowding in classrooms by constructing additional classrooms and recruiting more teachers. Implementing recommended teacher–student ratios will improve classroom management, enhance learner participation, and allow for individualized instruction and assessment, thereby improving curriculum implementation.

6. Continuous Teacher Training and Professional Development

Regular in-service training, workshops, seminars, and orientation programmes should be organized for teachers to update their knowledge and skills, especially when new curricula are introduced. Continuous professional development will enhance teachers' understanding of curriculum objectives, teaching methods, and assessment strategies, leading to more effective curriculum implementation.

7. Strengthening Supervision and Monitoring Mechanisms

Education authorities should strengthen supervision and monitoring systems to ensure effective curriculum implementation. Adequate numbers of trained supervisors should be employed, and necessary logistics provided to enable regular school inspection. Effective supervision will promote accountability, improve teaching standards, and ensure adherence to curriculum guidelines.

8. Policy Stability and Stakeholder Involvement

Education policies and curriculum reforms should be stable, well-planned, and based on thorough needs assessment. Relevant stakeholders, including teachers, school administrators, parents, and education experts, should be actively involved in curriculum planning and implementation processes. Policy stability will ensure continuity and allow adequate time for effective curriculum implementation.

9. Effective School Leadership and Administration

School heads should be trained in educational leadership and management to enable them to provide effective instructional supervision and support for teachers. Strong school leadership will foster a conducive learning environment, encourage teamwork, and ensure coordinated implementation of the curriculum.



10. Addressing Socio-Economic and Environmental Challenges

Governments and communities should work together to address socio-economic challenges such as poverty, insecurity, and poor parental involvement. Programmes that support learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, improve school safety, and enhance community participation in education will contribute positively to curriculum implementation.

4.0 Conclusion

Curriculum implementation is a vital process that determines the extent to which educational goals are achieved in Nigerian schools. Despite the existence of well-designed curricula, numerous challenges such as inadequate funding, shortage of qualified teachers, poor motivation, lack of instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, weak supervision, and unstable education policies have hindered effective implementation. This paper has examined these challenges and proposed practical solutions aimed at strengthening curriculum implementation in Nigeria.

Effective implementation of the curriculum requires collective commitment from all stakeholders, including government, school administrators, teachers, parents, and the wider society. By providing adequate resources, improving teacher quality and welfare, ensuring policy stability, and strengthening school leadership and supervision, Nigerian schools can achieve meaningful teaching and learning outcomes. Ultimately, improving curriculum implementation will enhance the quality of education, promote national development, and equip learners with the knowledge and skills needed to function effectively in a rapidly changing global environment.

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Concluding Synthesis

This edited volume, *Sustainable Education in Africa*, presents a robust and multidimensional exploration of the evolving dynamics shaping educational systems across Nigeria and the broader African context. The contributions collectively interrogate critical issues such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence in educational planning, gender inclusivity, economic constraints, institutional effectiveness, and the intersection of education with national development priorities.

A synthesis of the chapters reveals that sustainable education in Africa is inherently complex and requires an integrated, systems-oriented approach. While technological advancements offer transformative potential for improving educational access, quality, and administration, their successful implementation is dependent on enabling environments characterized by adequate infrastructure, policy coherence, and human capacity development.

Furthermore, the persistence of structural barriers—including underfunding, inequality, insecurity, and governance challenges—continues to impede progress. The contributors consistently emphasize that achieving sustainability in education necessitates deliberate, inclusive, and context-sensitive policy interventions that address both systemic inefficiencies and emerging global trends.

Importantly, this volume reinforces the position of education as a strategic instrument for sustainable development, aligning with global development priorities while responding to local realities. The insights generated herein contribute meaningfully to scholarly discourse and provide actionable knowledge for stakeholders across the education sector.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the collective contributions of this volume, several practical implications emerge for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners:

- **Policy and Governance:** Governments should prioritize coherent and forward-looking educational policies that integrate technology, inclusivity, and sustainability into national development agendas.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** There is a critical need for sustained investment in digital infrastructure, learning facilities, and instructional resources to support modern educational delivery systems.
- **Capacity Building:** Continuous professional development for educators and administrators is essential, particularly in the areas of digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and innovative pedagogy.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Educational interventions must intentionally address gender disparities, socio-economic inequalities, and access challenges affecting marginalized populations.
- **Research and Innovation:** Institutions should foster a culture of research and innovation to generate context-relevant solutions and inform evidence-based practices.
- **Collaboration:** Stronger partnerships among governments, private sector actors, development agencies, and academic institutions are necessary to drive sustainable educational transformation.

Editors' Note

The editors of this volume express profound appreciation to all contributing authors for their scholarly rigor, intellectual depth, and commitment to advancing knowledge in the field of education. The diversity of perspectives represented in this work reflects the complexity of educational challenges and opportunities within Africa.

We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional supporters whose efforts ensured the academic quality and integrity of this publication.

This volume is conceived not only as a scholarly resource but also as a catalyst for dialogue, policy reform, and practical innovation. It is our expectation that the ideas presented herein will inspire further research and contribute to the ongoing transformation of education systems across the continent.