



FUTURE STUDIES AND CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR QUALITY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This paper titled; future studies and curriculum planning for quality education in Nigeria: challenges and prospects is an analytical approach to the experience of Nigeria pertaining to future studies (futuristic study) as it affects the educational system and curriculum planning particularly. In the paper, the writer opined that futuristic study is a critical element in planning curriculum especially the type that will affect the future of a nation positively. The paper suggests that Nigerian tertiary institutions should be given the mandate to establish future studies institutes and that the government should provide funding for such to thrive. No government through wishful thinking or day dreaming can realize the goals of educational development, economic development and technological advancement without proper planning of the educational system, hence the Nigerian government, curriculum specialists and other educational stakeholders should assume a proactive role in the quest to entrench quality education. Curriculum planning for quality, sustainable and functional education using future studies should be encouraged while borrowing a leaf from developed nations' future studies experiences.

Key Words: Curriculum Planning, Future Studies, Quality Education

INTRODUCTION

A popular saying goes that; to fail to plan is to plan to fail. Human societies from time immemorial have perfected strategies to achieve targeted objectives and goals through planning. This could be formal, official planning or flexible kind of planning that is not well coordinated. It could be short-term; the medium term or long term plans as the case may be. In any case and no matter what the type of planning involved, it is logical and reasonable that, no meaningful planning can take place without the study of the future. Bell (1997) attest to the diverse terms used by scholars and writers to explain future studies such as futuristic, futurology, futuring, future studies and futurism. He defines future studies as a prospective thinking, in particular to discover or invent, examine and evaluate and propose possible and preferable futures. Others scholars see future studies as a discipline or field of study. Futurism is a systematic discipline that studies future probabilities within a certain time frame (Saedah, Muhammad and tony, 2011). Siraj & Abdullah (2011) observed that future studies is a well advanced and established field of study dominated mostly by developed countries especially in the US and Europe. Future studies simply connotes the study of the future; whether perceived as a field of study or calculated attempt at foreseeing or forecasting the future it will bore down to preparing to day for tomorrow. Hence, Siraj & Abdallah cited noted that it has assumed a key role in the overall lives of many nations, organizations and institutions of learning. National and international corporate bodies have all embraced future studies to expand the prospect for their businesses. They went on to suggest that this may have accounted for the huge success these countries have enjoyed staying ahead of others in development and nation building.

Nigerian education needs to be tailored towards meeting set national and individual objectives which cannot be achieved without planning which is only possible with proper evaluation and



analyses of present and future expectation, that is future studies or futurism. Ezeaocha, (1990) sees quality education as a process which a society uses to put in place necessary machinery and relevant resources to preserve and enhance knowledge, skills and attitudes to continually uphold the well-being of man and ensure its survival against hostile and destructive elements and forces of man and nature. Education is an instrument for national developments (FGN, 2014.) Offorma, (2016) concurred that a good functional and quality education begets buoyant economic, political, moral, spiritual and healthy development of a nation. She pointed out that curriculum planning is cardinal for such quality to be instilled in the educational system. In the view of Ezeaocha cited there are destructive tendencies natural and man-made which can be conquered using education. Curriculum planning comes to mind which such tendencies and elements are considered while future studies becomes the obvious strategy to enhance potent curriculum planning. This is where the study of the future finds relevance; to provide a platform and based on which planning will be systematic and holistic.

Curriculum, according to Uwatt (2009) can be seen as a working tool that gives a sense of direction to what to do and how to do it for the purpose of realizing any educational goal. It is an attempt to capture appropriate contents in order to facilitate the realization of the need of the society as reflected in objectives. To Okoro, Emenyeonu & Akraonye (2012) curriculum refers to organized educational experiences which are planned sequentially and administered to the learners by the school for the benefit of not only the learner but the society at large. Simply put, the curriculum is the totality of the teaching-learning experiences planned to effect desirable changes in learners for the benefit of the society.

Planning, on the other hand, is a systemized pattern or way of doing things that has some degree of order and harmony. Curriculum planning is a decision making and selection process that gathers relevant information to design a learning program that will help learners achieve educational goals (Obih & Oleribe, 2016:60). Cumulatively, curriculum planning must take cognizance of future factors if the system will grow and not become stagnated. This is achievable by future studies which take into account a systematic assessment of the prevalent educational practices and the forecasting of events and their possible outcomes. This leads to a curriculum for the future though developed today for tomorrow based on the tenants of future studies or futurism. There is no better time to plan for the future of education than now when Nigeria is obviously confronted with a mirage of challenges especially in the educational system. Curriculum planning using future studies will no doubt be a panacea for the challenges and provide a prospect for quality education for the future generation. The curriculum planned based on future studies will be used in the education system such that what will be implemented in the education system would have a clear direction thereby resulting to better future quality education (Siraj and Abdullah, 2011).

In Nigeria, the challenge of providing free education for all her citizens form an evergrowing population, provision of required world standard skills and expertise for developmental purposes have all proven to be a mirage because of the fallen standard of education and poor quality education being provided by the government and other stakeholders (Ogwu, 2016). While there has been a series of economic development plans, planning for education particularly has shown to be a difficult area; if education is adequately planned, then could the poor quality education today be attributed to poor implementation of the plans? In any case there is a problem directly or related to planning which in the view of this paper can be handled by future studies. Without planning the curriculum, education of the present and tomorrow is jeopardized, and without future studies, curriculum planning is practically impossible. And yet without curriculum planning, the educational system will soon become obsolete and inconsequential. This study therefore, takes a look at the Nigerian experience in future planning of the educational system, approaches and strategies for



future planning, why Nigeria needs future studies in planning curriculum and the relevance of future studies planning curriculum, some possible challenges in planning curriculum. The paper postulates prospect as proffered solutions to the challenges future studies and curriculum in Nigeria.

NIGERIA'S EXPERIENCE IN FUTURE STUDIES FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING

In the course of researching for this paper, it was discovered that literature that deal directly with future studies in Nigeria are not so common. Literature on general education planning are available in diverse forms not particularly associated or based on studies of the future or futurism in Nigerian education. No wonder Uwatt (2009) concluded that futuristic study is almost an exclusive reserve of the developed countries like Europe and America. Siraj, & Abdullah (2011) listed the following evidence to show that developed nations have been engaged in futuristic studies for long:

1. The RAND (Report on a Long-Range Forecasting Study) Corporation, Santa Monica, California, has published findings on futures studies in RAND report since the 1950s.
2. The establishment of Futures Studies Centres in higher institutions in the US.
3. Birth of journals on futures such as (a) *Futures*; (b) *International Journal of Forecasting*.
4. The establishment of councils and societies for futures studies in Western countries.
5. Futures studies by Carswell, Thomas, Petre, Price, and Richards (1999).

This shows that Advanced World have used the studies of the future for planning while not much is hard of for Nigeria in terms of future studies in planning curriculum. It is however logical to point out that Nigeria's experience in planning has majorly involved series of economic development plans which unfortunately fail to include future studies for educational development. The closet experience in curriculum planning using future studies is the National Policy on Education which has through many revised versions beginning from 1977 included an agenda to look into the future for planning educational curriculum in Nigeria (NPE 2014). According to Denim (2018), the 7-point agenda of the former (late) President Musa Yaradua could easily be said to be the most recent appreciable effort at future planning that clearly recognizes education generally. This plan though medium term included education as the 7th agenda (Denim, 2018). The most unfortunate of all may be the current (2017-2020) Nigeria Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) by the present (2018) government (Advocacy for Investment Opportunities and Economy, 2017). Going through this plan it was discovered that it did not provide any clear-cut focus on education generally let alone curriculum planning. An outline of the development plans includes; 1st Development Plan 1962- 1967, 2nd Development plan 1970- 1974, 3rd Development Plan 1975- 1980, 4th Development plan 1981-1986. This also is classified into; the eras of Fixed Medium Plans, Rolling Plans and new Democratic Dispensation (Teniola, 2018, NaijaQuest.com, 2018). This paper is not primarily dealing with national development plans (hence, no much details on the development plans is provided), it is however expected that development plans should fully capture plans for educational planning for the future. A study of these plans shows that no such proper future studies were made for today's education. This may be why the nation has found itself in this low-quality education status today.

NEED FOR FUTURE STUDIES FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING FOR QUALITY EDUCATION

Attainment of set goals and delivery of quality education to citizens and the realization of a bright future is not what can be achieved in the world of dreams. Obih and Oleribe (2016) succinctly put it that curriculum planning deserves a careful process and should consider all factors and sources of data that influence the planning of school curriculum. They realized that to plan and provide quality

education for the citizenry curriculum planners need consider all factors and sources of data which in future studies. The needs of the society are achievable with careful planning, concerted, continual and uncompromising effort initiated and vigorously pursued to meet these needs. The developed world has keyed into this and are reaping the fruits thereof (Siraj, & Abdullah (2011). The establishment of Futures Studies Centres in higher institutions in the US. Birth of journals on futures such as (a) *Futures*; (b) *International Journal of Forecasting*. The establishment of councils and societies for futures studies in Western countries are testimonies to this claim (Siraj & Addullah 2011). Nigeria as a nation needs to tap into this resource to lift the present level of education and guarantee a greater future for the teeming population. What then are the needs for future studies particularly as it concerns Nigerian curriculum planning? The decline in the fortunes of education with its attendant low quality of educational products has been in the public burner on issues of urgent concern. This has led to assorted debates and discourse among educationist, Ministries, Departments, Government agencies and other stakeholders. The reinvention of curriculum planning using future studies will serve as a catalyst for strengthening and reinvigoration of quality education in the nation. The quest for sustainable development, political stability and enhance security is a direct call for re-planning of education curricular in Nigeria. Education been as an instrument for all and encompassing future of a nation is vague without curriculum and instruction. Hence, revitalizing curriculum and instruction will in no small measure set the stage for political stability and enhanced security (Obih and Oleribe 2016). This has the capacity to propel the progress and prosperity of the citizenry and in the long run all round advancement of Nigeria. Based on this the following needs for future studies are identified:

1. To discover current trends that will help forecast future events and their possible consequences on education and nation-building.
2. To access and asses' data that of current significance in planning to help organized schools and other educational institutions that use Nigerian curriculum.
3. To take deliberate and decisive steps to deal with the dwindling fortunes of Nigerian education.
4. Future studies in building future curriculum can be used as a tool to plan strategies of fast-tracking development and correcting anomalies in the Nigerian education presently.
5. To create opportunities for in-depth research for curriculum development/design and to provide sound bases for policymakers in curriculum and education institutions (Siraj, & Abdullah (2011:226).
6. In an ever-changing environment wired by technological and digitalization of almost every single facet of human existence, planning for future can should not be compromised. This will ensure the Nigerian curriculum is abreast with global competitive advancements.

STRATEGIES/APPROACHES FOR FUTURISTIC STUDIES IN PLANNING CURRICULUM

Numerous strategies or approaches have been propounded by educational experts for futuristic studies which are applicable for future curriculum planning. The following are accepted as some that can be used (Siraj, & Abdullah, 2011, Saedah 2005, 2006):

1. Delphi technique (experts' consensus opinion);
2. Cross-impact analysis;
3. Alternative futures projection;
4. Visioning approach;
5. Scenario planning;
6. Word mapping;
7. Linear or classic projection;



8. Bibliographic analysis;
9. Environmental scanning;
10. Trend extrapolations;
11. Future scanning and analysis method;
12. Historical analogy;
13. Technological forecasting;
14. Technological impact assessment;
15. Intuition and intuitive forecasting;

Since future studies for curriculum planning is a very essential part of planning education for future generations (Bolstad, 2011), it is expedient that assorted approaches could be used to ensure a near perfect plan.

PROSPECTS OF CURRICULUM PLANNING THROUGH FUTURE STUDIES

Future studies provides and impetus to curriculum planning in the nation, institutions and even the world of work as asserted by Bolstad (2011), it provides a glimpse for considering the prospect of education using future studies which include; thinking about students in their future lives, the future of schooling and preparing young people and communities/ society to deal with future focused issues. These may among others include:

1. The roles of planners and curriculum designers would be vital in ascertaining the future direction of the education system. However, future (an important element of the curriculum) and future forecasting includes data (an important element of the future curriculum) are two significant elements in planning or forming the curriculum for an institution or nation. In other words, future studies makes curriculum becomes an important element in any planning for development of an institution or nation.
2. Forecasting future with data can assist an institution or country to make various preparations including finance, infrastructure and human resource to achieve each of their goals. This provides a brighter future for younger generations.
3. Through modification (a key element in the future planning), additional goals which are related to the institution or the future of a nation will be attainable.
4. Curriculum Planners, policy legislators and curriculum implementation experts are the main asset of an institution or country the future generation and its global community.
5. Research data from future studies can provide a balance to curb bad policies which could be detrimental to the future and the nation. The data can also provide a curriculum which is able to handle unexpected needs of the current society and for the future by creating educated and broad-minded individuals of the younger generation and with that, they are hoped to be able to live more comfortably.
6. Developers and curriculum developers with future studies expertise would be able to plan current concepts which are principled on national culture, logic and moral values. In fact, they are able to analyze the nation's philosophical principles and the need of the current youth and solve future problems indefinitely.
7. Planners and curriculum developers with future studies background would be more dedicated, competitive and possessing self-identity in confronting challenges and pressing obstacles, including the current erratic characteristics of society, as well as the future needs of the nation. (Saedah, 2001).

CHALLENGES AGAINST FUTURE STUDIES FOR CURRICULUM PLANNING IN NIGERIAN EDUCATION

The nightmare of poor educational performance in Nigeria coupled with the abysmal performance in the world of work are clear testimonies of the malady of education in Nigeria. Agwu (2006) succinctly lamented that the recent introduction of post- UTME by Universities, Colleges and other tertiary institutions may not be disassociated with the crises of planning which has bedevilled the nation's education sector. Hence, curriculum planning have suffered a great deal leading to regrettable consequences of renowned proportions. As already pointed out traces of classical future planning or studies in Nigerian education are very scanty. This may not be unconnected with the sterile challenges or factors militating against this wholesome practice which is yielding the desired result for the developed world. Some of these challenges are outlined below according to Udoh (2017) and Ayeni (2015):

1. The scarcity of accurate and up-to-date data on education issues.
2. Corruption in governments and individual institutions, schools and communities.
3. Ignorance of the need for future studies/planning and poverty of vision for the future.
4. Inadequate funding of future studies in education generally and for future curriculum. This is generally based on the poor funding of education and the low status accorded education in Nigeria.
5. Poor skills in data gathering and processing.
6. Inadequate data processing machines.
7. Political instability and crises.
8. Inconsistency and discontinuation of policies by governments.
9. Religious, regional and ethnic monsters who selfishly interpret every demand for information based on their agenda and interest.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the foregoing, it is obvious that future studies is of immense benefit to curriculum planning and will be of invaluable advantage for curriculum implementation and overall quality education in Nigeria. The paper, therefore, proffers the following solutions to mitigate these challenges:

1. Government and private owners of tertiary institutions in Nigeria should borrow a leaf from the US and European countries and establish future studies institutes that will be charged with the responsibility of researching and forecasting educational issues.
2. Students in Nigerian tertiary institutions should be encouraged and given incentives to embark on studies of the future as courses in the Nigerian universities or other specialized institutions of higher learning.
3. Futuristic studies should be included or introduced in Nigerian tertiary institution to expand the awareness on future studies in education and other fields of learning.
4. For the above suggestions to be realizable, government and education policymakers should appropriate funds for feasibility studies that will lead to the initiation of this idea.
5. Curriculum experts should provide a forum for discussion on future studies particularly in curriculum planning and development and ensure futuristic studies becomes part and parcel of curriculum studies in all educational institutions of learning.

CONCLUSION

Planning for the future is *sin qua non* to succeeding in the future. If for nothing, that the developed world is using it and its working for them is enough reason for Nigerian to give it a trial. This led the writer to study what future studies is as well as looking at the strategies or approaches to futuristic studies. The aim was to provide a frame work for the revitalization of future studies and



create awareness for the need for future studies in Nigerian educational system. The writer, therefore, explored the meaning of curriculum, curriculum planning, the concept of future studies and provided the need and relevance of future studies particularly for Nigeria, suggesting that concrete steps should be taken to introduce future studies in the Nigerian tertiary education system. Create an enabling environment for curriculum planning using future studies as global best practice.

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