



AN ASSESSMENT OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM IN NIGERIAN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the assessment of the implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum in Nigerian schools. The aim of the Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is to encourage students to participate in those activities which foster personal discipline, character training, tolerance, reconciliation & peaceful co-existence. Despite these rich objectives of the Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum, however, there is a growing perception that Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is not effectively implemented in the Nigerian primary and secondary schools as no much impact on the lives and the receiving students seem to have been observed over the time. It is in the light of this that this paper attempts to examine critically the reasons for not implementing the curriculum as expected and proffer solutions to it. Library sources and internet sources were used to gather relevant data / information for the study. From the study, it was discovered that there are challenges confronting the implementation of the Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum in Nigerian schools such as inadequate funding, use of auxiliary teachers, student attitude to this subject among others. The authors therefore recommend that the government should provide adequate and relevant instructional material for school while only qualified teachers in the field of Christian Religious Studies should be employed to teach in our schools.*

KEYWORDS: Assessment, Implementation, Christian Religious Knowledge, Curriculum, Nigerian, Schools.



INTRODUCTION:

Christian Religious Knowledge (CRK) as known at primary and secondary school level is a subject

that has always played an important role in human history. It is one of those subjects that provide opportunities for the full development of the child's cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains.

Christian Religious Knowledge serves as a foundation for moral and spiritual guidance for the pupils/students. It gives a sense of direction and ability to differentiate between what is right and wrong (Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council NERDC, 2007). Religion and Moral Education have been widely accepted as determinants of national development in modern society, hence the inclusion of the subject in the school curriculum. Also Christian Religious Knowledge has its foundation in the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2004). It is advocated in some sections of the policy for all levels of learning. The policy emphasized that religious instruction and moral education shall be taught and learnt in schools.

Thus, the national curriculum for religious education evolved over time as a reflection of the social perception and historical development of the society concerned. Christian Religious Knowledge is a subject concerned with the upbringing, instructing and informing students on Christian beliefs and practices as found in the Holy Bible and Christian tradition (Omali, 2001). The Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum aims at producing the learners that will be God fearing, morally sound, highly disciplined, useful to themselves and the society.

Obilom in Eluu (2011) asserted that Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is designed to teach not only the content of the holy book but also the moral lessons desirable therefrom. The major aim of inclusion of Christian Religious Studies in the education curriculum is to raise a generation of people who can think for themselves, respect the views and feelings of others, appreciate dignity of labor and those moral values specified in the broad national aim as good citizens. While at the secondary school level, the subject is meant to prepare learners for useful living through inculcation of Christian attitudes & values, and to prepare learners for higher education (Akubue, 2012). Considering the usefulness of Christian Religious Knowledge as a subject to national development and nation building, implementation of the CRK curriculum at the primary and secondary level of education in Nigeria is a great task that cannot be overlooked.

The objective of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is to grow the student to be morally sound, disciplined and dedicated to the dignity of labor and to be good citizens. Hence, Christian Religious Knowledge has been approved by the National Policy of Education (NPE) as one of the subjects to be taught and studied in primary and secondary school in Nigeria (NPE, 2013).

The aim is to encourage students to participate in those activities which foster personal discipline, character training, tolerance, reconciliation, and peaceful co-existence. In addition, the inclusion of Christian Religious Knowledge in the primary and secondary is aimed at providing opportunities for Nigerian youth to learn more about God and the divine order with a view to produce well-ordered personalities and citizens with commendable character.



Despite these rich objectives of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum for our primary and secondary school, however, there is a growing perception suggesting that Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is not effectively implemented in the Nigerian primary and secondary school, as no much impact on the lives of the receiving student seems to have been observed over the time. This has been hinged on the assumption that the set moral objectives of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum have not surfaced in the behaviors of the student as moral decay appears to be the rule of life in the society today. For example, youth involvements in some negative social practice, like drug abuse, permissiveness, armed robbery, racial violence, prostitution, indiscipline, examination malpractices and other moral vices have been interpreted in some quarters to suggest that religious education has lost its purpose and hence the curriculum design for the religious subject in the Nigerian primary and secondary schools is either deficient, with regard to moral building of the future generation as contained in the national philosophy and educational goals, or it has not been effectively implemented (Ikechukwu & Ugwuzor, 2014). It is in the light of the above, that this paper sought to access the factors militating against the implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum in Nigerian schools.

Concept of Curriculum

The term curriculum is an educational concept which has been viewed differently by Philosophers, researchers, practitioners/teachers and the laypersons alike. Curriculum is the sum total of what teachers and their pupils do at school, all the related and relevant activities related in and outside school (Alaezi, 1989). Dike and Eze (2009) defines curriculum as an embodiment of all the knowledge, skills and attitude which a nation through the school impacts on its citizens. Their emphasis is on learning especially needed by the citizens to function properly in the society. Okeke (1981) further defines curriculum as a series of planned learning activities a child is exposed to in the course of its development, the aim of which is to make him/her develop fully his/her potential so as to function effectively in the community.

Furthermore, curriculum is a standard based sequence of planned experiences where students practice and achieve proficiency in concept and applied learning skills. Curriculum is the central guide of all educators as to what is essential for teaching and learning, so that every student can have access to rigorous academic experiences. Curriculum is the combination of instructional practice, learning experience and student performance assessment that are designed to bring out and evaluate the target learning outcomes of a particular course.

Etete (1995) states that the curriculum contains all the functions in the school like knowledge, principles, aims and objectives, teachers facilities, interest, value, society needs , processes, culture, growth, among others. In this regard, there is no doubt that school curriculum affects the values and practices of the society in totality through the help of the teacher. In a nutshell, no teacher, no curriculum. Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is included in the school not only as a school teaching subject but as a means of fostering the religious, spiritual and moral development of the students.



Curriculum Implementation Process in Christian Religious Knowledge

Curriculum implementation is a very important aspect of the curriculum process.

Curriculum implementation entails putting into practice the officially prescribed courses of study, syllabuses and subject, the process involves helping the learner acquire knowledge or experience.

Curriculum implementation cannot take place without the learner. Curriculum implementation helps to give learners the appropriate/relevant content with the application of the learners environment in order to make learning real. It helps to ensure that the set goals and objectives are achieved. It enables effective/proper assessment and evaluation of the curriculum.

Teachers are the main curriculum implementers while at the same time students, parents, school administrators can be directly or indirectly involved in the implementation process. Leonard (2014) affirmed that if curriculum is not implemented, all efforts expended in the planning are to no avail. The teacher is the dominant figure in the curriculum implementation process. He is the final decision maker concerning the actual learning opportunities to be provided by learners and how they are able to present guided and evaluated mechanisms for the particular learner involved. As the ultimate implementer of the curriculum, the teacher must necessarily translate the curriculum into real classroom operation.

Offorma (2005) defines curriculum implementation as the transmission of the planned curriculum into operational curriculum. The major implementers of the planned curriculum are the teachers, they set up learning opportunities aimed at the desired knowledge, skills, attitudes and values. The teacher plays a crucial role in curriculum implementation. How he plans and presents his lessons, guides and evaluates learners involved in curriculum implementation. Indeed, as the ultimate implementer of the curriculum, the teacher translates the curriculum into real classroom operation. This is done focusing on the syllabus which is derived from the curriculum. While the curriculum represents the total planned programmes for all the school subjects in some years, the syllabus contains recommended topics and selected learning experiences aimed at meeting the set educational goals. The syllabus is further broken down into a scheme of work unit plan and lesson plan by subjects' teachers in the school respectively for transmission to students.

The scheme of work is the splitting of the recommended topics and selected learning experiences contained in the syllabus into manageable portions on a term and yearly basis. This is done with a view to guide the teachers in making instructional plans as it stipulates specific topics to be covered within term or season.

On the other end, unit plan is the identified closely-related subject matters and learning experiences which constitute the unit of work meant to be taught within a few weeks, for example between two and six weeks. A further split of the unit produces the lesson from which the teacher designs a lesson plan for effective delivery of the lesson to students in the classroom. A lesson plan is an orderly and sequential arrangement of the lesson, consisting of the subject matter to be taught, the instructional objectives to be achieved and the performance activities of both the teacher and the learner in the course of lesson delivery (Ikechukwu & Ugwuzor, 2014). This is indeed a very critical point in curriculum implementation.



Challenges to Implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge Curriculum in Nigeria

1. **Inadequate funding:** One of the challenges confronting education in Nigeria is inadequate funding. This is also a critical challenge in curriculum implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge in Nigerian schools as funds usually released by the Government are usually inadequate and insufficient to cater for the needs for implementing the curriculum. No curriculum can be implemented effectively without adequate funds for it.
2. **Inadequate facilities/Infrastructure:** Classrooms' facilities are not adequate in most Nigerian primary and secondary schools. This has resulted in a large population of learners using classrooms that are small in size or classrooms not available at all.
3. **Curriculum overload:** There is a curriculum overload. However, Ivowi (2005) noted that the content of the curriculum is satisfactory though overloaded. Offorma (2006) laments that the issue is not only the large amount of knowledge, skills, attitude and values to be presented to the learner, but the availability of adequate time and resources for the implementation of those content areas. The non-coverage of the content makes the learner to be half-baked as some teacher runs to cover the contents, thereby treating the content shabbily why others leave a lot of ground uncovered. This observation by Offorma succinctly explains the nature of the problem encountered in school.
4. **The use of auxiliary teachers:** The teacher occupies a central position in the implementation of the curriculum. This is in consonant with Ikechukwu (2014) who asserted that curriculum implementation cannot be effectively carried out without the teacher. The teacher's variables such as competence, availability, attitude, dedication and remuneration are faulty. There are many schools who are using the auxiliary teachers to teach Christian Religious Knowledge in our secondary schools. These are teachers who are not professionally qualified and competent to handle the subject - Christian Religious Knowledge but they are allowed to do so by the head or administrator of the schools. They do this with the belief that only Christian who go to church can teach Christian Religious Knowledge as a subject. Therefore lack of adequate professionally qualified teachers in Christian Religious Knowledge is a big challenge in the implementation of the curriculum as observed by Ikechukwu (2014). No matter how lofty the educational goals are, how relevant the curriculum is, teachers are the determinants of effective curriculum implementation in the school.
5. **Dearth of instructional materials:** Another great challenge to the implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum is inadequate or lack of instructional materials. Instructional materials are necessary for effective teaching and learning. Nwoju (2002) views instructional material as a device that facilitates the transmission to a learner of the fact, skill, and values which promote understanding and appreciation of concepts. It is evident that no curriculum can be implemented effectively without the availability and use of instructional materials. One of the problems is the cost of the material, and since education is poorly funded, many public schools lack the necessary instructional materials for effective teaching and learning.
6. **Student's attitude to the subject:** The attitude of most learners especially toward Christian Religious Knowledge as a subject is not encouraging. Some of these students do not attend Christian Religious Knowledge class, some do not have learning materials like textbooks



while some others feel it is a simple subject and therefore, there is no need to be serious about it. Since the status of the subject in secondary schools is not made compulsory like English language and Mathematics, it makes a lot of students neglect Christian Religious Knowledge as a useful subject. This poor attitude of students towards the subject is a great challenge to the effective implementation of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum. Learners are very pivotal to the implementation of any curriculum. If the learners do not pay necessary attention to the subject, the implementation of the curriculum becomes a great challenge.

CONCLUSION

The objectives of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum are to groom the students to be morally sound, disciplined & dedicated to dignity of labor, and to be good citizens. These objectives of the curriculum to a large extent have been implemented even though it is still confronted with some challenges. However, if the recommendations here will be implemented, it will go a long way to provide solutions to the challenges of implementing of Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum effectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are some recommendations made in the light of the study:

1. Government should make adequate provision of teaching aids needed for use by teachers available in implementing Christian Religious Knowledge curriculum effectively.
2. Qualified teachers who studied Christian Religious Studies in tertiary institutions and with relevant qualifications should be employed to teach Christian Religious Knowledge in our schools.
3. Government should provide facilities and infrastructure like classrooms equipped with relevant devices available in all schools for effective teaching and learning of Christian Religious Knowledge as a subject.
4. Teachers who teach Christian Religious Knowledge should make the subject interesting so as to motivate the learners to develop more interest in it.
5. In-service training should be given to teachers in service to enable them learn new methods and techniques of teaching Christian Religious Knowledge as a subject for better output.



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