

ASPECTS OF THE “MANAGEMENT ROLE” OF THE PRODUCTIVE TEACHER OF THE UNIVERSAL BASIC EDUCATION IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS.

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Abstract

As a curricular artefact, the new Nigeria's Universal Basic Education (UBE) has become constituted into one of the importantly embedded features in the structures of her educational system. This universal Basic Education has become accepted as one of those critical pivots of our educational practices. Its curricular dimensions and underpinnings imply that it is submerged in immense interdisciplinary commitments. This development conveys a notion of curriculum integration and it suggests that the new Universal basic Education has to cope with complex methodological demands which are intrinsic to an effective classroom dispensation of its associated subject matter. It follows, therefore, that the complex structural issues which stem from the curricular underpinnings and dimensions of the Universal Basic Education has to be effectively confronted and addressed by the professional 'teacher-manager' if we are to attain the goals and objectives associated with the new scheme.

INTRODUCTION

A major development associated with the present regime in Nigeria is the pride of place it has accorded to the Universal Basic Education. The Government's proposed Blue print on the Universal Basic Education (UBE), as revealed in the Guardian (1999:33), is to universalize access to basic education, engender a conducive learning environment and eradicate illiteracy in Nigeria within the shortest possible time. Other objectives of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education programme include the following:

- (a) developing in the entire citizens a strong consciousness for education and a strong commitment to its vigorous promotion;
- (b) reducing drastically the drop-out rate from the formal school system through improved relevance and efficiency;
- (c) providing free, compulsory universal basic education to every Nigerian child of school-going age;
- (d) caring for drop-outs and out-of-school children/adolescents through various forms of complementary approaches to the provision and promotion of basic education; and
- (e) ensuring an acquisition of the appropriate levels of literacy, numeracy, manipulative and life skills needed for laying the foundation for life-long learning.

Thus, the curriculum framework enshrined in Nigeria's universal Basic Education (UBE) endorses that instructions in it should not only be governed by the principles of immediacy and utility but also should be channelled to a major purpose of enabling young learners acquire desirable attitudes and attributes characteristic of effective citizens who are expected to function within the framework of a democratic society. This philosophy emphasizes, among other things, that classroom dispensation of the curricular imperatives built into this Universal Basic Education should not only lay solid foundations for a perpetuation of democratic principles and a just society but might also positively influence a fashioning-out of youths and students alike who are expected to be acutely aware of the characteristics of a democracy and be committed to its ideals.

Thus the curricular underpinnings of the Nigerian Universal Basic Education is expected to provide young learners with insight into the use of various knowledge structures and procedures that have relevance in modern civilization. It is concerned with fostering better understanding of the movements and personalities that have influenced the history of Nigeria. It does not only deal with the controls imposed on our lives by political, social and economic institutions, but also capitalizes on a fostering and improvement of human relationships through a better understanding of others. A major objective of the Universal Basic Education impinges, therefore, on a development and improvement of living generally, not merely in the classroom but in the community, country

and in the world as a whole. A curriculum programme of that nature has to be seen in terms of a development of intelligent, responsible and self-directing citizens.

The foregoing considerations on the objectives and goals of Nigeria's Universal Basic Education raise tasks of no mean pedagogical importance. The issues, objectives and goals involved are not only seriously all-embracing in their curricular demands but are also no easy tasks to surmount. In other words, the emergence of the 'new' Universal Basic Education implies, among other things, that teachers are being called upon to develop new approaches to teaching new courses and programmes. Thus teachers are also required to arm themselves with the necessary resources and where-with-all that would enable them to effectively function as pedagogical assets designed to make the new scheme successful.

Major Issues Involved In the Management Role of the Productive Teacher of the Curricular Imperatives of the Universal Basic Education in the Context of Nigerian Schools.

The place of 'management' as applied to an achievement of objectives associated with the curricular imperatives of the Universal Basic Education is not merely an issue of classroom dispensation of subject matter or content alone. It also embraces and places much emphases on the question of method. Davis (1976) endorses that the term 'method' implies an approach - a path which encourages not only progress but also continuity. He expatiates further that every journey along this path depends upon a master-thought, a plan or idea which imparts direction as well an anticipation of probable results. Thus, the 'teacher-manager' of the curricular imperatives of the Universal Basic Education is seen as an organizer of learning resources rather than himself being the sole source of learning. He is meant to stimulate the appropriate situation in which skills will be acquired by the learner rather than stamping-in these skills into the learner through behaviouristic steps. In other words, this teacher needs to make explicit the principles by which effective planning is achieved. This development is bound to capitalize and endorse the importance of communicating these principles so that they might become, in time, part of the professional expertise of the productive and resourceful 'teacher-manager' of the UBE construed as a curriculum design. These principles, among other things, will involve the process of planning and execution of lesson units in which learners are expected to play active roles. Thus, the process, apart from defining, directing and co-ordinating what learners are meant to learn, is expected to give direction, coherence and purpose to their learning experiences. In these contexts, the teacher-manager of the UBE curriculum in Nigerian schools has to demonstrate interest in a number of vital issues and activities including the following:

- (a) how the planning is executed in terms of a display of effectiveness in the classroom dispensation of the curriculum content of the UBE;
- (b) what criteria may best be used to decide between alternative possibilities for achieving the objectives and or goals associated with the UBE as a curriculum design; and
- (c) how to judge the effectiveness of the planning in terms of determining the extent to which the aims and objectives that prompted the planning have been achieved.

Again, the importance of 'management', as applied to a classroom dispensation of the curricular imperatives of the UBE by the productive teacher is inextricably linked-up with a variety of processes and activities used in solving educational problems generally. The teacher-manager has to see these developments as 'a rational, problem-solving approach to education, a way of thinking skeptically and systematically about learning and teaching with reference to the UBE as a curriculum design. Thus, this teacher-manager is called upon to institute, within the framework of teaching-learning sessions, classroom interactions between himself and the learners which essentially derive from an application of 'an integrated and systematic method of designing, planning, implementing and evaluating the total process of learning and teaching in terms of specific objectives, research information on human learning and the process of communication (Joof and Okam, 1992).

Based on the demands reflected above, the Nigeria's Universal Basic Education demands and stipulates that the 'manager-role' of the productive teacher of the curriculum design associated with the 'new' scheme represents an appeal for increased professionalism on his part. This development must necessarily capitalize design associated with the 'new' scheme represents an appeal for increased professionalism on his part. This development must necessarily capitalize and derive nourishment from an approach which is essentially 'process-oriented'. The approach is not only 'inquiry-based' and 'experience-centred' it also involves a conception of 'flexible grouping', and 'doing-things-with' and a host of other concepts which are designed to protect the interest of the learner and commit him seriously to the learning process (Joof and Okam, 1992). The approach is also inextricably linked with such values as 'self-fulfilment', 'self-actualization', 'responsibility',

'growth', 'probability', 'creativity', 'participation', and 'liberalism'. The approach also embraces such learning resources as 'discipline emphasis' 'independent study', 'instructional systems', and 'instructional technological practices'. The distinctive qualities of this modern philosophy of the classroom dispensation of an integrated curriculum design derive from the following: its insistence on relevant educational research; and its heavy reliance on integration and synthesis (Davis, 1976). Thus, rather than thinking about a variety of educational phenomena or things (child, teacher, parent, subjects, school, classroom, community, society etc) as separate entities, they are viewed in totality-each dynamically relating to the other in education for the purpose of building "a well spent youth".

Thus a conception of "management" in curriculum-matters in Basic Education is central to what is now designated as the "systems approach" to the total process of teaching and learning. This approach emanates from the belief that isolated parts can rarely provide adequate information about a system, but knowledge about the system can provide valuable information about the functioning of the component parts. The approach enables the professional teacher to isolate and identify problems and select optional strategies and evaluate both their effectiveness and their effects on the working of the overall education or training system with particular reference to the UBE as a curriculum design. The systems approach to planning instructional programmes from the curricular imperatives of the UBE provides a useful framework in which to consider applications of communication media resources and tools to processes of teaching and learning. In the systems approach, media (audio-visual aids, resource materials and devices including textbooks) are regarded as central elements in instructional design with reference to curriculum programmes. The goal is usually to help professional teachers of UBE programmes to improve instruction and stimulate learning by increasing the effectiveness of their work from a development of objectives to an evaluation of results. The systems approach introduces not only a new type of increased professionalism of the UBE. The approach largely endorses that the professional teacher of the UBE must be seen not only as a learning resource, able to balance and reconcile the conflicting task-needs of the content of the UBE with the personal and group needs of the learners.

The professional teacher of the social studies curriculum, therefore, fulfills his role performance in a way distinct from those of an instructor. For a successful execution of a lesson in UBE programmes, he has to regard himself as only a single resource amongst many, he has to capitalize on a combination of resources of better than himself as a sole resource. He is aware of the various processes involved in systems planning. Among other things, this line of thought presupposes that the teacher-manager regards the classroom in which he operates as an organization- a large system which commits all its members and other resources at its disposal for an attainment of goals for the benefit of all concerned. In other words, the professional teacher of programmes in the UBE capitalizes on a general identification and development of functions and roles which relate to the smooth functioning of his organization, the classroom (Joof and Okam, 1992). Thus Davis (1976) sees as characteristic of the teacher-manager of any given curriculum package from four broad features in terms of the educational process, namely: planning, organizing, leading and control. Since these features are regarded as a cycle which operates within a given system, they have important implications for the management-role of the productive teacher of the curricular imperatives of the Universal Basic Education within the framework of Nigerian schools.

Implications of the 'Management Role' of the Production Teacher of the Universal Basic Education in Nigerian Schools

That the teacher-manager of the curriculum underpinnings of the UBE to relate his "management role" with the demands of the "systems approach" in the framework of the classroom represents a compromise. This approach would seem to compromise the process of applying available knowledge in a systematic way to solving problems in education and training generally. It is worth underscoring that effective management in any teaching-learning situation in the context of the UBE curriculum must be associated with problem-solving (Tanner and Tanner, 1980).

If the professional teacher of the UBE curriculum is looked upon as a problem-solver in any teaching-learning situation, his "management role" in the context of the classroom implies that events must be organized to conform to plan since they are not self-effecting. This thinking pattern involves looking ahead and taking steps to predict and to control events rather than being controlled by them. Teacher professionalism in the sphere of effective classroom dispensation of the UBE curriculum demands a high degree of expertise and a sound knowledge of a synthesis, on the part of the teacher and two major issues which essentially impinge on the content and methods of basic education are:

- (a) an acceptance of the view that broadly-based social issues cut across the boundaries of the academic disciplines. Thus the curriculum implication of a conception of “integration” regarding the content areas of the curriculum of basic education derives and revolves around the idea that a single subject is not enough to adequately understand the interaction of man and his environment; and that
- (b) any effective implementation of the curricula underpinnings of basic education programmes largely depends on professional teachers whose expertise does not necessarily derive from their subject-matter knowledge or background but rather depends on their rational application of the methodologies and styles of teaching which can contribute significantly in bringing about innovations and developments associated with curricular integration.

In essence, the professional teacher has to recognize that a major aim for classroom dispensation of basic education is to create more meaningful experiences and challenges for young learners than would be the case if the content or subject-matter involved is presented as single subject disciplines. Probably the most critical aspect of developing teaching-learning programmes in the basic education curriculum is the selection of teachers. Teachers who are involved in these programmes must not only possess a very high degree of expertise in their subject fields but must also have acquired an excellent dimension in their ability to work with young people. Since the main thrust in basic education is essentially innovative, professional teachers with a proclivity to seek newer ways are highly prized. The emphasis in teacher-development is on placing them where they can facilitate learning, not impede it (Okam, 1995).

For a successful implementation of curriculum programmes in basic education, teachers are bound to be confronted with five-fold tasks and roles, among others, namely:

- (i) Possessing an awareness regarding the organizational patterns of curriculum programmes in basic education;
- (ii) Committing young learners to the unique characteristics of basic education;
- (iii) Fostering independent study amongst young learners
- (iv) Creating an awareness amongst young learners regarding their roles in curriculum programmes in basic education;
- (v) Instituting extensive testing and evaluation programmes for dealing with learners’ progress.

The fore-going tasks are considered in some detail below.

Possessing an Awareness Regarding the organizational patterns of Curriculum Programmes in Basic Education.

An adoption of effective teaching procedure in basic education programmes implies that a well thought-out plan has been formulated for the purpose of achieving higher efficiency and effectiveness in relationship to instructional objectives. This development can evolve essentially through a careful and continuous analysis of intent before an adoption of the teaching process and during the developmental stage. Richardson (1971) has revealed the following characteristics which are typical of teaching situations in basic education classrooms, namely that:

- (a) a common purpose exists between the teacher and the pupils;
- (b) the teacher concentrates in various talents displayed amongst the pupils by pooling those unique capabilities that are relevant to the purpose of the teaching situation;
- (c) learning activity is planned by the teacher and implemented by him;
- (d) the teacher capitalizes on the unique talents of pupils;
- (e) the teacher continually assesses pupil performance in the light of specific objectives;
- (f) the teacher’s enterprise encourages interpersonal relationships that foster social growth and a consistently higher level of performance on the part of the individual pupil.

Committing Young Learners to the Unique Characteristics of Basic Education.

A classroom dispensation of curriculum programmes in the UBE implies that the teacher should be responsible for executing the following tasks in terms of the learners, namely:

- (a) acquainting learners with activities and exercises which are meant to assist them to uncover the intricacies and nuances of the respective concepts that are involved in the educational programmes encountered:

- (b) impressing in the minds of learners that the basic education curriculum represents an embodiment of units that contain a rationale, a set of behavioural objectives and a variety of activities from which they can select optional paths.
- (c) assisting learners to recognize that the curriculum package associated with basic education requires many more materials than one has come to expect in conventional classroom;
- (d) creating an awareness in the learners that they are expected to dig for information on their own, weight their alternative data, come to conclusions, and evaluate their accomplishments;
- (e) emphasizing on a creation of forms for learner enrichment not necessarily on the depth of work covered.

Fostering Independent Study amongst Learners

In the process of executing basic education programmes, the teacher has a task to display in regard to fostering independent study among learners. His commitment in this regard has to address certain basic purpose, namely:

- (a) providing learners with experiences in using human and material resources within a group of individuals;
- (b) developing in learners a sense of responsibility for executing their own learning activities;
- (c) providing learners with opportunities to pursue their special interest and talents (Lee, 1971).

Creating an Awareness Amongst Learners Regarding the Roles in Basic Education Programmes

With regard to the above subject-matter, the teacher has three distinct but related roles and tasks to execute in terms of learners involved in programmes, namely:

- (a) orientation and adaptation of learners;
- (b) catering for individual differences amongst learners;
- (c) confronting learners with their own roles and tasks.

With regard to the first role, the teacher-manager must necessarily arrive at some kind of inventory of prior learner accomplishments in order to place him in the curriculum sequence appropriate to his intellectual development. This teacher has to explore the usefulness of commercial materials (instructional gadgets and aids) to help the learner achieve mastery. Thus, where the commercial materials exist, the teacher has to plug them into teaching-learning units where most appropriate. When commercial materials do not exist to help learners gain concept mastery, they have to be improvised and invented by the teacher.

On the issues of catering for individual differences among learners, the teacher has to be aware that the framework within which the UBE operates lends itself to flexibility and decision-making particularly at the teacher level. This recognition demands that at certain teaching learning occasions, the teacher is expected to employ such arrangements as the use of contract systems and the application of learning activity packets in a bid to enhance this respect for individual differences among learners.

On the question of confronting learners with their own roles and tasks, the teacher has to impress in their minds that programmes associated with the UBE curriculum are largely built on learning by discovery. The learners are expected to participate as inquirers and must be intrinsically committed to the following tasks: (i) searching for answers; (ii) testing data; (iii) drawing tentative conclusions; (iv) framing new hypotheses. The emphasis is on intrinsic regards and ultimate learner independence.

Extensive Testing and Evaluation Programmes for dealing with Learners' Progress in the UBE.

The "Integrated Curriculum" which is in-built in the UBE calls for extensive testing programme for determining progress registered by each pupil exposed to it. Pupil assessment should be a team effort and is based on the use and application of several criteria including the following:

- (a) an application of standardized and teacher-made tests;
- (b) a utilization of past performances, including a use of past records;
- (c) an establishment of teachers' judgement about social maturity, emotional maturity, and physical maturity;
- (d) a determination of the extent there is a display of cooperation and willingness to accept responsibilities;
- (e) a utilization of many forms of academic performance; and
- (f) a determination of attitudes, particularly attitude towards the group and peers (Okam, 1995).

Concluding Remarks

The teaching and learning of the curricular underpinnings of the UBE within the Nigerian schools system represents a reaction against an employment of separate classroom instructions in the traditional subject

disciplines (geography, history, economics, religious knowledge, biology etc) to pass for worthwhile endeavours and activities in these establishments. The major argument for the emergence of the UBE as a curriculum package is largely buttressed on the view that its raison d'être is meant to capitalize and explore the process "interdisciplining the conceptual frameworks and methods of a variety of forms of knowledge and thought processes and channelling them to bear on the study or examination of human and societal problems in their environmental settings for their comprehensive analysis and understanding. These developments associated with the UBE curriculum (new instructional strategies, new concepts, new methods, devices, materials and equipment) represent an appeal for increased professionalism and productivity. Thus the management of learning in the context of the UBE curriculum within the framework of Nigerian schools involves much more than mere instruction. It has to do not only with the art of co-ordinating resources and efforts in a classroom setting but also entails dividing work and functions amongst responsibilities. The teacher-manager of the UBE curriculum has to cope with these demands effectively in a typical classroom situation if he is to worth his salt.

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