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## **Curriculum Management in Nigerian Secondary School for Sustainable Development: Challenges and Opportunities**

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### **Abstract**

*Curriculum management in Nigerian Secondary schools is pivotal for advancing sustainable development goals (SDGs). Effective curriculum management encompasses the design, implementation, and periodic review of educational programmes to ensure they meet current and future needs. Despite significant efforts, numerous challenges persist, including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and outdated educational policies. Addressing these issues presents opportunities for reform, such as integrating modern pedagogical approaches and aligning curricula with global sustainability standards. By focusing on these areas, Nigerian secondary schools can enhance educational quality and better contribute to sustainable development. This theoretical explores the complexities of curriculum management in the context of Nigerian secondary education, highlighting both the obstacles and potential solutions for fostering a more Robust and responsive educational system.*

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**Keywords:** Curriculum implementation, Curriculum management, Curriculum review, Education opportunities, Education policy, Education reform, Equality education, Sustainable development.

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### **Introduction**

Nigeria's education sector, particularly the secondary school level, is critical to the nation's socio-economic development. The effectiveness of this sector is largely dependent on the strength and adaptability of its curriculum management processes. Effective curriculum management ensures that educational programs are not only comprehensive but also aligned with both national and global development goals (Ogunyemi, 2015). In recent years, the global agenda has increasingly emphasized sustainable development, as exemplified by the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals underscore the need for educational reforms that are both sustainable and adaptable to evolving global needs within this context, Okebukola, (2009) claim that the Nigerian secondary school curriculum must be meticulously managed and continuously reviewed to ensure it contributes to sustainable national development. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a universal

framework for addressing global challenges, including those related to education. SDG 4, which according to United Nations (2015), focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and emphasises the critical role of education in achieving sustainable development. Adebayo, (2019) is of the opinion that in Nigeria, where educational disparities and systemic challenges persist, aligning Secondary school curricula with the objectives of SDG 4 presents both significant challenges and potential opportunities. A curriculum managed with an emphasis on sustainable development principles can empower students with the knowledge, skills, and values necessary to contribute effectively to both national and global progress (Obanya, 2007). The paper seeks to explore the complex dynamics of curriculum management in Nigerian secondary schools, focusing particularly on how it can be leveraged to achieve sustainable development goals. By examining the challenges inherent in the current system and identifying potential opportunities for reform, this paper aims to provide a comprehensive analysis that can inform policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders. Through a detailed examination of curriculum management practices, educational policies, and the broader socio-political context, the paper offers insights into how Nigeria's secondary education system can be better aligned with sustainable development objectives.

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### **Curriculum Management in Nigeria**

Curriculum management involves the systematic planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of educational programmes to ensure that learning objectives are achieved. It encompasses a range of activities, including curriculum design, content selection, instructional strategies, and assessment methods. In the context of secondary education, curriculum management is crucial for providing students with a well-rounded education that prepares them for higher education and the life of work. Effective curriculum management, according to Ajayi (2018), requires collaboration among various stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, administrators, and the community. It is not merely about the content taught in schools but also about how that content is delivered and assessed to meet the educational needs of students. In Nigeria, the complexity of curriculum management is heightened by the country's diverse socio-cultural landscape and the need to address both national development goals and global education standards.

The history of curriculum development in Nigeria is closely tied to the country's colonial past as posited by Fafunwa (2004) and subsequent efforts to reform its educational system to better meet local needs. The post-colonial era saw significant educational reforms aimed at

decolonizing the curriculum and aligning it with Nigeria's socio-economic realities. One of the major shifts, according to Nwagwu (2007) was the introduction of 6 years of primary education, 3years of junior secondary, 3years of senior secondary and 4years of tertiary education (6-3-3-4).

The 6-3-3-4 system of education, was designed to provide a more balanced and functional education that would produce graduates equipped with the skills necessary for national development. In spite, of this, Okebukola (2011) opined that the implementation of these reforms has faced numerous challenges, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a lack of trained personnel. Despite these challenges, Adewale (2013) maintain that there have been ongoing efforts to review and update the curriculum to make it more relevant and responsive to the changing needs of society. The current focus on integrating sustainable development goals into the curriculum represents the latest phase in this ongoing process of curriculum reform.

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### **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Nigerian Education.**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are seventeen shared blueprints for peace and prosperity for people on the planets now and into the future. It represents a global commitment to addressing some of the most pressing challenges facing humanity, including poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. United Nations (2015) singles out Education as central to achieving these goals, as it provides individuals with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to make informed decisions and contribute to society. Sustainable development goal 4 (SDG4) in particular, emphasizes the need for inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.

For us in Nigeria, achieving the targets set under the SDG 4, according to Amadi (2017), presents significant challenges, particularly in the areas of access to equity in and quality of education. The country's education system is characterised by significant disparities, with rural areas and marginalized groups often having limited access to quality education (Odukoya, 2016). Additionally, the quality of education is often compromised by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and poorly trained teachers (Okebukola, 2011).

Integrating the principles of sustainable development into the secondary school curriculum is essential for achieving the objectives of the SDG 4 in Nigeria. This requires a holistic approach to curriculum design, where sustainability is not treated as a standalone subject but is integrated

across all areas of learning. For instance, environmental education can be embedded into science curricula, while social studies can focus on issues of equity and justice.

Several initiatives have been undertaken to promote the integration of SDGs into the Nigerian curriculum. These, as listed by Obanya, (2004) include the development of new teaching materials that emphasize sustainability, the training of teachers in SDG-related content, and the incorporation of global citizenship education into the curriculum. However, the success of these initiatives, according to Olorube (2012), depends on the ability of schools to implement them effectively, which in turn requires adequate support from government and other stakeholders.

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### **Challenges in Curriculum Management for Sustainable Development**

The challenges in curriculum management for sustainable development include:

#### **1. Policy and Governance Issues**

One of the major challenges in curriculum management for sustainable development in Nigeria is the inconsistency in education policy formulation and implementation. Education policies in Nigeria are often influenced by political considerations rather than educational needs, leading to frequent changes in policy direction that disrupt curriculum implementation. Moreover, there is often a gap between policy formulation at the Federal level and implementation at the State and Local levels, resulting in inconsistencies in curriculum delivery across the country (Okojie, 2011). Political instability and corruption further exacerbate these challenges. The frequent changes in government often lead to changes in education policies, with each new administration seeking to implement its own agenda without regard for continuity or long-term planning (Odukoya, 2016). Corruption in the education sector also diverts resources away from essential areas such as curriculum development and teacher training, further undermining the quality of education.

#### **2. Resource Constraints**

The effective management of the curriculum is also hampered by resource constraints, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a lack of teaching materials (Ekundayo, 2010). Many schools in Nigeria, particularly in rural areas, for Nwaka (2015), lack basic facilities such as classrooms, laboratories, and libraries, which are essential for effective teaching and learning. Additionally, the shortage of textbooks and

other teaching materials makes it difficult for teachers to deliver the curriculum effectively (Ajayi, 2018).

Funding for education in Nigeria is also inadequate, with the country consistently falling short of the UNESCO-recommended benchmark of allocating 15-20% of its national budget to education. This lack of funding affects all aspects of education, including curriculum development, teacher training, and the provision of learning materials (Adeyemi & Adu, 2012). Without sufficient resources, it is challenging to implement a curriculum that meets the demands of sustainable development.

### **3. Teacher Training and Professional Development**

Ololube (2009) posits that another significant challenge in curriculum management for sustainable development is the inadequate training and professional development of teachers. Many teachers in Nigeria lack the necessary training to deliver a curriculum that is aligned with the principles of sustainable development. Aina (2013) agreeably expresses that this is particularly true in subjects such as science and social studies, where teachers need to be well-versed in issues related to sustainability. Corroborating, Ogunyemi (2015) opines that continuous professional development is also lacking, with many teachers not receiving regular updates on new teaching methods or curriculum changes. This lack of ongoing training, in the view of Babalola, (2015), means that teachers are often ill-prepared to implement new curriculum initiatives or to integrate sustainability into their teaching. Addressing this challenge requires a significant investment in teacher training and professional development programmes, as well as a commitment to ensuring that all teachers have access to the resources and support they need to succeed.

### **4. Socio-cultural Barriers**

Socio-cultural factors also play a significant role in shaping curriculum management in Nigeria. Traditional beliefs and practices as exposed by Obanya (2014) can sometimes conflict with the principles of sustainable development, making it difficult to implement certain aspects of the curriculum. For example, in some regions, cultural norms regarding gender roles may hinder efforts to promote gender equality in education. Similarly, Dada (2004) maintains that religious beliefs can sometimes clash with scientific concepts, making it challenging to teach subjects such as evolution or climate change. Additionally, Nigeria's diverse cultural landscape means that there are

significant regional differences in how the curriculum is delivered and received. What works in one part of the country may not be effective in another, and this diversity needs to be taken into account in curriculum planning and implementation. Overcoming these socio-cultural barriers requires a nuanced approach that respects local traditions while also promoting the values of sustainability and global citizenship.

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## **Opportunities for Curriculum Management Reform**

Despite the challenges, there are significant opportunities for reforming curriculum management in Nigeria to better align with the goals of sustainable development.

### **1. Policy Reforms for Sustainable Education**

One of the key areas for reform for Edukugho (2012), is in education policy-making. To be effective, education policies need to be based on sound research and must be designed to be flexible enough to adapt to changing circumstances. This requires a commitment to evidence-based policy-making, as well as greater collaboration between policymakers, educators, and other stakeholders (Nwagwu, 2007). Fostering inter-sectoral collaboration is also essential for effective curriculum management. The involvement of various sectors, including health, agriculture, and environment, can help to create a more integrated and holistic curriculum that addresses all aspects of sustainable development. Additionally, partnerships with the private sector can provide valuable resources and expertise to support curriculum development and implementation (Obanya, 2004).

### **2. Enhancing Teacher Capacity**

Investing in teacher training and professional development is another critical area for reform. Teachers are at the forefront of curriculum delivery, and their ability to effectively implement the curriculum is essential for achieving sustainable development goals (Ololube, 2009). To enhance teacher capacity building, there need to be a greater focus on training programmes that emphasise sustainability and the use of technological and innovative teaching methods. This according to Ayayi (2018), includes training teachers in the use of Information Communication Technology tools which can help to make learning more engaging and relevant to students' lives.

Additionally, Ogunyemi (2015) maintains that there should be a greater emphasis on continuous professional development, with regular opportunities for teachers to update

their skills and knowledge. Providing teachers with the resources and support they need to succeed will not only improve the quality of education but also help to ensure that students are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to contribute to sustainable development.

### **3. Community and Stakeholder Involvement**

A key opportunity for reform in curriculum management in Nigeria lies in enhancing community and stakeholder involvement. Education, particularly in the context of sustainable development, is a shared responsibility that extends beyond the classroom. Community engagement, in Ofoegbu (2009), ensures that the curriculum reflects local needs and values while promoting a sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders. Similarly, Olowu (2012) opines that by involving parents, community leaders, and local organisations in the curriculum development process, schools can foster a more inclusive and responsive education system.

### **4. Public- Private Partnerships (PPPs)**

Public- private partnerships (PPPs) also present significant opportunities for advancing curriculum management. Public- Private Partnerships can provide the financial resources, expertise, and innovative approaches needed to overcome many of the challenges facing Nigeria's education system (Babatunde, 2014). For example, private companies can collaborate with schools to develop and implement curriculum content that is aligned with industry needs, thereby ensuring that students are equipped with the skills required in the job market (Olaniyan & Okemakinde, 2008).

### **5. Leveraging Technology for Curriculum Implementation**

The integration of technology into education offers another promising avenue for curriculum reform. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance teaching and learning (Ololube, 2006). E-learning platforms, digital resources, and interactive tools can make the curriculum more accessible and engaging, particularly in under-resourced schools (Jegade, 2015). Moreover, technology according to Agyeman (2016) can facilitate the delivery of curriculum content that is aligned with sustainable development goals, such as environmental education and global citizenship.

The effective use of technology however in education requires significant investment in infrastructure, training, and support. Many schools in Nigeria still lack the basic ICT infrastructure needed to implement technology-enhanced learning, and teachers often lack the skills and confidence to use these tools effectively (Olaniyi, 2020). Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort by the government, private sector, and international partners to ensure that all students have access to quality education in a digital age.

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### **Curriculum Review and Development for Quality Education**

Curriculum review is an essential process for ensuring that educational programmes remain relevant, effective, and aligned with current educational goals and societal needs. A robust curriculum review process involves regular assessment and updating of curriculum content, instructional methods, and assessment strategies. This process should be guided by several key principles, including relevance, coherence, and flexibility. Relevance refers to the need for the curriculum to address the current and future needs of students and society. This includes ensuring that the curriculum is aligned with national development goals, as well as global objectives such as the SDGs. Coherence involves ensuring that the different elements of the curriculum are logically connected and support each other, creating a unified and comprehensive educational experience. Flexibility, also refers to the ability of the curriculum to adapt to changing circumstances and to accommodate diverse learner needs.

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### **Best Practices in Curriculum Development**

Drawing on best practices from other countries can provide valuable insights for improving curriculum management in Nigeria. For example, Sahlberg (2011), expressed that countries like Finland and Singapore have implemented highly effective curriculum reforms that have significantly improved educational outcomes. These reforms, according to Darling–Hammond (2017), often involve a strong emphasis on teacher professional development, student-centered learning, and the integration of technology into the curriculum. In addition to learning from international best practices, it is of necessarily important to consider the unique context and challenges peculiar to and confronting Nigeria. These include addressing issues such as cultural diversity, regional disparities, and socio-economic inequalities. A contextualised approach to curriculum development ensures that educational programmes are not only effective but also equitable and inclusive.



## **Conclusion**

The paper conclusively opined that Curriculum management in Nigerian secondary schools is a complex and dynamic process that plays a crucial role in shaping the quality of education and the achievement of sustainable development goals. This article has highlighted the challenges and opportunities associated with curriculum management, including issues related to policy and governance, resource constraints, teacher training, and socio-cultural barriers. Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities for reform, particularly in the areas of policy-making, teacher capacity building, community involvement, and the integration of technology.

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## **Suggestions**

The paper after due conceptual review suggest the need to:

1.     Develop Evidence-Based Education Policies: Policymakers should priorities the creation of education and policies grounded in empirical research to ensure they are effective and responsive. Policies need to be flexible and adaptable to accommodate changing educational needs and contexts.
2.     Foster Inter-Sectoral Collaboration: Strengthening collaboration among different sectors such as health, agricultural, and environmental is essential for creating a comprehensive curriculum. Additionally, promoting public-private partnerships can provide valuable support for curriculum development and implementation.
3.     Enhance Teacher Capacity: Continuous professional development is crucial for teachers to stay updated with innovative teaching methods and Information Communication Technology. Investing in these areas will improve instructional quality and better equip teachers to implement the curriculum effectively.
4.     Involve Communities and Stakeholders: Schools should actively engage parents, community leaders, and local organisations in the curriculum development process. This involvement ensures that educational programmes are tailored to local needs and contexts, making them more relevant and effective.
6.     Examine Curriculum Reforms: Future studies should focus on evaluating the impact of specific curriculum reforms on student outcomes. This research will help in understanding which reforms are most effective and how they can be improved.

7. Evaluate Teacher Training Programmes: It is important to assess the effectiveness of professional development programs for teachers. Research should explore how these programmes can be enhanced to better support curriculum implementation and overall educational quality.
8. Explore the Role of Technology: Research should investigate how technology can be used to enhance curriculum delivery and engage students more effectively. Identifying best practices for integrating technology into the curriculum will help in improving its use.
9. Investigate Socio-Cultural Factors: Future research should examine how socio-cultural factors influence curriculum implementation. Developing strategies to address these factors will promote a more inclusive and equitable education system.

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