

Re-Engineering Curriculum Studies Towards Lifelong Learning and Life Long Skills for National Development in Nigeria

Victor Ojorka Akor, PhD

Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education, Rivers State University,
Nkpolu-Port Harcourt

&

Chidindu Lucky Akajiri

Department of Educational Foundations,
Faculty of Education, Rivers State University,
Nkpolu-Port Harcourt

Abstract

The paper examined re-engineering curriculum studies towards lifelong learning and lifelong skills for national development in Nigeria. The concept of curriculum and curriculum studies, lifelong learning, lifelong skills and national development were discussed. The various types of lifelong skills and soft skills were highlighted, steps to develop lifelong learning enumerated, how to maximize curriculum studies for national development was discussed. Also, the strategies for the re-engineering process of curriculum studies for national development were highlighted as well as the position of learning experience in lifelong learning and lifelong skills. Again, some indicators of national development were mentioned alongside the problems. It was then concluded that the process of development through curriculum studies for teacher trainees should be adequate and global in its construction. The following suggestions were given that learner centred approach is needed to achieve best results possible. Practical experience should be given priority in curriculum construction and leaders in the nation should be exemplary for younger people to emulate.

Keyword: Curriculum studies, lifelong learning, lifelong skills and national development

Introduction

Lifelong learning could be perceived as an educational engagement that one gets involved in throughout life. This may mean an educational process that unfolds where one idea links to another, a concept connects a new one and the linkage continues. It is such a process that the finding on a problem leads the researcher or student to identifying an or newer idea (s) that may be deeper or not but the ideas having integration with one another and capped with the intention of proffering solution to a prevailing problem area in the society. Kalz (2015) sees lifelong learning as a process that engenders education for life. This means that a person gets in contact with a learning process and decides to probe into it further daily for life or where learning one thing leads to another learning process and it continues for as long as the researcher continues. Furthermore, it is said to have both formal and informal arrangements embedded in it.

Cheary (2022) perceives that lifelong learning is a type of education that is wide in scope than what goes on in the classroom. By inference, lifelong learning should pass as any change in behaviour resulting from continuous ideation on issues, the ability to transfer knowledge in one area to solving problems in another area among others. It could also be depicted by apprenticeship practice, all tilted towards enhancing the livelihood of the people and society. The practice of lifelong learning invariably develops in the learner the ability of lifelong learning but based on the idea that learning is continuous. Thus, lifelong learning is not restricted to formal education or classroom learning alone but knowledge that could be gained and skills acquired through the process of lifelong learning. Skills You Need (SYN, 2022) says that lifelong learning is in pursuit of the building and improvement of self towards acceptable outlook on life both in the perspectives of personal and professional development. This conveys that lifelong learning has two major benefits:

1. To develop self
2. To develop profession

However, it must be made clear from the foregoing, that lifelong learning is both voluntary and deliberate. This by extension has the capacity in helping people develop potentials originally known to them, improve their quality of life and that of society, hence the place of skills. A skill could be described as the ability to show dexterity in managing a problem or dealing with a situation or capacity to do something well. According to Careers (2020), skills spans from the capacity to do something well through expertise. Skill is said to grow through experience. Skills do not happen to people but they are consciously, voluntary and deliberately developed or cultivated in people who want the said skills. For Rick (2018) skill is an ability to carry-out defined activities to a high proficient degree. Like an earlier assertion, skills are developed through dedication and utmost commitment based on practice. It then means that skill is developed from knowledge, right attitude and regular practice. This shows that skills can only be developed with the three domains of learning fully engaged (cognitive, affective and psychomotor). It further could mean that skills could be categorized into practical, academic or personal. However, the modern society seem to be yearning for more of two of the three categorization than the other one, that is, practical and personal skill than academic skill, even though it is clear that academic skills is a necessity and an enhancer of the other two sets of skills. However, Careers (2020) has said that the two most valuable skills in recent times are the practical and personal skills, that is, going by the domains of learning; the affective and the psychomotor domains seemed to be much more priced nowadays, than knowledge or cognitive but permit me to say that the previous skills categories would remain crude and unembellished without knowledge. Be that as it may, experts in curriculum studies are now calling for an inclusion of skills in all educational programmes, a situation which may not be, unconnected with the place of curriculum studies in any educational process and lifelong learning which would amount to nothing if the intent is not for the acquisition and utilization of skills; in pursuit of solving the problems facing the society.

Curriculum studies is a study that is aimed at how educational contents, methods, strategies are transmitted from one generation to the next with the intent of making the preceding learner and society better than the previous one. According to Onwuka (2002) it is a course of studies for every teacher-in-training in order to be able to transfer the culture of his people to the next generation. This the curriculum does with the concept of social reality in mind. In other words, curriculum studies, helps education and its adherents to serve the social needs of the people and that of the society in which they live. So, if curriculum studies could be adequately described in this matter, it could then be conceived as the palm oil with which roasted yam (culture) is made to pass through the throat (society). Therefore, the development and betterment of our society (Nigeria) is hanging on curriculum studies, its practice and process that is geared towards making the society better than the previous one. Thus, according to Ihenacho and Osunji (2009) the curriculum studies practice and process should endeavor to delineate adequately how the Nigerian educational system would provide skills in its curriculum, make it conspicuous that both the teachers and others would also know there are roles to play not just the role of the teacher implementing the curriculum but beyond teaching to helping to show that what is taught is relevant to life and living for them in the society. Hence, this study is aimed at addressing this need of reengineering curriculum studies towards lifelong learning and lifelong skills for national development in Nigeria.

Concept of Curriculum and Curriculum Studies

Curriculum is a tool used in helping people to do self-discovery through the development of self for a better self and a better society. It means that the curriculum could be viewed as an instrument for bringing about change in the behaviour of a learner for self-advancement and societal development. The curriculum is thus, an object used in brushing crudeness out from a person to leave such refined and the society a better environment to live in (Akor, 2021). According to Esu (2010) the curriculum serves as the bridge between the society and the school. Therefore, it connotes that advancement seemingly lies in the much content that the curriculum would provide and how much the learner is able to gain from what the school is able to provide through the transfer of knowledge to those who are ready and willing to change their quality of life and that of the society. Again, it conveys that the curriculum has the capacity to change the ideas and beliefs of a people to something better at any given time so long as they are able to give themselves to it. Offorma (2002) sees the curriculum as all the planned and unplanned learning experiences that the learner is exposed to by the school. The curriculum in this guise has different perspectives to it, in consideration of the unplanned aspect that forms the curriculum (hidden curriculum). This is why Igbokwe (2009) stated that there are four major aspects of the curriculum to include planned curriculum, hidden curriculum, attained curriculum and implemented curriculum. Therefore, based on the foregoing, the hidden curriculum comes to light when the unplanned curriculum displays itself. They are curriculum intents shared by the school workers and the school environment that holds lots of learning for the learners without a formally organized learning process provided

and researchers have even confirmed that the hidden curriculum at times stays longer with the learners than the planned curriculum does.

Nonetheless, it is clear to all that the various aspects of the curriculum cannot stand alone apart/away from the school working with them. Hence, it is the responsibility of the school to ensure that the content of the curriculum reaches its final consumer (the learner and the society) and this it does with the help of the teacher. So, going by the definition by Esu (2010) where the school is seen as the end of the bridge, in real terms, the teacher (curriculum worker) is the one standing at the other end of the bridge because he/she is the one that ensures that the ideas taught manifests in the people and society. Therefore, it is imperative that there be continuous training of new teachers to take over from the aging ones, hence, the concept of curriculum studies. Although, curriculum studies is an act of being groomed in the process of working with the curriculum but Onwuka (2002) has said it is a course that teacher trainees must go through in their schooling life and in fact it is so important that almost at every level, there is a study to do on it. Also, this is important as long as the curriculum is known to help the teachers describe and analyze teaching relative to how and what the learner learns being vital to him and the society in which he lives. This conception shows that one of the essence of curriculum studies is to capture social realities in relation to learning, thus, leading to the sprouting of the idea of continuous learning, one learning leading to another learning or lifelong learning.

Concept of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning is a conception of continuous learning that is necessitated by knowledge, habit and creativity. It is a type of learning that could be associated to mean without borders or restrictions. This seems to indicate a learning approach for self-development, professional development, and skills acquisition for self-improvement and societal advancement. Valamis Learning Solution (VLS, 2022) sees lifelong learning as an educational engagement that takes place outside an educational establishment yet not restricted to informal learning alone. This shows that lifelong learning ensures to strike a balance between formal and informal learning patterns and also to close the gap between them in that learning takes place at all times no matter what the learner is engaged in doing, if trading, teaching, practicing medicine or working in the laboratory, library, doing laundry e.t.c. So, there is no exception as to the right place where learning could be assumed to take place better.

According to an assertion by Drew (2022) lifelong learning is very important in that as the world changes rapidly, there is need also for up-skilling in the various areas of life in order not to be left behind. This is hinged on some of the ideas of the proponents of lifelong learning like Basil and Yeaxlee (1992) ten reasons for Lifelong Learning to take place:

1. Encouraging full functionality of individuals and society
2. Charting purpose and path in life

3. Driven by passion and life satisfaction
4. Encourages employability and higher levels of employability
5. Economic enhancement
6. Leadership growth
7. Transferability
8. Development of social awareness and change in perspective
9. Practicability
10. Staying alive for longer

It would be good to have a highlight of few of these

1. Life-long learning encourages functionality the in day to day life of people and the society. A person who is given to learning is definitely going to function better in this noisy world in that he could easily carve a niche for self and function more to become self-reliant in it and by his work the society becomes a better place to live.
2. Economic enhancement has some connection with the extent of learning that an individual has at times such that technological change is connected to extent of learning and in this age of World Wide Web, this also determines people's economic power.
3. Employability is also hanging on the extent of learning and skills acquired by a person and people. Those who go to school to gain knowledge and acquire skills they may need for job entry would always need new facts and principles known to remain and grow in the job, proficiency in skills learned which is associated with lifelong learning is vital too, thus, to remain employable and deployable at all times lifelong learning is imperative (Vander-Ark, 2017).

There exist several types of lifelong learning that people could choose from and they are:

1. Formal Learning: This occurs in schools and institutes where people take courses. It follows a predetermined time frame for learners and colleagues.
2. Self-Directed: This is common with people who desire to take control of their own pace and path in life. They do not need to be regulated on what they should learn or should not learn, they just spend time studying in their areas of passion e.g. studying online courses.
3. Professionalization: This is tilted towards professional advancement after a regulated learning season. The aim is to develop the individuals to become masters in their chosen fields.
4. Indirectly: This happens at times without the knowledge of the learner. It could be part of a person's daily work activities and it eventually develops the person more. Others are personal, Information etc (Vender-Ark).

Life- long learning perhaps could occur based on or through the following means

1. Learning new skills
2. Joining a club

3. Downloading educational podcasts
4. Keeping reflective journal
5. Use of meta-cognitive strategies, that is, reflecting on a thinking, ideas etc (Drew, 2022)

Maximizing Curriculum Studies for Lifelong Learning Towards National Development

1. Encourage the learning process for education for life
2. Encourage non-vocational educational practice
3. Begin with a situation at hand not the named subject
4. Build on the learners experiences
5. Use changes to build focus on a new education
6. Utilize the new idea to develop new learning paths. Innovate for the people and the society (Smith, 2021)

These can only be attained if there is regular practice leading to mastery; an avenue for skills development.

Concept of Life Long Skills

Skills could be conceived as peculiar types of ability applied by a person in carrying out a role function. IGI (2022) posits that skills are special competencies that are utilized in specific areas to solve determined problems. It is an indication that skills are unique performance competencies possessed by people in order to effectively and/or efficiently play a role or carry out a responsibility. Skills are further said to be time, energy or both bound. Also, skills are said to be domain-general and domain specific. This means that for one to perform adequately and acceptably in a particular area, there are general assignments demand of such, however, there are certain job roles that demand specific abilities that general knowledge and skills or attitudes would not allow someone to perform well with. Thus, skills are said to be based on dexterity, physical abilities and intelligence.

Based on the position of (CG, 2021) skills are developed over time from life and work or practice experience in life, a situation that depicts that learning experience is very crucial in skills development. Therefore, from the idea of general and specific domain skills, it could be inferred that some skills are meant to be needed for life, then the idea of lifelong skills while others may serve for a time.

Here are examples of skills according to (CG, 2021) which come in the dimension for life: Job skills, leadership skills, organizational skills, life skills while others are specific to individuals based on their roles in an organization. Life skills are important for everybody no matter your role and responsibility or career path. Some of its features are: cooperation, curiosity, perseverance, communication, adaptability, studying, organizing, creativity etc. Doyle (2022) described most of these skills mentioned above as soft skills or interpersonal skills. It includes communication, listening, time management, empathy and other skills. They are said to be skills that employers would need. Thus, they belong to the lifelong skills that anybody would need at any point in time.

Lifelong skills could be seen as those skills that a person would require for the whole of his or her working life in order to remain relevant in the work place. Again, lifelong skills demand constant improvement to be able to stand the test of time. Therefore, it is a function of lifelong learning, again, a characteristic of life experience and work. Lifelong learning precedes lifelong skills. It is vital, as it keeps body and mind in shape, it enriches life, builds profession etc.

Crocket (2020) says that lifelong skills are beneficial in the following areas:

- a. Creativity
- b. Problem solving
- c. Critical thinking
- d. Leadership
- e. Communication
- f. Collaboration
- g. Information management
- h. Adaptability
- i. Curiosity and
- j. Reflection

So, it is vital to reiterates that the place of learning experience and practice plays a major role in lifelong skills development, thus, the curriculum has a lot to do with how and the extent of lifelong skills to develop.

Concept of National Development

National development is better described than defined. It is a situation where people in a given society are able to afford an averagely acceptable living standard such that everyone or almost everyone is engaged in one role or the other that satisfy the needs of the society. Bawa (2022) sees national development as a process where every sector of the national economy and stay of the nation is growing. The implication is that national development is indicated by the capacity of the citizens, knowledge and skills that are visible and useable in the society. UNESCO (2020) describes national development as growth in addition to change. Thus, it is quantitative and qualitative in that there is always a physical representation of the unobservable changes by the observable changes that could be seen.

Some Indicators of National Development

1. Planning of the national economy
2. Utilization of industry to drive development
3. Higher output in agricultural productivity
4. Human capital development
5. Use of science and technology to enhance life and living etc.

Nonetheless, the United Nations stated the following problems as challenges to national development

1. Unpredictable economic growth and poor standard of living

2. Full scale unemployment
3. High population growth rate
4. Drudgery in change process
5. Poor leadership process
6. Poor philosophy of life
7. Poor quality of life

Re-Engineering Curriculum Studies for Life Long Learning and Life Long Skills for National Development

The steps enumerated below would help in the development process

1. Discourage knowledge fragmentation but encourage knowledge integration.
2. There should be regular proper situation analysis on learning and skills suitable for the nation and populace in line with global perception.
3. Contextualize the education and training to be given to groups in line with available local human and material resources.
4. Arrange a sequential translation process from where they are to where they should be placed according to their skill level.
5. Ensure that learning produces skill difference in-between in the building process from those who are participating and those who are not.
6. Expose the learners to creative thinking but they should function independently in order to determine individual level of learning and skills development.
7. Put up an adequate feedback mechanism for proper evaluation of the process and practice.

The Position of Learning Experience as a Curriculum Tool for Life Long Learning and Life Long Skills for National Development

Learning experience is like a prerequisite idea on a new knowledge or skill that is about to be taught. According to Offoma (2002) learning experience is the activities the learner engages in at a time of learning. The level of learning experience a learner possesses determines his/her level of participation in the learning process. The level of participation of a learner determines how much learning such would gain from a learning process, so what the learner does determines the actual level of skills he lives and leaves with, so the dexterity of skills possessed by a learner is determined by the extent of involvement in the learning process, thus, it is the duty of curriculum studies to teach the teacher trainee to develop adequate learning in the learner by allowing them full participation in the learning process. Therefore, it is expected that curriculum studies in every dimension should depict learner centered learning process, hence, curriculum studies has dual roles to play here: equipped the teacher trainees for themselves and also for their future learners because people become what they do and could lead others in the same direction after learning enough. Therefore, the curriculum required to perform these roles must:

- i. Be valid
- ii. Be comprehensive
- iii. Encourage variety
- iv. Capture the interest of the learner
- v. Be within the learning competence of the learners.

Moreso, it should be learner centered, bearing the following characteristics:

- i. Full participation of all learners
- ii. Encourage interaction among learners
- iii. Promote skills development
- iv. Permit use of own-initiative
- v. Discourage rote learning (Mkpa, 2009). These features when conscientiously built into the would develop a citizenship that stands tall anywhere in the world, showing what the learner can contribute to national development.

Strategies to Use Curriculum Studies through Lifelong Learning and Life Long Skills for National Development

The following steps would help in use of curriculum to solving problems associated with national development

1. Development of learners to appreciate their environment and its endowment (Amadioha & Akor, 2020).
2. Use of research and research findings in solving the problems of the society.
3. Encouragement of social solidarity through the spirit of belongingness and ownership (Adiele 2019).
4. Transmission of practical knowledge and skills that are adoptable/adaptable as well as utilizable
5. Implementation of curriculum in line with market demand and needs.
6. Encourage the school-industry partnership that is regulated and adequately supervised (Kalie, 2018).
7. The curriculum should encourage apprenticeship opportunities for individuals who have entrepreneurship inclination.

Conclusion

Lifelong learning cannot be overemphasized as it leads to lifelong skills development which are acquired from experiences and practice, thus, the curriculum needs reengineering regularly in order to be in tune with current lifelong skills development pace that every individual in Nigeria needs in order to be a contributing and functional member of the Nigerian nation. However, the process must begin from the training procedures of the people (learners) who are expected to drive national development through their curriculum development and implementation practice in order to build a nation that is desired by all. While curriculum designers should display global intention in the curriculum construction process of the curriculum for use.

Suggestions

The following are the suggestions supporting this study:

1. Curriculum studies students should be open to learner entered procedures that they may be exposed to in order to develop themselves for their future work life.
2. Curriculum designers should put practical experience to share equal time frame for learning with theoretical learning.
3. The custodians of national leadership should model the kind of life they desire, not what is convenient in order to make curriculum implementation easy for those involved.
4. Every citizen should be encouraged to share in training for national development through any avenue set up by the government.
5. The institution saddled with the production of curriculum studies experts should go beyond what they could find around to building global mind set in their trainees.

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