

Generating Competency-Based Curriculum Conceptual Framework for Nigerian Secondary Schools

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Abstract

One of the most trending issues of national concern in Nigeria was the revelation by the Vice President of the country, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo that the Federal Government was redesigning school curriculum. He made this statement in the 23rd Convocation Lecture of the Lagos State University on Thursday 16th May, 2019. The details provided by the him concerning the imminent redesigning of the school curriculum arguably suggests a misdirection of education. A deep sense of concern about the implication of a possible misdirection of education in the country with its attendant retrogression and non-attainment of developmental goals constitutes the rationale for a systematic engagement with the official statement. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the curriculum reforms component of the Convocation Lecture and provide some professional ingredients that were missing therein. The essence is to support the educational enrichment interventions of the Government with appropriate ingredients. In specific terms, the paper seeks to examine the state of secondary education with regard to skills and competencies, assess implication of the Vice President's pronouncement on imminent school curriculum reform, and formulate a competency-based conceptual framework for secondary schools in the country. Grounded in the philosophical and sociological foundations of education, the paper employs a combination of the philosophical method, observation method, curriculum criticism, document analysis and creative synthesis. Its contribution to scholarship lies in its contextualization of competency-based curriculum conceptual framework designing into the Nigerian context, based on both national and regional peculiarities of the country.

Keywords: *Competency, Curriculum, Conceptual, Framework*

1. Introduction

There is a growing misconception in Nigeria that schooling is no more than physical presence or attendance of students and teachers at their meeting point otherwise known as school (Grace, 2018; Chinello, 2011; Collins, 2018; Abdulyassar, 2018; Abdullah & Muhammad, 2015; & Abdulkarim, 2010). Pursuant to this line of thinking, Collins (2018) notes that the government erroneously hold that by building structures and hiring few teachers regardless of the quality involved, a school can be said to have been founded for children to be enrolled for the purpose of certification. Consequently, such children as having been enrolled in such schools are certificated without attaining the required level in knowledge and skills acquisition and

values cultivation. He argues that this is chief among the factors accounting for the production of substandard, unemployable graduates in the country. It goes without saying that such a system of education has no regard for competencies or any meaningful learning outcomes the acquisition of which is an indication that the learner is prepared to solve a problem through the instrumentality of his or her education (Abdullah & Muhammad, 2015). It is further argued, that only where students are guided to learn individual skills at their own pace and advance through practice and reflection of the skills, that a solution-focused learning can be achieved, especially with regard to concrete skills and abstract learning. This kind of learning attaches importance to skills and competencies as well as knowledge attitudes and values, to a degree to which such elements can be deployed in proffering solutions to certain problems.

According to Hamisu, Salleh, Sem, Adamu and Sambo (2017), failure to acquire appropriate skills and competencies in education is often associated with a

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multiplicity of problems in learning. The efficacious mature of this kind of learning, otherwise called competency-based learning explains the shift of attention to it in various countries of the world, since its originations from the United States in the 1970s. Relying on DeiBinger and Hellwig (2011), Chemagosi (2020), notes that after the introduction of the competency-based curriculum in the US, it was adopted by English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, India, New Zealand. In Brazil, Malaysia, Finland, Singapore, China, Japan, Qatar, Bahrain, Chemagosi (2020), Thailand, Brunei and other countries of the world, the competency-based curriculum flourishes and has significantly altered the landscape of learning. It was later introduced in African countries like South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya owing to the insufficient learning outcomes and low level of achievement among the students produced by the middle training colleges and adult education centres. Chemagosi (2020) adds that its introduction in various countries was not unconnected with the low level of education achievement which informed a shift from the teacher centred to the learner centred system.

In the African context, the competency-based curriculum flourishes effectively wherever it is properly implemented. According to Chemagosi (2020), the teachers were challenged in Rwanda where they embraced competency-based pedagogy in order to effectively operate in an education system whose lower primary learner profile is competency-focussed and includes acquisition of social skills, language skills, physical and mental abilities and community responsibilities. As regards Tanzania, Chemagosi (2020) opines that the introduction of competency-based curriculum was aimed at producing graduates with skills required to function in modern society. In Kenya, the introduction of the competency-based curriculum in 2019 was informed by the need to address the education-based weaknesses occasioned by the 8-4-4 curriculum (Chemagosi, 2020). In Nigeria, where the 6-3-3-4 educational system is still in operation some of the problems enumerated above, in connection with various countries, the dysfunctional roles of the education system are unmistakable. According to Ezeaku (2021), the problem with education in the country is not only with content but also with method. Ezeaku (2021:167) provide specific details of this claim where he writes: ...children very often are not required to learn to solve problems by themselves. The teacher does almost everything, giving notes in the class and presenting no challenges. They are not taught creativity so that on coming out they will look for avenues of expression of their ideas. Instead, on leaving school, every child looks

for employment in the civil service where life apparently appears easy-going. The aftermath is that we produce men who have not cultivated the habit of looking for challenges in life. Instead, we have men who are predisposed towards living an easy life, who would like to stay where they are and fatten themselves by consuming imported western goods.

It is derivable from the ongoing that Nigeria cannot be described as enjoying quality education which is central to development across countries (UNESCO, 2017). According To Adeniran, Onyekwena, Onubedo, Ishaku and Ekuruche (2020), educational performance in Nigeria is extremely low with regard to both quality and quantity. While the quantity dimension of this claim may be viewed through the lens of the fact that over 14 million school-aged children are out of school (Rufai, 2021), the quality angle may be viewed through the implications of such findings as reported by Adeniran et al (2020:11) that “Nigeria ranks 124th out of 137 countries in terms of quality of primary education” and that “58.3% of school children in Nigeria are not learning basic literacy and numeracy skills”. The connection between both quality and quantity is well covered in the increasing sophisticated corpus on the the Almajiri system of education (Muhammed, 2010; Ja’far, 2008; Okonkwo, 2017; Khalid, 2002; Baba, 2006; Baba, 2007; Baba, 2008; Aghedo & Eke, 2013; Hoechner, 2010; Hoechner, 2011; Hoechner, 2012; Okonkwo & Alhaji, 2014; & Olaniran, 2018) which arguably represents both the quality and quantity dimensions of education in Nigeria.

It is not arguable that Nigeria has not been successful in the education sector which is obviously dysfunctional. The lethargy or inaction that characterizes performance in the sector is not a function of any insurmountable challenge posed by the situation but by the capacity and state of mind of the people whose responsibility it is to address the problem (Ezeaku, 2021). The problem is not restricted to any level or section of the educational system in the country as it transcends all restrictions and distinctions. However, the present paper is focused essentially on what need be done in redirecting education in Nigeria for functionalism. The paper focuses on the Senior Secodary level of education which is fragmented into three arms namely Science, Srts and Commercial. The rationale for this choice lies in the strategic place of Senior Secondary level of education as a section where the potentials of the students for tertiary education is determined, given the deliberate orientation of most of the subjects offered at this level, towards specific disciplines.

In response to the clamour for curriculum improvement in the country, the Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo, in a convocation lecture delivered by him at the Lagos State University in 2019, hinted the citizenry of an imminent engagement with the education system by the Federal Government and provided an unambiguous account of the thinking of the Federal Government about educational reforms in the country. A high-profile lecture of that nature on the state of education in the country and possible reforms, cannot be ignored at any level. The purpose of this paper is to critically examine the curriculum reforms component of the lecture and provide some professional ingredients that were missing therein. The essence is to support the educational enrichment interventions of the Government with appropriate ingredients. In specific terms, the paper seeks to examine the state of secondary education with regard to skills and competencies, assess implication of the Vice President's oronouncement on imminent school curriculum reform, and formulate a competency-based conceptual framework for secondary schools in the country. In order to achieve a systematic pursuit of these objectives, three research questions were formulated to guide the study in correspondence with the three objectives. They are, what is the state of secondary education in Nigeria with regard to skills and competencies?; what is the implication of the Vice President's oronouncement on imminent school curriculum reform in Nigeria? and what is the nature of a competency-based curriculum conceptual framework that can be ideologically consistent with and situayionally relevant to Nigerian secondary schools?

2. Method

This study employed a combination of the philosophical method, observation and document analysis with each of the three playing a significant role in the research. As characteristic of the philosophical method, it is employed in this research to clarify terms, concepts and ideas, as well as to expose and evaluate underlying assumptions, and connect a part to another, with a view to offering a meaningful picture of the subject involved (Jorgensen, 2006). For instance, it is the philosophical method that is in action where this researcher clarifies the philological implications of the concept of competency in the context of curriculum and examines its etymological foundations. The purpose of the researcher's undertaking in that regard is to eliminate ambiguity, vagueness and possible confusion that may have been occasioned in previous engagement with the subject by other researchers. The significance of the philosophical method to in the methodological direction of this paper cannot be underestimated as it facilitates

precision and accuracy, and navigates a clear path in addressing the three research questions stated for the study namely, what is the state of secondary education in Nigeria with regard to skills and competencies?; what is the implication of the Vice President's oronouncement on imminent school curriculum reform in Nigeria? and what is the nature of a competency-based curriculum conceptual framework for Nigerian secondary schools? There is no gainsaying that the philosophical method has appropriate analytic ingredients with potential to withstand the rigour of determining the nature of a variable, the level of an experience, the association between elements, and the components or ingredients constituting a formula or proposition.

As regards the observation method which originally belongs to the family of ethnographic research methodology, it facilitates a researcher's study of people in their natural habitat with a view to understanding issues from their perspective. According to Baker (2006), observation requires the researcher to spend considerable time in the field with the possibility of adopting various roles in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the people being studied. Although Baker identifies gaining access to the group being studied, leaving the field, ethical problems as well as validity and reliability issues, as some of the concerns involved in observation as a method, it is not disputable that observation is fast gaining acceptance and recognition as a reliable method in research. Through observation, the lead researcher studied secondary school students in their normal school setting or natural academic environment at different times and different locations, for over ten years. In specific terms, the lead researcher made his observation of the secondary school students in Lagos during the years that he, at different times, was a lecturer at the University of Lagos and Lagos State University, both of which are located in the Southwestern part of Nigeria. He also made the observation in Abuja which is the Federal Capital Territory during his frequent official assignments in the administrative seat of the government, which falls in the heart of the country. The lead researcher also in Sokoto which is located in the Northwestern part of the country, where he later served as a lecturer at the Sokoto State University. At these various times, he did not only serve as lecturer within the university system but also supervised and assessed student teachers on teaching practice where they engage with secondary school students. That gave him direct access to evidence of performance of secondary school students in various parts of the country. Seeing and observing secondary school students repeatedly for an appreciable length of time, provided for repeated

observation, as well as examination and re-examination of the subject.

It should be pointed out that the ubiquitous nature and unwieldy size of the population of the secondary school students rendered unnecessary the ethical consideration concerning participant consent and access. While their ubiquity negates the question of access, the unwieldy size of their population and homogenous nature of their environment, negates the idea of consent. Being in the university setting and assessing the student teachers through the performance of the secondary school students taught by them on teaching practice, earns this researcher an unrestricted access to what Adler and Adler (1994: 377) describe as bedrock source of human knowledge about the social and natural world which is aptly characterized by Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994: 249) as collecting data firsthand. Relying on Powell and Connaway (2004, Williamson (2000) and Pearsall (1970, Baker (2006) notes that some research methods textbooks and articles describe observation as a research method as well as a data collection method. However, Baker (2006) aligns with Williamson who prefers to characterize observation as a data collection technique owing to its applicability to a multiplicity of research methods.

The study also employs curriculum criticism and creative synthesis in generating the competency-based conceptual curriculum framework for Nigerian secondary schools. The relevance of curriculum criticism in this connection lies in the fact that it provides a more comprehensive view of curricular and educational needs (Kliebard, 1992). "Curriculum criticism is premised on an analogy between the curriculum (as a set of materials offering experience to its recipients) and the work of art in any medium. The curriculum critic attempts to portray the experience offered by the work and especially the experiences offered to students. The critic serves as a bridge between a curriculum and school officials who must make a decision about it. This inquiry tool goes a step beyond the participant-observer methodologies of ethnography" (McCormick, 1990: 176). In this study, it is employed in engaging with the curricular directions offered by the Vice-President and articulating the ideal curricular orientation for the country. The potency of this method in identifying the strengths and deficiencies in any educational blue-print, for possible improvement or endorsement features prominently in this study.

As regards creative synthesis, its relevance to this study stems from its nature as a tool for "the combining of separate elements to form a coherent whole" (Murphy, 2007). The generation of a competency-based conceptual framework from the Nigerian worldview and

other sources is not without its creative and synthetic dimension. Hence the use of creative synthesis in the study especially with regard to the core principles and criteria of the competency-based curriculum for Nigeria as derived from the Nigerian national experience and regional peculiarities. It may be added that creative synthesis as a method for this study comes to the fore in the generation of core principles of the Nigeria-oriented secondary school curriculum. This method, as noted earlier, is primarily associated with the systematic selection and organization of different components into an interlinked unit or interlocked whole. This is particularly the situation where this study formulates or generates conceptual principles from the Nigerian experience or heritage as well as from some of the best practices in secondary school curriculum in the context of today.

Concerning the role of document analysis in this study, it should be noted that document analysis is a social research method that has gained general acceptance as an effective research tool for specific areas (O'Leary, 2014). It is regarded as an important components of triangulation which concerns the combination of research methods in investigation the same subject (Bowen, 2009). Abdalslam (2014) has articulated the significance of the method for both data collection and analysis in modern research. Abdalslam (2014) quotes Prior (2003: 4) as saying that 'in most social scientific work, of course, documents are placed at the margins of consideration'. Abdalslam (2014) further quotes Prior (2003) as having alluded to Weber (1978) in stating that 'the modern world is made through writing and documentation'. It is unmistakable from the foregoing that document analysis is an essential research method for both data collection and analysis where policies are involved as is the with secondary school curriculum which is the subject of the present research.

Given that the population for this study comprised all the secondary school students, the researcher have conducted long-term, consistent and repeated observations on them with regard to knowledge, skills and values. Data collected through such observation supplement the data from the literature which exposed the gaps in research and a rationale for the present study. It is interesting to note that data from long-term observation, and those from literature review and curriculum criticism constitute a source of strength for both the validity and reliability of the study. As regards validity and reliability of the data involved in the study, it is pertinent to state that the intertwined concepts of validity and reliability in the context of qualitative research, as noted by Lincoln & Guba (1985), is 'trustworthiness of a study as the naturalist's equivalent

of for internal validation, external validation, reliability and objectivity, which is achievable by credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, confirmability in qualitative research. In an attempt to demystify the concept of validation that (Eisner, 2017) constructed standards such as structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy as evidence for asserting the credibility of qualitative research. This implies that the researcher is expected to have specific credible sources to support or deny a particular view or interpretation.

That explains why in addition to a diversity of credible sources on this subject, the researcher's reliance on official educational blueprints as documents whose provisions are situated in the context of what was repeatedly observed by him as a lived experience for over ten years, and commented upon by peers, goes a long way in strengthening the validity and reliability of this study. The data so collected provided a good insight into the subject of the research as guided by the four research questions which revolve around the ideal nature of competency-based secondary school curriculum for Nigeria and possible ameliorative ideas concerning possible educational enrichment interventions that have potentials to make secondary school curriculum consistent with the indicators and targets of sustainable development.

3. Result and Discussion

This Findings subsection of this paper comprises the curriculum-focussed views and ideas contained in the submission by the Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osibajo in the Convocation Lecture delivered by him at the Lagos State University in 2019 (Osinbajo, 2019). This is so in view of the fact that such official statement constitutes the material subjected to analysis in the Discussion subsection as will be demonstrated in what follows. The salient aspects of the lecture that has serious curricular implications are captured below as findings.

It is obvious that there is need to change both the substance of education that Nigerian children receive as well as the methods by which they are educated. We are clear that the key to achieving this is to focus on Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math Education and the need for a workforce with STEAM skills to drive economic prosperity....The Federal Government new policy is to introduce Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics curriculum in primary schools...We recognise that schooling should support the development of skills in cross-disciplinary, critical and creative thinking,

problem-solving and digital technologies. These skills are essential in all 21st-century occupations.

The national curriculum being developed would not only include the teaching of coding, digital arts, design thinking, robotics, critical thinking and other skills but also using these skills in interpreting traditional curriculum topics. The aim of the Federal Government is to ensure that from early education, primary school onwards regardless of social background or geographical location every young person should have a fundamental level of digital and STEAM literacy.

There are four major logic-based derivatives in the submission as produced above. They are that there is need for curriculum change, that a decision had been taken to focus on STEAM, that a cross-disciplinary approach to skills development will be employed, that the new national curriculum is already being developed and is intended to provide for the acquisition of fundamental level of digital and STEAM literacy at all levels of education in Nigeria. A more creative look at the submission may however reveal other derivatives that may not be as central and significant (Osinbajo, 2019).

The submission by the Vice-President as provided in the foregoing, unarguably signals the next direction of education in Nigeria and also hints of the nature of the reform desired for education by the Federal Government. It is portentous of danger and calamitous educational experience if the curricular issues involved in this regard are not critically addressed, in view of the inappropriateness of some of the components mentioned in the excerpt, for the current state of education in the country. Although the components may at best be right ingredients for educational reform elsewhere, the submission is grounded in the need to "change both the substance of education that Nigerian children receive as well as the methods by which they are educated".

It is not arguable that the Nigerian education authorities are aware of the concept of theory of change in the context of school curriculum. However, the concern in this regard is, what does this imply for Nigeria with regard to the realization of a competency-based curriculum. This question leads us to the five curriculum diagnostic questions which are stated below:

- i. The Question of Intrinsic Value, which is interested in the degree of goodness and appropriateness or otherwise, of the existing school curriculum in Nigeria, in view of the fact that it is not possible to declare the present secondary school curriculum as good for nothing;
- ii. The Question of Instrumental Value, which is concerned about who the intended audience of the current Nigerian secondary school curriculum are;

- iii. The Question of Comparative Value, which seeks to identify what can make the competency-based curriculum being advocated better than the traditional or academic curriculum it is supposed to replace in Nigeria;
- iv. The Question of Idealization Value, whose focus is to determine how to make the proposed competency-based curriculum for Nigeria the best possible; and
- v. The Question of Decision Value, which seeks to make, based on evidence from the above four evaluation questions, what to retain, modify or discard in the existing programme (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004).

In keeping with the scholarship of curriculum making, it is imperative to diagnose after the above questions the Nigerian secondary school curriculum with a view to understanding what can work and why it can, with regard to competency-based curriculum for Nigerian secondary school. The imperative of this undertaking lies in its potential to facilitate a good understanding of secondary school curriculum in the country, through a careful diagnosis, of what can work for the country and why it can. In order to achieve a systematic transition, certain technical questions should be asked from the onset. These questions which have been articulated above, are ideally five and characteristically guide curriculum diagnosis (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2004; Tom, 1997; Rufai, 2012). They have potential to offer good directions, based on the peculiarities of Nigeria, concerning how to transit from the existing academic curriculum to competency-based curriculum.

In consonance with the technical nature of a curriculum framework, the formulation of the present curriculum framework is aimed at setting the parameters, standards, principles, and directions for competency-based curriculum practice. It highlights the elements of learning essential for the acquisition of target competencies and guides the evaluation and revision of education blueprints based on students' progress, with regards to learning outcomes. Rather than being a curriculum per se, this curriculum framework is a guide/toolkit to organise, control, direct and regulate the components of a competency-based curriculum (Abdallah & Muhammad, 2015). It seeks to change the landscape of learning from the traditional to the competency-oriented approach. The purpose includes equipping the learners with knowledge, skills and mindset that are demonstrable through specific competencies with potential to enable them respond satisfactorily to national needs and global trends. This framework is therefore intended to ultimately direct the subject descriptors or syllabuses, teachers as curriculum

implementers and textbooks and other instructional materials. It also addresses a "a range of matters that can have a direct impact on the development and implementation of competency-based curriculum, such as how the curriculum meets the current and future needs of a country, teaching methodology, teacher recruitment and selection, assessment and examination practice, and even class sizes" (UNESCO, 2017). The nature of a competency-based curriculum derivable from this framework uses the Tajikistan context in its articulation as a model (McCormick, 1990; Murphy, 2007).

It is instructive to state that the first condition to meet in formulating a curriculum framework for Nigerian secondary schools is technical soundness which requires an investigation of what can work and what may not work for Nigeria, as against the blind imitation or sheepish embrace of curriculum designing orientation that is dominant or globally popular. Technical soundness as well as change in the structure of schools, in the form of teacher-students interaction, are sine qua none to curriculum change which is never approached bureaucratically but rather organically (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). For instance, as stated in the Convocation Lecture (Osinbajo, 2019), "the national curriculum being developed would not only include the teaching of coding, digital arts, design thinking, robotics, critical thinking and other skills, but also using these skills in interpreting traditional curriculum topics". These words expose a bureaucratic disposition rather than an organic engagement with the curriculum. This bureaucratic thinking needs to be replaced by an adaptive and realistic approach that is focused on grassroots problems and conditions of Nigerian schools. The ideas articulated in the excerpt are great and interesting but unfortunately do not match the peculiarities of the education sector in Nigeria, altogether, with regard to what should be done as education reform. Therefore, this paper seeks to alert and guide the government as well as alarm and enlighten the citizenry to the risk of importing a curriculum from an overseas model under the guise of redesigning education curriculum in Nigeria. While appreciable instances of best practices may be contextualized for replication in curriculum constructions (Allan, 1997; Higgs, 1994a; Higgs, 1994b; Kliebard, 1992;; and Rufai, 2021), it should be noted that there is no acceptable practice that is bereft of faults and failings which is why curriculum importation or imposition is deemed bizarre in the education parlance. For, a curriculum is a product of peculiarities and identities which are hardly undifferentiated even between two historically homogenous and geographically neighbouring states.

Accordingly, a process of curriculum redesigning, begun today and approached diligently and professionally, is not likely to have been completed or attained its implementation stage even at the end of President Muhammadu Buhari's second term tenure of another four year. This paper seeks to demonstrate this claim in what follows. But the salient question is, what kind of curriculum reform does Nigeria need? A curriculum redesigning for Nigeria is expected to be a product of purposefully formulated national education standards for the country which are cognizant of what is required to function as a Nigeria focussed but globally oriented citizen in the context of today (Samuel, 2002). The Nigerian national standards so generated will most probably have the potential to facilitate the acquisition of Nigerian focussed 21st Century Skills (Saylor, 1981). The specific descriptions and peculiarities of Nigeria as a country should therefore play a leading role in the formulation of the standards, based on certain descriptions of the country. What this means is formulating a Nigerian curriculum for Nigerian settings as against importing to or imposing on Nigeria some alien fragments of curriculum components in the name of education curriculum redesigning. By so doing will the Nigerian children or students be served a home-cooked education meal and not a hurriedly put together stuff known as fast education food.

From the experience of this lead researcher who is not only a citizen of but also resident in Nigeria, the issues attracting a growing concern in the country include insurgency, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, corruption and climate change. A curriculum changing or redesigning initiative for Nigeria is therefore expected to reflect some attention whether major or minor, to such issues of national concern. Just as it is expected that a country surrounded by aggressive and highly militarized neighbours is expected to have military psychology and training accommodated at the appropriate levels of its schooling, the above enumerated issues are of central concern in Nigeria and deserve some place in the curriculum being redesigned for Nigerian schools. Anti-terrorist education, anti-insurgency curriculum, peace education, learning for deradicalization, and education-based counter-radicalization, should be among the central themes or propellers whenever the idea of curriculum redesigning features in the Nigeria context. The proliferation of militant groups in the country can only be portentous of an unfavourable security situation in near future. However, the Vice-President, Prof. Osinbajo seemed oblivious of this in the Convocation Lecture.

Although the Niger Delta avengers were asked to surrender their weapons for amnesty (Sahara Reporters,

November 9, 2016), the question remains, what percentage of such weapons was surrendered by them? When the Ile-Ife communal clash (Channels TV, March 26, 2017) subsided how much of the daggers, arrows and bows Dane guns, cutlasses and charms used by the blood-thirsty and trigger-happy "warriors" was really surrendered by them? By the time the Boko Haram insurgents dispersed from Sambisa Forest (Sahara Reporters, September 14, 2021), what percentage of their weapons was dropped or retrieved? When the herdsmen are eventually persuaded to embrace peace, how are we handling the disarmament aspect of the conflict resolution? What about the arms and ammunition that normally constitute the backbone of the "professional" Nigerian politician? (Bamigbade, 2020). Where are they sourced? Where are they stored? And how are they accessed preparatory to electioneering.

There is a free flow of arms into Nigeria owing partly to the porous nature of its borders which are vast and undermanned (Punch, March 28, 2021). There are pedestrians' access routes at virtually every border town in the country. This is coupled with the fact that virtually all the border towns are bounded by conflict zones. More critical than all that is that animals such as donkeys are used to transport firearms into the country. Another method that has become common knowledge is the concealment of firearms in cargo flown, ferried or transported into the country through other means as livestock trucks, too, are used to convey these goods to urban settings for sale. There have been several embarrassing revelations over border security breaches in Nigeria, in recent times, and the authorities and security operatives in the country seem yet unabashed. So, there now are weapons everywhere in Nigeria! Does the education system not have a role to play in this connection? Why therefore is the new curriculum redesigning initiative oblivious of this?

In May 2019, a container full of firearms was imported into the country through the Lagos Port (Vanguard May 21, 2019). After a purported comprehensive examination by the entire military operatives at the port, the head of the operations addressed the Press and revealed that the importer of the consignment was a licensed importer who is doing legitimate business and has all the documents required to deal in firearms. Accordingly, the head of the operations assured that there was no cause for alarm as the consignment was legally imported. The contents were said to include sub-machine guns, pump action removers with magazines, pump action removers without magazines, automatic remover (magazines). However, the purpose of the importation was not disclosed. What that says about Nigeria is that firearms are now ubiquitous! Issues concerning the youth

militancy, armed banditry, terrorism, unrestricted access to arms, or proliferation of small arms and slight weapons are not wholly addressed through military strength, soldiers' macho character, or government's masculinity. They are often characterized as a subset of ideological war and are therefore so treated. For more than four years, I articulated "Why Nigeria may not defeat Boko Haram soon" in several publications in various Nigerian dailies.

The question is, what can one do to make people surrender the arms and weapons in their possession or to make them abdicate a particular ideology or belief system? This belongs to both the cognitive and the affective domains of learning and there is need for a pedagogical engagement with a combination of thinking and attitudes, perception and feelings, understanding and dispositions, knowledge and values, philosophy and behavior, content and outcome, as well as learning experiences and change. A school curriculum is never designed in a closed-door session but rather through the agency of an extensive stakeholder mapping and subsequent consultation with them with special attention to technical stakeholders. How did the Federal Government come about the curriculum redesigning initiative in question which unfortunately seems to have missed the point from the conceptualization stage? Aside the question of youth radicalization and deradicalization, the high disaster risks in Nigeria are outstanding for high incidence of natural disasters.

As noted earlier concerning a country surrounded by militarily aggressive neighbours which should make military education a core of its school curriculum, the catastrophic effects of climate change in Nigeria seem more visible than the sun in daytime. It was reported that in 2017, flooding affected an estimated of 250,000 Nigerians and in 2016, 92,00 were displaced, while 40 percent of the country's land area is now estimated to be subject to periodic drought (FloodList, 2021). Yet, the government's response to natural disasters is below the desired level as the subject of climate change itself is not encouraged as a subject of popular debate. Floods, oil spill, drought, bush fire, landslides have always been in the top five natural disasters in Nigeria. A recent report by Council on Foreign Relations scores Nigeria low in this regard and calls for an urgent reform of the Nigerian Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) (Campbell, 2021). However, the Federal Government seems unaware that there is a technically strong rationale for the introduction of climate change to the Nigerian classroom as the subject is deserving of a consideration in school curriculum proportioning for the country.

The literature may also be relied upon in determining the national education standards to guide curriculum

redesigning for Nigeria. There is need for analysis of comparative data on the performance of Nigeria among other countries in human capital development through education. Findings from such analysis may offer some directions to curriculum reform. It should be noted at this juncture that what is generally known as national standards with regard to curriculum framework development is often technically referred to as conceptual and design principles (Rufai, 2010; Rufai, 2021; Ross, 2000). Based on the above considerations, national standards may be generated to ultimately guide curriculum contents, pedagogical practices and assessment methods, in the context of the education reform planned or being designed for implementation by the Federal Government as hinted in the excerpt under discussion.

Well-grounded National Education Standards for Nigeria shall be cognizant of what it is required to be a truly Nigerian focussed but globally oriented citizen in the context of today. The Nigerian national standards should have the potential to facilitate the acquisition of Nigerian focussed 21st Century Skills. To be Nigerian focussed and globally oriented is to be cognizant of some of the issues like climate change, terrorism and others, as enumerated above. The specific descriptions and peculiarities of Nigeria should play a leading role in the formulation of the standards. Some of the salient peculiarities of Nigeria that may explain appropriate competencies to be targeted through education in the country, are derivable from the foregoing. Based on the above considerations, the following may be generated as education standards that will ultimately guide curriculum contents, pedagogical practices and assessment methods, in Nigerian schools for the 21st century: Nigerian national identity; Responsibility for the Nigerian environment; Comprehensive growth; Critical and creative thinking; Inclusivity and participatory citizenship; Communication, Collaboration and Information skills; Civic Literacy and Global Awareness; Flexibility and responsiveness; Cross-cultural studies; Adaptability to change; and Local Peculiarities with Global Focus (Rufai, 2021; Nkoane, 2002).

These are among the 21st Century competencies based on today's peculiarities of Nigeria and each of them is targeted at a concern or goal deemed attainable through the instrumentality of education. The competencies are identified based on Nigerian needs with potential to make the education system effective for students. All the eleven items can be carefully subsumed under the following four subheadings namely: Core subjects- (reading, writing and arithmetic); Learning and Innovation skills (creative thinking, communication and

collaboration; Life and Career Skills; and Information, Media and Technology Skills. It should be pointed out that Creative Thinking and Technology Skills feature in the excerpt being analyzed albeit in a fashion that does not key well into any systematic curriculum changing context for Nigeria.

These principles have serious implications for assessment in view of the need to review the focus of teaching in Nigerian schools and allow learning to take the centre stage. The implication is that teaching will now start with assessment and end with the curriculum through pedagogy as against the ongoing practice of starting with the curriculum and ending with assessment through pedagogy. The implication of the above enumerated competencies will be articulated while generating curriculum content from the national framework, not the national curriculum itself, as assumed in the excerpt. It is technically erroneous for the Federal Government to have redesigned or been on the verge of redesigning education curriculum. What about the training of those who will implement the new curriculum? What about the training of those who will rewrite textbooks and ensure there is no mismatch? What about teacher guides? What about other instructional materials for the new curriculum? Any school curriculum redesigning initiative that disregards all these is a failure from the start!

Pakistan once attempted a school curriculum redesigning without training teachers and textbook developers (Afzal, 2014). The curriculum was ready but could not be implemented since 2011 simply owing to failure to train teachers ahead of the curriculum review. Tajikistan is another place where reform in education failed to recognize the role of textbooks developers (UNESCO, 2019; Mid-Term Education Action Plan 2018-2020). Consequently, a new curriculum was meant to be implemented through the instrumentality of the old traditional content. New curriculum, old textbook! A bizarre educational experience! The most recent of curriculum crises is ongoing in Kenya (Akala, 2021) where Teachers Union directed teachers to disregard the new curriculum introduced by the government. The heart of the matter is that the Teachers Council could not have mobilized its members against the new curriculum if they had been involved in its formulation. The implication of this for Nigeria shall be discussed shortly. The principles enumerated earlier are expected to derive from the Nigerian realities and should be extensively debated and agreed upon. However, it should be pointed out that these competencies may turn out to be no more than general capabilities where there are no 21st Century education system and pedagogical orientation. The Federal Government has to allow curricularists and

pedagogues to formulate these principles or standards and take decisions thereupon based on the political, social and cultural climate in the country. Consequently, each region or each of the six geopolitical zones, may generate its own peculiarities-based curriculum from the national curriculum framework. It is untrue that the same school curriculum can serve the entire country! Nigeria needs regional and even sub-regional elements in its school curricula. At this stage, the Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) is expected to be at the center of the formulation of the curriculum framework as the coordinating entity. However, the Council is expected to work closely with such technical stakeholders as universities, curriculum teams or associations, Teachers Unions, textbook publishers and similar others, some of whom are not aware of the on-going curriculum redesigning initiative. It is salient to ask, what will all these bodies be doing together? They shall be formulating, based on the objectives or directions stated in the standards, content foci, pedagogical orientations, assessment methods and institutional composition of the framework. Now, the question, how can this be done in the Nigerian context?

The competencies enumerated above are suggestive of the skills that should be acquired through education in order to be able to function well as an educated citizen in the Nigerian context. For instance, the Nigerian national identity cultivation is targeted at the cultural identity, moral values, languages and achievable through arts-based learning experiences and activities while Responsibility for the Nigerian environment is a function of climate change education for Nigeria, as elaborated earlier, and attainable through science related subjects. As regards Critical and creative thinking, liberal arts and languages are the appropriate curricular vehicle which may also be employed for the cultivation of communication, collaboration and information skills. What this means is that various school subjects are associated with various skills. This however might have worked for Nigeria sometime ago but may not really work in the face of emerging challenges which require specific skills for specific tasks and target appropriate pedagogical approaches to aid the cultivation or acquisition of such skills. It should be pointed out that the peculiarities of the various regions in Nigeria necessitates the development or derivation of either regional core curricula or regional frameworks from which district or school curricula could be generated. A country like Nigeria with its highly geographically and climatically differentiated zones is best served through local curricula derived from regional core curricula which themselves are derived from the national

curriculum framework. How can these curriculum developmental experiences, at these various stages, materialize for Nigeria? That is the essence of stakeholder consultation at which point the political and technical stakeholders play significant role which is obviously missing in the narration contained in the excerpt in question. It is inconceivable that Nigeria deserves the likelihood of the Kenyan curriculum crisis. It is unfortunate that the authorities in Nigeria seem to have almost always seen education as a domain where every individual, regardless of his or her level of education, can perform. This is grounded in the thinking that every educated citizen knows something about teaching and there is no one that cannot teach! However, misconceptions about education in Nigeria are not restricted to people with low level of education. The erroneous thinking that it is a territory that is open to being trodden by all has truly prompted everyone into pronouncing rather erroneously upon and recommending a reform for the system. Consequently, even the good intentions of appreciably educated and concerned stakeholders who offered some recommendations have been articulated rather inaccurately. This lays credence to the plight of education as a discipline committed to the unprofessional hands of lay persons and non-specialists. Every Nigerian arguably thinks the current school curriculum is outdated, archaic and should be “redesigned” as will be demonstrated in what follows.

The Governor of Oyo State, Abiola Ajimobi wants the curriculum “redesigned” because it is “civil service-oriented” and therefore recommends “entrepreneurship-focussed” education curriculum for the economic development of the country (Tribune, Nov. 3, 2017). The Governor of Kaduna State, Nasir El-Rufai wants it “reviewed” for it is “outdated and archaic” because it was grounded in the 20th Century while we are in the 21st Century (Premium Times, May 1, 2018). He recommends as a way out a holistic review and mother tongue education. Prof. Edwin Egwu of the Lagos Business School wants it redesigned owing to the urgent need for “a holistic overhaul of the curriculum in terms of educational practices, entrance routes to different courses of study, credential requirements in relation to the learning objectives and outcomes, options of continued training, codes of teaching and the evaluation of the teaching requirements for faculty, tutors or teachers” (Guardian, June 6, 2019). All these are useful recommendations and ameliorative proposals which do not necessarily offer a technically sound, manageable and organic professional interventions on the desirable content and process of the educational reform for Nigeria.

The education sector is currently boiling in Kenya on account of the fact that the Kenyan government did what the Nigerian government is about to do. Consequently, the Teachers Council declared that the curriculum redesigning process was wrongly handled by the Government which failed to factor all the relevant stakeholders into the curriculum process and only announced to them that it had redesigned the school curriculum. The teachers were therefore directed to ignore the new curriculum and continue to teach the existing one while the government was asked to return to the drawing board with regard to the process of redesigning school curriculum. Is the Federal Government prepared for such unpalatable experience? How can curriculum redesigning be initiated without a comprehensive retraining of the implementers of the curriculum who are teachers and textbook developers? The Kenyan Institute of Curriculum Development identified several gaps in the new curriculum just a few months to its roll-out and quickly intimated the Education Cabinet Secretary, Amina Muhammed, of this (Amutabi, 2021).

Her response was that a team of International Experts has been invited to evaluate the new curriculum. “The Ministry wishes to triangulate our internal Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) pilot findings with other international experts and we have commissioned an external evaluation to generate comparative findings on our state of preparedness for a full curriculum roll-out”, the Education Cabinet Secretary declared. This desperate move by the Kenyan Government can only complicate the unfavourable state of education in the country for they must eventually return to basis of curriculum making as articulated above. The problems with the redesigned curriculum include its unsystematic nature, teachers’ lack the capacity for the new competency-based curriculum implementation, schools’ lack of instructional and learning materials for the roll-out. Worse than all that is that learning in Class Four may not take place as the curriculum design for this class is yet to be developed. The pupils are therefore not sure which system they will rely upon in learning and this means no teaching or learning will take place at certain classes because the curricula for them are not ready let alone the teachers’ capacity and appropriate books for them. This is what normally happens where the government is not procedural in curriculum making and it gladdens that Kenya is not too far from Nigeria.

4. Conclusion

This paper has attempted to formulate a competency-based curriculum conceptual framework for Nigerian secondary schools through a critical evaluation of the

curriculum designing direction articulated by the Vice-President of Nigeria, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo in the 23rd Convocation Lecture of the Lagos State University which he delivered on Thursday 16th May, 2019. There was a serious concern among scholars and researchers, especially those in the field of education, that such an education direction of which the Vice-President hinted in the Convocation Lecture has the potential to misdirect secondary education in the country whose education sector is currently characterized by retrogression and non-attainment of developmental goals. The paper engaged systematically with the Vice-President's curricular intervention and exposed both its strengths and deficiencies, in building a rationale for a competency-based curriculum conceptual framework. The paper which was grounded in the philosophical and sociological foundations of education, employs a combination of the philosophical method, observation method, curriculum criticism, document analysis, and creative synthesis. The paper articulated the concept of principles which applies to conceptual directions and form the basis of concept formulation of the competency-based curriculum framework, based on national standards and regional peculiarities of the country which are to be factored into any secondary education curriculum construction exercise. The paper's contribution to scholarship lies in its contextualization of competency-based curriculum conceptual framework designing into the Nigerian context, based on principles, standards and peculiarities of the country.

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