

Factors Hindering Effective Curriculum Performance and National Educational Goals in Nigeria (2015-2027) Political Era

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Abstract

This article explores the factors hindering effective curriculum performance in achieving the national goal of education in Nigeria with reference to 2015-2027 Political Era. The main argument of the study is that despite Nigeria's ambitious national goal of education aimed at empowering Nigerian citizens to their full potential to promote a strong democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation through series of educational reforms by successive governments, the aforementioned expectations still look like a mirage after five decades. Through a qualitative research methodology utilizing literature-based contents review, documents analysis and case study approaches, the study identifies key areas of obstacles which includes; lack of government political will, inadequate funding, insufficient teacher training, unstable and inconsistency curriculum implementation challenges—continue to impede the progress. The article concludes with actionable recommendations underscoring the urgent need for resilience political will of the government to enhance resource allocation, community engagement and appointment of professional manpower to improve the sector. The uniqueness of this research lies not only in the development of a framework for curriculum optimization in Nigeria, which delineates strategic pathways for aligning educational practices with national aspirations. Nor its contribution to enrich the existing literature and broader discourse on educational reforms, but also serves as a pragmatic guide for current stakeholders aiming to elevate the efficacy of Nigeria's educational system in alignment with its overarching goals.

Keywords: Curriculum, Curriculum Performance, National Policy on Education, Nigeria's National Goal of Education, Educational Reforms.

Introduction

Education is a fundamental pillar for human and community development, fostering innovation, and enhancing the socioeconomic fabric of any nation. In Nigeria, "the National Policy on Education first introduced in 1977, with revisions made in 1981, 1998, 2004, 2007 and 2013 articulates an ambitious vision aimed at utilizing education as a tool for producing citizens equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge, and values to contribute to national growth and development" (Abdussalam, A.G.E., 2020, P .5). However, the educational curriculum in Nigeria was largely Eurocentric, neglecting indigenous knowledge systems and cultural contexts been the solid bedrock for achieving the goal of education prior to independent. Although the September, 1969 National Curriculum Conference (NCC) held in Lagos leading to the introduction of the National Policy on Education in 1977 marked a

significant shift towards a more inclusive and contextually relevant curriculum, subsequent revisions have often been reactive rather than proactive, failing to address the systemic issues that plague the educational sector. Additionally, despite the government's concerted efforts, the effectiveness of curriculum implementation remains suboptimal, compromising the very foundation of educational progress.

While existing research has explored various dimensions of educational challenges in Nigeria including inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and the need for teacher training, there remains a notable lack of comprehensive studies investigating the intricate interplay of these factors and their collective impact on curriculum performance. Moreover, the dynamic socio-political climate, worsen by issues such as regional disparities, social unrest, insecurity and the recent shifts brought about by technological advancements, necessitates a fresh examination of the barriers to effective curriculum delivery in Nigeria. Against this background, the proposed exploration of the factors that hinder effective curriculum performance is critical not only for enhancing educational outcomes but also for aligning these outcomes with Nigeria's national goals of education proposed by the current 2015-2027 led political government.

Statement of Problem

It has been observed that the escalating rates of educational underachievement and curriculum ineffectiveness in Nigeria demonstrate a stark disconnect between policy intentions and realities on ground. This is because, the Nigeria Second National Development Plan of (1970 - 1974) following the civil war clearly identified education as a potential critical driving sector for achieving five national objectives marked out which include: 1. A free and a democratic society, 2. A just and egalitarian society, 3. A united, strong and self-reliant nation, 4. A great and dynamic economy, and 5. A land full of bright opportunities for all Nigerian citizens. However, after five decades of educational reforms by successive governments, the aforementioned objectives still look like a mirage as the current realities indicate that the country is far from attaining any of them. Instead, the country seems to be witnessing unprecedented democratic failure and bad governance, insecurity, marginalization, poverty, economics hardship, overdependence on foreign supports and a whole lot more. While so much researches have been broadly done on the challenges confronting education in Nigeria, significant attention is yet to be given to the political oscillatory factors affecting the performance of curriculum specifically. Based on these premises, this research aimed to work on this gap by identify the barriers and propose actionable strategies for improvement on the 2015-2027 national education agenda.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it explores the factors hindering effective curriculum performance in Nigeria's education system, with a focus on lessons applicable to the national goal of education in the 2015-2027 political era. By identifying the challenges and obstacles that hinder effective curriculum performance, the study can be informative in

several ways: Firstly, the study can inform education policy and decision-making in Nigeria, particularly in the areas of curriculum development, teacher training, and infrastructure development and improving curriculum implementation. Secondly, the study provides insights for stakeholders, including educators, policymakers, parents, and community members, on the factors hindering effective curriculum performance and strategies to address these challenges. Finally, the study is hoped to contribute to the existing body of research on education in Nigeria, particularly in the area of curriculum development and implementation.

Aim and Objectives

The aim of the study is to explore the factors hindering effective curriculum performance in Nigeria with a focus on achieving the national educational goal with the following specific objectives: 1. Improving education quality: The study aims to contribute to improving the quality of education in Nigeria by identifying the factors that hinder effective curriculum performance. 2. Achieving national goals: The study's findings can inform policy and practice aimed at achieving the national goals of education, which include developing individuals who can contribute to the country's economic, social, and cultural development. 3. Contextual relevance: The study's focus on the 2015-2027 political era ensures that the findings are contextual and relevant to current policy and practice.

Research Questions

Some key questions formulated to guide this study are:

1. What are the key factors hindering effective curriculum performance in Nigerian education?
2. What are the implications of curriculum underperformance on national development of Nigeria?
3. How can curriculum performance be improved to enable Nigeria achieve the national goal of education?

Research Methodology and Procedure

Methodologically, this paper adopts a qualitative research methodology utilizing literature-based data exploration approach to identify, select, analyze and synthesize relevant materials for the study. Additionally, scholarly current materials such as; journals, books and periodicals from 2010 to 2025 were consulted in the course of study. By critically identifying, selecting, analyzing and synthesizing existing relevant and current literature, this research attempt to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the issue of curriculum performance towards the realization of national goal and objectives of education in Nigeria. To achieve this therefore, the study explores the theoretical framework for curriculum performance in section two. While section three deals with the historical context of curriculum performance in Nigeria. Having established this background, section four

provides comprehensive analysis of findings and discussion of the research questions, subsequent to which the research is steered to conclusion in section five.

Clarification of Key Words

The following are clarifications of key terms used in the paper to give focus and understanding to readers.

Curriculum: Although the word 'curriculum' has diverse definitions however, in this paper it refers to "the overall goals, plans, arrangements, and practices that shape the experiences of students in schools. Thus 'curriculum' does not just refer to the subject content of textbooks and other teaching-learning materials (TLMs) and their pedagogy, but also includes aspects such as school environment and culture [societal expectations]" (Kasturirangan, 2023, p. 15).

Curriculum Performance: Curriculum "performance" and "implementation" are related to some extent, but their concepts are distinct. While curriculum performance refers to the extent to which the curriculum is effectively implemented and achieves its intended learning objectives and outcomes, "curriculum implementation is the process of putting all that have been planned as a curriculum document into practice in the classroom through the combined efforts of teachers, learners, school administrators, parents as well as interaction with physical facilities, instructional materials, psychological and social environments" (Adamu, Z. & Adebisi, A. F., 2023, p. 23). In other words, implementation is about the process, while performance is about the outcome.

National Policy on Education: "According to the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2004), the concept: "National Policy on Education" refers to a guiding document which spells out in the clearest of terms the philosophy, objectives, systems, processes and methods of operating education sector from local, state to federal levels in Nigeria" (Abdussalam, A.G.E., 2020, P. 2).

Nigeria's National Goal of Education: In the context of this paper, the concept refers to National Policy on Education's vision aimed at utilizing education as a tool for fostering development of all Nigerian citizens to their full potential in the promotion of a strong, democratic, egalitarian, prosperous, indivisible and indissoluble sovereign nation..." (F. M. E. Handbook, 2019, p.13).

Curriculum reform: According to Ovute, "Curriculum reform specifically involve changes in the objectives of learning, namely which competencies, knowledge, values and attitudes should students acquire. Under this definition, curriculum is highly cultural and political, since it determines the vision of a society by deciding what kind of knowledge and skill are most valuable for its people and what knowledge is worth passing on" (2024, p. 60).

Theoretical Framework for Curriculum Performance

Curriculum models have evolved over the years, shaped by various educational philosophies, societal needs, and pedagogical advancements. Curriculum models encode assumptions about what knowledge counts, how learning should proceed, and which

outcomes matter for society. This section examines five prominent models of curriculum performance which include: Value-Centered, Subject-Centered, Teacher-Centered, Learner-Centered, and Problem-Centered. Understanding these different types of curriculum models and designs is a fundamental background to help educators make informed decisions about curriculum development and implementation, ultimately leading to more effective and meaningful learning expectations.

Value-Centered Curriculum

Value-centered curriculum positions ethical formation, character, social responsibility, and sustainability as structuring aims across subjects and school life. This approach is rooted in moral and civic education and, more recently, Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Contemporary frameworks (e.g., OECD's "embedding values and attitudes" strand) argue that values are integral to competence and should be intentionally woven through content, pedagogy, and assessment (OECD, 2021, p. 5). Recent empirical work shows teachers articulate value-related goals (e.g., openness to change, conservation, self-transcendence) and perceive school climate as shaping how such values are taught (Oeschger et al., 2024, p. 2). A value-centered curriculum strengthens civic dispositions, social cohesion, and ethical reasoning as assets for democracy, unity, and justice (OECD, 2021, p. 12). It can also align school culture with national identity formation and responsible citizenship. However, three recurring issues emerge: (a) ambiguity and contestation about "whose values" (Oeschger et al., 2024, p.7); (b) superficial treatment via posters/assemblies rather than curriculum-embedded practice (Döring et al., 2024); and (c) limited teacher preparation for values pedagogy and assessment (OECD, 2021, pp. 18–21). A value-centered orientation directly supports Nigeria's democratic and egalitarian aims, but requires policy-supported teacher development and school-wide climate work (FME, 2020, p. 24). Embedding anti-corruption, inclusion, and service-learning projects across subjects can concretize "bright opportunities for all citizens."

Subject-Centered Curriculum

Rooted in the classical liberal tradition and academic disciplines, subject-centered design organizes content around bodies of knowledge, typically sequenced from simple to complex. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) define it as designs that "center on knowledge, not learners or society," with the textbook and syllabus as structural anchors (p. 188). The strength of this curriculum lies in its clarity of scope/sequence, strong alignment with examinations, and ease of standard setting make it efficient for large systems and credentialing (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 190). On the other hand, they noted that over-emphasis on coverage can narrow pedagogy to recall, fragment real-world connections, and marginalize cross-disciplinary competencies (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 193). For instance, given WAEC/NECO's assessment regimes, subject-centered design supports national economic goals through credentialing pipelines. However, without integrative

tasks and applied projects, it risks under-serving creativity and entrepreneurship central to the national development agenda (Muhammad, 2023, p. 170).

Teacher-Centered Curriculum

Teacher-centered approach is tied to a more authoritarian educational model, where the teacher acts as the primary source of knowledge. Historically linked to essentialism and behaviorism, teacher-centered models prioritize direct instruction, demonstration, and tightly guided practice. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) describe classrooms where “teachers plan, present, and evaluate; students receive” (pp. 193–195). This model allows for structured learning environments and can be effective for direct instruction, especially in foundational knowledge areas. Evidence supports direct instruction for initial acquisition of well-structured knowledge and basic skills at scale, particularly in resource constrained settings clarity, pacing, and whole-class efficiency (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 195). Over-reliance on teachers suppresses student agency and higher order reasoning; it may also perpetuate passivity that undermines innovation, collaboration, and problem-solving (Dowden et al., 2024). Teacher-centered approaches can stabilize quality where class sizes are large and materials are scarce. But to meet national goals of a “dynamic economy” and self-reliant citizenry, systems must blend explicit teaching with student inquiry, projects, and discussion especially from senior secondary to tertiary levels of education.

Learner-Centered Curriculum

Drawing from progressivism and social constructivism, learner-centered models organize around students’ needs, interests, prior knowledge, and active knowledge construction. Features include differentiated tasks, formative assessment, and co-design (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018, p. 198). When well-implemented, learner-centered designs enhance engagement, transfer, and metacognition; they cultivate collaboration, communication, and self-direction competencies aligned with knowledge for economy goals (Dowden et al., 2024). However, the challenges associated with the model is that, implementation demands intensive teacher expertise, continuous assessment, and flexible resources; large classes and exam pressures can push practice back toward recitation (FME, 2020, pp. 22–24; Okpara, 2024, pp. 5–7). Learner-centered pedagogy, phased in with professional learning communities and assessment reform, can advance national aims of opportunity and self-reliance, particularly through inquiry tasks connected to local contexts.

Problem-Centered Curriculum

A problem-centered curriculum focuses on engaging students in real-world problems, promoting critical thinking and problem-solving skills through collaborative learning. Problem-centered models organize learning around authentic, often interdisciplinary problems of life and society. Ornstein and Hunkins (2018) situate these designs as emphasizing “persistent life situations, social issues, and reconstruction” (p. 199). Contemporary meta-analyses show problem-driven methods produce small to moderate

positive effects on student motivation across domains (Wijnia et al., 2024, pp. 6–8). These approaches integrate knowledge, promote critical thinking, collaboration, and real-world transfer key to a “great and dynamic economy” and to addressing societal challenges (Wijnia et al., 2024, p. 9; Bron et al., 2024, pp. 2–3). Wijnia et al., observes further that the challenges for implementing the model may include; design quality, teacher facilitation skill, assessment alignment, and resource demands are non-trivial; large-scale implementations can show “erosion” i.e. (process drift, group size inflation) without sustained support (2024, p. 11).

The analysis above reveals that each curriculum model has distinct aim and characteristics, contributing to its advantages and disadvantages. For instance, Value-Centered and Learner-Centered approaches promote ethical considerations and student engagement respectively. While Teacher-Centered and Subject-Centered provide clarity, rigor and efficient yet, risk diminishing student autonomy. Problem-Centered curricula foster creativity and real-world relevance, but may face challenges in assessment and implementation. The findings underscore the complexity of curriculum design and the necessity of a balanced approach that incorporates elements from multiple models. Additionally, the challenges associated with each model highlight the importance of context in curriculum design, development and implementation. Educators must consider the diverse needs of learners and the specific educational environment when selecting and adapting curriculum approach.

Historical Context of Curriculum Performance in Nigeria

The development of the curriculum in Nigeria reflects the socio-political and economic transformations that have occurred many centuries in the history of education in Nigeria. According to Fasinro, K. S., Akinkuotu, F. A., and Aina, J. O., Nigeria like most other countries of the world is undergoing rapid social, economic and political reforms, the impetus for these changes is fueled by the nation’s commitment to international goals of development such as the Education For All (EFA), Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and its own home growth National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) I and II that recognizes education as a means of empowering people for the attainment of the nation’s developmental targets (2014, p. 1)

Therefore, this analytical discourse examines distinct phases of curriculum development in Nigeria from pre-colonial era to the present date understudying each phase with unique challenges and developments that have shaped the educational landscape of Nigeria. The purpose of this section is to explore the historical development of curriculum in Nigeria as a fundamental background for responding the research questions formulated for the study.

The Curriculum During Pre-Colonial Era

Before the coming of the colonial masters, Nigeria had their own unique way of training both the young and adults. It was characterized by its knowledge acquisition, skills

development and practical performance of task. Notable strengths of the indigenous traditional education system then were a curriculum which emphasis; physical, intellectual, vocational, agricultural, moral trainings, trade and crafts. Foundational knowledge and discipline were also emphasized. Adesina (2014) argue that the structured nature of traditional education fosters a sense of discipline among students, which is crucial for their community engagement and development. The curriculum, primarily focused on core subjects such as languages, moral and braveness to provide students with essential skills that are necessary for further education and vocational training. Moreover, traditional education systems often emphasize cultural values and local knowledge, which can enhance students' sense of identity and belonging. According to Okebukola, (2015) the integration of indigenous knowledge into the curriculum helps preserve cultural heritage and promotes social cohesion among diverse ethnic groups in Nigeria. This aspect of traditional education can be seen as a strength, as it fosters a sense of community and continuity in a rapidly changing world. The education then, was not for mere certification without assistance of being employed, it was effective for goal-oriented, self-reliance and meeting the immediate needs of the individuals and the society at large.

Despite these strengths, the traditional education system in Nigeria is fraught with limitations that hinder its effectiveness. One significant limitation is the over-reliance on rote memorization, which stifles critical thinking and creativity among students. As highlighted by Oduolowu (2018), this pedagogical approach often leads to superficial learning, where students are unable to apply knowledge in practical contexts. The lack of emphasis on problem-solving skills and innovative thinking is a critical drawback that has been widely criticized by educational reformers. Additionally, the traditional curriculum often fails to address the diverse needs of learners, particularly in a multicultural society like Nigeria. According to Nwafor, "the one-size-fits-all approach of the traditional education system does not accommodate different learning styles and backgrounds, resulting in disengagement and high dropout rates among students" (2021, p. 156). This limitation underscores the need for a more inclusive and flexible curriculum that caters to the varied needs of the student population.

The challenges posed by the traditional education system present significant opportunities for reform and improvement. One potential avenue for enhancement is the integration of technology into the curriculum. Eze (2022) advocates for the incorporation of digital tools and resources can facilitate interactive learning experiences and promote critical thinking skills among students. By embracing technology, educators can create a more engaging and relevant curriculum that prepares students for the demands of the 21st century. Furthermore, there is a growing recognition of the importance of competency-based education, which focuses on equipping students with practical skills and knowledge applicable to real-world situations. Afolabi advocated for "a shift towards competency-based curricula that emphasize experiential learning and skill development, thereby better preparing students for the workforce" (2020, p. 89). This approach not only enhances students' employability but also fosters a culture of lifelong learning. While the traditional

education system in Nigeria has strengths in terms of discipline, cultural preservation, goal oriented and self-reliance, it is also marked by significant limitations, particularly in its pedagogical approaches and inclusivity. The opportunities for improvement, particularly through the integration of technology and a shift towards competency-based education, present a pathway for enhancing curriculum performance. As Nigeria continues to navigate the complexities of educational reform, it is imperative that stakeholders critically engage with these issues to foster a more effective and responsive education system.

The Curriculum During Colonial Era

The curriculum in Nigeria has undergone significant transformations from the era of Islamic education in the 16th and 17th centuries to the colonial educational era. Each phase of curriculum development reflects the socio-political and cultural contexts of its time, revealing strengths, limitations, and opportunities for improvement. This period witnessed the beginning of a formal curriculum of education in Nigeria. Notable formal curriculum worth discussion in this era includes the followings:

1. *Islamic Curriculum (16th-17th Century)*: The Islamic educational system, which flourished during the 16th and 17th centuries, was characterized by a strong emphasis on religious instruction, particularly in the areas of theology, law, and Arabic literacy. Afolabi argue that this curriculum laid the foundation for formal education in Nigeria, promoting literacy among the elite (2020). However, the limitation of this curriculum was its narrow focus on religious texts, which often marginalized secular subjects and practical skills necessary for broader societal engagement.

2. *Missionary Curriculum (1842-1882)*: The Missionary Curriculum marked the inception of formal education in Nigeria, primarily driven by Christian missionaries. This curriculum was characterized by a focus on religious instruction, literacy, and moral education. According to Oduolowu, "the missionaries aimed to "civilize" the indigenous population through education, which was heavily infused with Christian values" (2018, p. 45). However, this curriculum faced criticism for its lack of relevance to the local context and its failure to incorporate indigenous knowledge systems because the curriculum was "Eurocentric" and did not address the socio-cultural realities of Nigerian society.

3. *The Early Secular Curriculum (1882-1925)*: The transition to a more secular curriculum began in 1882, influenced by colonial policies that sought to establish a more standardized educational system. Dogara G.G. asserts that,

The year 1882 became a landmark in the history of the development of curriculum of education in Nigeria. That was the year in which government began to show interest in the development of the school curriculum by enacting the Education Act, and also establishing a Board of Education to control the development of education at all levels in English-speaking West African Countries. However, the first Nigerian Education Act was subsequently enacted in 1887, consequent upon which a separate Nigerian Board of Education was constituted for Nigeria (2025, p. 26).

This period saw the introduction of subjects such as mathematics, science, and geography. However, as highlighted by Adesina, "the curriculum remained largely elitist, catering primarily to the needs of the colonial administration and neglecting the majority of the population" (2014, p. 78). Turaki echoed this when he laments that, "Mass education was never a goal of the Colonial Administration. Instead, it favored educational elitism, that is to say, only a small privileged class was given access to education" (2009, p. 75). From all indications, the sole motive of the colonial masters was only to use the privileged educated elites to achieve their colonial agenda. Therefore, as noted by Okafor, "the methodologies used were largely unidirectional, stifling the critical thinking and creativity of Nigerian youths" (2014, p. 67). In this connection, Okwudishu (2019) observes further that the curriculum marginalized indigenous knowledge and values, ultimately leading to a disconnection between the educated elite and the local populace. The challenge during this period was the disconnect between the curriculum and the socio-economic needs of the Nigerian populace, leading to widespread disenchantment with the educational system.

4. *Phelps-Stokes Curriculum (1925-1952)*: The Phelps-Stokes Fund played a significant role in shaping education in Nigeria during this period. "The Phelps-Stokes Commission Report recommended a review of the academic curriculum in a manner that made education adaptable to the real needs of the people. In line with this recommendation, subjects like History, Geography, Biology and the like, were reviewed to emphasize African countries rather than European countries" (Dogara G.G., 2025, P. 27). Although, Okwudishu opines that, "this curriculum was more inclusive, as it sought to address the educational needs of various ethnic groups in Nigeria" (2019, p. 63). However, the implementation faced challenges, including inadequate funding and resistance from colonial authorities who were reluctant to relinquish control over education. The Phelps-Stokes Curriculum, while progressive, ultimately fell short of achieving its goals due to systemic barriers.

5. *WAEC-Independence Curriculum (1952-1960)*: The establishment of the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) in 1952 marked a significant shift in the Nigerian curriculum, as it aimed to standardize education across West Africa. This period was characterized by a focus on examination-oriented education, which prioritized rote learning over critical thinking and creativity. As noted by Nwankwo, "this curriculum was heavily criticized for its inability to foster innovation and problem-solving skills among students" (2021, p. 90). The challenge during this time was the overemphasis on examinations, which stifled the development of a holistic educational experience.

The Curriculum During Post-Colonial Period

The post-colonial era has been marked by various curriculum reforms aimed at aligning the educational system with national goal of education to address socio-economic challenges, and promote cultural identity and national development. To achieve this, the Nigerian National Policy on Education (NPE) was first established in 1977 and revised multiple times, serves as a foundational document guiding educational reforms. The policy emphasizes the need for education to foster national unity, promote self-reliance, and develop a sense of

cultural identity (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Subsequent reforms, such as the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program in 2004, aimed to provide free and compulsory education for all children, thereby addressing issues of access and equity to education (Ogunyemi, 2021). In 2013, the Nigerian government launched the National Curriculum for Basic Education, which sought to integrate life skills and vocational training into the curriculum. This reform was significant in shifting the focus from rote learning to a more holistic approach that prepares students for the realities of the job market. However, despite these reforms, the curriculum has often been criticized for its lack of relevance to the socio-economic context of Nigeria.

While there have been notable advancements in curriculum development, several limitations persist. One of the primary challenges is the inconsistency in implementation across different states and regions. According to Adesina (2014), the disparity in educational resources and infrastructure has led to unequal access to quality education, undermining the objectives of national policies. Furthermore, the curriculum has often been criticized for its heavy emphasis on theoretical knowledge at the expense of practical skills, which is crucial for economic development (Ogunyemi, 2021). Moreover, the influence of colonial legacies continues to shape the curriculum, as many subjects remain Eurocentric, neglecting indigenous knowledge systems and cultural contexts. This has resulted in a disconnect between what is taught in schools and the lived experiences of students, limiting their engagement and motivation. To enhance the performance of the curriculum, several opportunities for improvement can be identified. First, there is a need for a more inclusive approach that incorporates local knowledge and cultural values into the curriculum. This would not only promote cultural identity but also make learning more relevant to students' lives (Adesina, 2014). Second, teacher training and professional development must be prioritized to equip educators with the skills necessary to implement the curriculum effectively. Continuous professional development programs can help teachers adapt to new pedagogical approaches and integrate technology into their teaching practices (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014). Lastly, fostering partnerships between educational institutions, industries, and communities can create a more responsive curriculum that meets the needs of the labor market. Engaging stakeholders in curriculum development can ensure that educational programs are aligned with economic demands and societal expectations (Ogunyemi, 2021). The performance of the Nigerian curriculum during the post-colonial era has been characterized by significant reforms aimed at achieving national educational goals. While progress has been made, limitations remain that hinder the effectiveness of the curriculum. By embracing opportunities for improvement, Nigeria can develop a more relevant and inclusive educational system that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century.

The Curriculum in 2015-2027 Political Era

Since the historic merger that resulted in the birth of the All Progressives Congress (APC) in July 2013, they took over government from People Democratic Party PDP in 2015 with

ambitious development plans focusing on several key areas of priorities for the education sector in its manifestos and roadmaps, including equitable access, quality education, skills and entrepreneurship development, and infrastructure improvements. The party has also emphasized the need for increased funding, teacher training, and tackling the issue of out-of-school children (APC Manifestation on Education, 2015). These plans were further explained as APC's Road map for Free Relevant Quality Education which includes:

1. Make the right of every Nigerian child to receive a free, relevant and quality education a reality, based on free and comprehensive primary and secondary education.
2. Provide free tertiary education to students pursuing Science and Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM).
3. Provide free tertiary education to education majors and stipends prior to their employment as teachers.
4. Create incentives and dedicate special attention to the education of girls.
5. Ensure every child attending primary school is properly nourished and ready to learn by providing a Free Meal a Day.
6. Invest in better equipping and staffing Teacher Training Colleges and provide financial and progression incentives to attract and retain good teachers
7. Revamp and restructure education curricula from primary to tertiary levels with a view to ensuring students acquire the right skills for employment, entrepreneurship and innovation.
8. Prepare young adults for the jobs of the future by expanding the focus on science and technology at our colleges and universities.
9. Improve the ability of people to gain employment in a variety of fields through greater access to technical and vocational training (APC Manifestation on Education, 2015).

While there have been efforts to implement these plans, challenges persist in areas like data collection, planning, and the political will of APC led government which affect the overall quality of education. In a political statement made by the regime emphatically asserts that; "The challenge facing us as Nigerians is whether we have the will and courage to unite to radically reform, modernize and move our nation forward-not looking backward to the failed policies and practices of the past. It is no longer a question of choice but of will and courage!" (APC Manifestation on Education, 2015).

The concept of political will is pivotal in understanding governmental actions and policies. Scholars have debated the extent to which the APC government has demonstrated political will to reform the educational sector. Adeleke argues that the APC government has shown a mixed record regarding educational reforms. While the government has initiated several programs aimed at improving educational access and quality, such as the National Home-Grown School Feeding Programmed, critics contend that these initiatives lack the necessary depth to effect substantial change in curriculum performance (2018, p. 112). Similarly, Ojo highlights that despite the government's promises, the implementation of

the new curriculum has been inconsistent, often hampered by inadequate funding and poor infrastructure (2020, p. 78).

Conversely, Eze, posit that although the APC government had challenges with implementation, but it has made strides in aligning educational policies with national goals. Eze notes that the introduction of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) Act has provided a framework for curriculum development that emphasizes critical thinking and problem-solving skills, which are essential for national development (2022, 1p. 34). However, the effectiveness of these policies remains contingent upon the political will to prioritize education in the national agenda.

From the historical review, the factors hindering effective curriculum performance in Nigeria are multidimensional and deeply interconnected. The lack of stakeholder involvement, unstable curriculum frameworks, inadequate funding, absence of skills acquisition, unqualified facilitators, ineffective monitoring, and political interference collectively contribute to the challenges faced in achieving national educational goals. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive approach that involves all stakeholders in the educational process, ensuring that the curriculum is relevant, stable, and effectively implemented.

Findings and Discussion

The aim of this section is to present data analysis and discussion of findings in response to the three research questions postulated to guide the paper which include: What are the key political oscillatory factors hindering effective curriculum performance in Nigerian education? What are the implications of curriculum underperformance on national development of Nigeria? How can curriculum performance be improved to enable Nigeria achieve the national goal of education? The findings of this study is hoped to contribute to the development of evidence-based policies and programs that can improve the quality and effectiveness of education in Nigeria. Through a qualitative research methodology utilizing literature-based data exploration involving; contents analysis, documents analysis and case study approaches, the data realized are presented as follows:

Factors Hindering Curriculum Performance

From the contents, documents analyzed and cases studied, the study identify the following factors as major hindrances to effective curriculum performance in Nigeria:

Policy Instability on Education: Frequent changes in education policies has been identified by scholars as a major threat to curriculum implementation and a hindrance to its effective performance in Nigeria. According to Ezegwu, C., Okoye, D. & Wantchekon, L., "Frequent changes contributed to eroding the structure, processes and quality of education. In view of this development, there is no continuity hence, educational system is yet to create national consciousness and patriotism among the Nigerian citizens because citizenship education is never practiced. As a result, The Nigerian society, in recent time, is bedeviled by high level or insecurity such as; banditry, kidnapping and terrorisms. Politically, there is

no free and fair elections due to high rate of electoral malpractices leading to bad governance. Economically, the cost of leaving has gone beyond control and these challenges have brought the country almost to the level of a failed nation. Abdussalam assert that, all this occurs because the education system makes very little effort to empower the citizens socially, morally, politically and economically due to disrupted educational policies changes by successive government in the bid to achieve their political interest (2020, p. 10).

Curriculum Instability and Inconsistence Implementation: Next to policy instability on education is the threat of instability of the curriculum. The frequent changes in educational policies automatically jeopardize the curriculum frameworks by creating confusion among educators and students alike. As noted by Eze, “the lack of a stable curriculum leads to inconsistencies in teaching and learning outcomes, as teachers are often required to adapt to new content and methodologies without adequate training” (2022, p. 102). For instance, a case study in Enugu State revealed that teachers struggled to implement new curriculum guidelines due to insufficient professional development opportunities, resulting in a fragmented educational experience (Eze, 2022).

Lack of Involvement of Key Stakeholders: Another significant barrier to effective curriculum performance is the lack of involvement of specialize and critical stakeholders, including educators, parents, and community members mostly due to politically motivated interest. According to Oduolowu and Akinola, stakeholder engagement is crucial for ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of the learners and the community. Their study highlights that “when stakeholders are excluded from the curriculum development process, the resulting curriculum often fails to address local contexts and realities, leading to disinterest and disengagement among students” (2021, p. 45). In a study conducted in Lagos State, it was found that teachers felt alienated from the curriculum design process, which resulted in a disconnect between teaching practices and the curriculum objectives (Oduolowu & Akinola, 2021).

Inadequate Funding and Corruption in the Sector: Inadequate funding and corruption within the educational sector further exacerbate the challenges faced in curriculum implementation. The Education Commission (2016) emphasizes that achieving universal education requires substantial financial investment, recommending that countries allocate at least 15-20% of their national annual budgets to education. This recommendation is based on the premise that adequate funding is essential for improving educational outcomes, reducing dropout rates, and enhancing the quality of education. A report by the World Bank (2021) highlights that insufficient investment in education has resulted in poor educational outcomes, including high rates of illiteracy and low enrollment in secondary and tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Recently, Guardian Newspaper reported that “Over 100 pupils at the L.G.E.A. Primary School Maje in Danmahawayi Ward, Giwa LGA in Kaduna State, are compelled to sit on bare floors to learn due to the absence of chairs in the classroom” (2025, June, 22). This was revealed by a civil society organization (CSO), after a visit to the school which is just one example of many cases across the country.

Lack of Skills Acquisition-Centered Curriculum: The absence of a skills acquisition-centered curriculum is another factor that hinders effective curriculum performance. As highlighted by Nwankwo, “the current curriculum often emphasizes theoretical knowledge over practical skills, leaving students ill-prepared for the job market” (2021, p. 56). In a case study conducted in Delta State, it was found that graduates struggled to secure employment due to a lack of practical skills that employers sought, demonstrating the need for a curriculum that integrates skills acquisition (Nwankwo, 2021). Similarly, this was also highlighted in an inaugural paper presented by Alio that, “poor staffing, low level of funds and inadequate training facilities in tertiary institutions as reasons behind unemployable graduates in Nigeria” (Vanguard, 2025 June, 22).

Lack of Professional Curriculum Facilitators: The effectiveness of curriculum delivery is also compromised by the lack of qualified and professional curriculum facilitators. Okeke observes that, “many educators lack the necessary training and expertise to implement the curriculum effectively” (2021, p. 34). A case study in Cross River State revealed that teachers often resorted to outdated teaching methods due to their limited understanding of modern pedagogical approaches, which negatively affected student engagement and learning outcomes (Okeke, 2021).

Lack of Effective Monitoring and Evaluation of Curriculum Performance: The absence of robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms further complicates the challenges in curriculum performance. As noted by Ibrahim and Suleiman, “effective monitoring is essential for assessing the implementation of the curriculum and making necessary adjustments” (2022, p. 90). Their study found that without systematic evaluation processes, many schools continued to operate under ineffective practices, resulting in poor educational outcomes. A case study in Abuja highlighted that the lack of regular assessments led to a stagnation in curriculum improvement efforts, as educators were not held accountable for their teaching practices (Ibrahim & Suleiman, 2022).

Politicization of the Educational Sector: Finally, the politicization of the educational sector poses a significant barrier to effective curriculum performance. As emphasized by Adesina, “political interference often leads to the imposition of policies that do not align with educational needs, diverting attention from the core objectives of the curriculum” (2023, p. 66). Thus, political instability produces instability in education policies, approaches, management, processes and outcomes. Frequent changes and hastily introduced regimes’ programs and sentimental political appointments did not give room for in-depth program planning, execution and learning” (2023, p. 8). They lamented further that, “Educational policies are products of political bargains and authoritative decisions over who gets what, how, when and to what extent” (2023, p. 12). They concluded that, “Successive governments, both during the military and civilian regimes, tend to pursue educational programs in line with their respective ideologies and priorities undermining the existing policies on education” (2023, p.11-12). A case study in Ogun State illustrated how political agendas influenced curriculum changes, resulting in a focus on ideological content rather than practical knowledge and skills (Adesina, 2023).

Implications of Curriculum Underperformance

Through the contents, documents analyzed and cases studied, the paper identified six implications of curriculum underperformance on the national development of Nigeria;

Limited Human Capital Development: One of the most critical implications of curriculum underperformance is the limited development of human capital. According to Oduolowu and Oduolowu, "the Nigerian educational system has failed to equip students with the necessary skills and competencies required in the modern workforce" (2018, p. 45). For instance, a case study of vocational education in Nigeria highlights that many graduates lack practical skills, leading to a mismatch between education and labor market demands (Adebayo, 2022, p. 78). This gap in human capital development not only hinders individual career prospects but also stifles national productivity and innovation.

Poor National Economic Growth: The relationship between educational outcomes and economic growth is well-documented. The lack of a robust educational framework has resulted in a workforce that is ill-prepared to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing global economy. A study by Ezeani and Ezeani (2020) indicates that the underperformance of the curriculum has contributed to stagnation in Nigeria's economic growth. For example, the agricultural sector, which employs a significant portion of the population, suffers from a lack of innovative practices and technologies due to inadequate educational training (Ogunleye, 2023, p. 34). This stagnation in economic growth perpetuates a cycle of underdevelopment.

High Rate of Unemployment: The underperformance of the educational curriculum has also been linked to the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, "youth unemployment stands at an alarming rate of 33%" (2022, p. 5). The curriculum's failure to provide relevant skills has left many graduates unable to secure employment. A case study of recent graduates from Nigerian universities reveals that over 60% reported feeling unprepared for the job market (Ibrahim, 2021, p. 89). This high unemployment rate not only affects individual livelihoods but also contributes to broader social challenges affecting the national development.

Increasing Rate of Poverty and Inequality: The implications of curriculum underperformance extend to the increasing rates of poverty and inequality in Nigeria. A report by the World Bank (2023, p. 22) highlights that "educational disparities contribute significantly to income inequality." For instance, students from low-income backgrounds often attend underfunded schools with outdated curricula, limiting their future opportunities. A case study of rural education in Nigeria illustrates that children in these areas are less likely to complete secondary education, perpetuating the cycle of poverty (Adesina, 2018, p. 56). This inequality not only affects economic mobility but also exacerbates social tensions in the country.

Weakened Global Competitiveness: The global competitiveness of Nigeria is also at risk due to curriculum underperformance. According to the Global Competitiveness Report, "Nigeria ranks low in education quality and workforce skills" (2022, p. 15). The inability to produce a skilled workforce capable of competing on a global scale limits Nigeria's

attractiveness to foreign investors. A case study of Nigeria's technology sector reveals that many startups struggle to find qualified personnel, hindering innovation and growth (Ojo, 2023, p. 102). This weakened competitiveness further isolates Nigeria from the benefits of globalization.

Promotion of Bad Leadership and Governance: Lastly, the implications of curriculum underperformance can be seen in the promotion of bad leadership and governance. A study by Nwankwo argues that “a poorly educated populace is less likely to engage in civic activities or hold leaders accountable” (2021, p. 67). This lack of engagement can lead to a cycle of poor governance, where leaders are not challenged to improve policies or practices. A case study of local government elections in Nigeria illustrates that low voter turnout and apathy are often correlated with inadequate civic education in schools (Okafor, 2022, p. 44). This dynamic perpetuates a system where accountability and transparency are compromised. The implications of curriculum underperformance in Nigeria are profound and multifaceted. It is clear that limited human capital development, poor economic growth, high unemployment rates, increasing poverty and inequality, weakened global competitiveness, and the promotion of bad leadership are all interconnected consequences of an inadequate educational framework. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive reform of the curriculum to align educational outcomes with the needs of the economy and society.

Framework for Improving Curriculum Performance

Based on the contents, documents analyzed and cases studied, the study acknowledged eight workable frameworks for improving curriculum performance.

Government Political Will to Rebrand the Education Sector is the Key: The political will of the government is paramount in rebranding the education sector. Oduolowu asserts that, “effective educational reforms require a commitment from political leaders to prioritize education in national development agendas” (2018, p. 45). For instance, the Nigerian government’s recent initiatives to increase budgetary allocations to education reflect a growing recognition of the sector's importance. However, the lack of sustained political commitment often undermines these initiatives, leading to inconsistent policy implementation.

A Curriculum that Contextualizes Local Knowledge and Cultural Values: A curriculum that integrates local knowledge and cultural values is essential for relevance and engagement. As noted by Afolabi, incorporating indigenous knowledge systems into the curriculum fosters a sense of identity and belonging among students (2020, p. 112). For example, the introduction of local languages and cultural studies in schools has been shown to enhance student participation and retention rates in various regions of Nigeria (Afolabi, 2020). This approach not only enriches the educational experience but also promotes cultural preservation.

Skills Development and Practical-Task Performing Curriculum: The emphasis on skills development and practical-tasks performing curriculum is crucial for preparing students for

self-reliance and employment rather than job seeking education. According to Nwankwo, “a curriculum that prioritizes hands-on learning experiences equips students with the necessary skills to meet labor market demands” (2021, p. 78). For instance, vocational training programs integrated into secondary education have demonstrated success in improving employability among graduates, as evidenced by the increased enrollment in technical colleges across the country (Nwankwo, 2021, p. 80).

Teachers Training and Development: The effectiveness of any curriculum is significantly influenced by the quality of teachers. Adeyemi argues that “continuous professional development for teachers is essential for effective curriculum delivery” (2020, p. 34). Case studies from various Nigerian states show that teacher training programs focused on innovative teaching methods have led to improved student outcomes. For example, the implementation of the Teacher Development Program in Lagos State has resulted in enhanced pedagogical skills among educators, positively impacting student performance (Adeyemi, 2020, p. 36).

Creating a Conducive Environment for Creativity, Innovation, and Invention: A conducive learning environment is vital for fostering creativity and innovation. As highlighted by Eze, “schools that provide adequate resources and facilities encourage students to engage in creative problem-solving and innovative projects” (2022, p. 59). For instance, the establishment of innovation hubs within schools has enabled students to work on real-world problems, thereby enhancing their critical thinking and collaborative skills (Eze, 2022, p. 62).

Stakeholders Involvement in the Curriculum: Involving stakeholders in the curriculum development process is necessary to ensure that educational programs meet the needs of the community. According to Okwu, collaboration between educators, parents, and local businesses can lead to more relevant and effective curricula (2022, p. 88). For instance, the partnership between schools and local industries in Enugu, which has resulted in curriculum adjustments that align with local economic needs, thereby enhancing student employability (Okwu, 2022, p. 90).

Effective Monitoring and Evaluation of Curriculum Performance: Monitoring and evaluation are critical for assessing curriculum effectiveness. As noted by Ibe, “a robust evaluation framework allows for the identification of strengths and weaknesses within the curriculum” (2023, p. 102). For example, the implementation of regular assessments and feedback mechanisms in schools has led to significant improvements in teaching practices and student learning outcomes in a strict monitoring enforcement environment like Abuja as compared to local areas (Ibe, 2023, p. 105).

Prioritizing Funding of the Education Sector: Finally, prioritizing funding for the education sector is essential for sustainable improvements. Uche laments that, “inadequate funding remains a significant barrier to achieving educational goal in Nigeria (2021, p. 23). The case of the Universal Basic Education (UBE) program illustrates the impact of funding on curriculum implementation; increased financial support has led to the expansion of educational facilities and resources, thereby enhancing access to quality education (Uche,

2021, p. 25). While the universal standard for education funding recommends that countries allocate at least 15-20% of their annual budgets to education, Nigeria's current allocation of approximately 6.3% indicates a significant gap in commitment. The challenges of economic constraints, corruption, and competing priorities further complicate the situation. For Nigeria to fulfill its obligations under international agreements and improve its educational outcomes, it is imperative that the government reassesses its budgetary priorities and increases funding for education.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study, "Exploring the Factors Hindering Effective Curriculum Performance Towards Achieving the National Goal of Education in Nigeria" has provided valuable insights into the challenges facing the education sector. The study reveals that; lack of stakeholder involvement, unstable and inconsistent curriculum implementation, inadequate funding and politicization of the education sector were significant hindrances to effective curriculum performance. Further findings highlight the implications of curriculum underperformance on the national development to include; limited human capital development, poor economic growth, high unemployment rates, increasing poverty and the promotion of bad leadership and governance. Based on these findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Political will is inevitably required from the federal government to increase funding for education in order to improve infrastructure, resources, and teacher training.
2. Federal ministry of education should encourage active participation of stakeholders in curriculum development and implementation to ensure relevance and effectiveness. Additionally, the ministry should provide ongoing training and development opportunities for teachers to enhance their skills and knowledge.
3. Policy makers should develop a curriculum that is stable, relevant, and aligned with national goals and global best practices. They should also ensure robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track curriculum implementation and identify areas for improvement.
4. Finally, the findings of this study is hoped to arouse future research interest on education in Nigeria and provide a foundation for further empirical investigation into the factors hindering effective curriculum performance.

This study did not only contribute to the existing body of knowledge on curriculum performance and national development, but also provide insights into the complex relationships between curriculum performance, education policy, and national development. The study's recommendations offer practical solutions for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to improve curriculum performance to facilitate the achievement of Nigeria national development goals.

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