

CURRICULUM, CERTIFICATION AND THE WORLD OF WORK

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Abstract

The subtheme is very apt all over the world particularly in the developing countries of West Africa and Africa as a whole.

There can be no certification without examination in any form. There can be no examination without teaching, training or instruction and there can be no teaching, training or instruction without Curriculum. Certification is essential in all areas of work or human endeavours. Certification determines the level of knowledge attained. In all areas of work, there are different levels of the working classes. We have the lower cadre, the middle or intermediate cadre and the senior cadre. These are based on the certificates the workers possess. For each cadre, there are sub-levels which can be attained through promotion or higher certificates.

It may not necessarily mean that possession of certificates determines performance or efficiency at work but possession of certificates is required. A worker may be able to perform the work of higher cadre than what his/her certificates could fetch him/her. He needs to possess the certificate of higher level before he/she can be placed at that level. The issues and controversies involved would be examined and the way-forward would be proffered.

Curriculum and Certification would be treated separately in terms of their definitions and explanations. Consideration of the world of work would follow before looking into the relationship of Curriculum and Certification. The place and role of examinations particularly in relation to Certification would be examined. This will be followed by the issues and controversies on examination and Certification.

Introduction

As said earlier, the choice of the topic on Curriculum, Certificate and the World of work could not be more appropriate than now for a thorough deliberation by scholars and professionals all over the world. This is because of all kinds of issues and controversies on certification in particular and the world of work.

People want to cut corners in possessing certificates for the world of work because of their vital relationships. It is not possible to obtain meaningful employment or appointment without relevant certificates except for some ceremonial Heads particularly in Education and other government

parastatals. The only possible work which may not require certificate is self or family employment. Even here, for one to make it in a bigger way, he/she has to possess certificates at least on a lower level.

Certificates cannot be obtained without examination in any form: oral, written or combination of both; practicals of all forms; etc. There can be no examination without requisite teaching and there can be no teaching without what to teach: the content of Curriculum or simply, Curriculum. Curriculum, teaching, examination and certification are therefore intimately connected. The paper would try to bring out this connection through relevant definitions and explanation. Issues and controversies in Curriculum, teaching, examination and certification would follow. Certificates and the world of work would be discussed before proffering the way-forward on the issues and controversies mentioned earlier.

Meaning of Curriculum, Teaching, Examination Certification and the World of Work

Curriculum

The following definitions of Curriculum are subscribed:

- The systematic body of materials and an organized plan put together for modifying the behavior of a person in his/her environment (Ivowi, 2009). In this connection, materials would include the objectives and the knowledge to be acquired, while the plan includes the instructional activities and resources designed to effect the materials;
- As series of instructional learning activities designed for a specific group of learners for acquiring skills and dispositions within a formal school setting (Ihebuzor, 1993);
- As subjects included in a course of study (Oxford dictionary of current English, 1998);
- As a prescribed course of study (New English Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2000 edition);
- As a regular course of study in a school or University (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1985 edition);
- As presented instructional content (Maccia, 1961);
- As a design of a social group for the educational experiences of children in school (Beauchamp, 1961);
- All the learning which is planned and guided by the school, whether it is carried on in groups or individually, inside or outside the school (Kerr, 1968);

- As a systematic organization of a set of intentions about learning experiences for certain learners in certain justifiable arrangement of sequence and resources (Adegoke and Ajeyalemi, 1994); and
- As the total learning, planned or unplanned, overt or covert, explicit or implicit, intended or unintended, that learners gained from exposure to instruction (Beauchamp, 1981),

Gowin {1981} grouped the various definitions of curriculum into three common places of teaching, learning and governance. Curriculum as teaching views the subjects taught in school as the focus. In this regard, curriculum is seen as what the teacher uses in teaching or what he teaches. In other words, the content for stimulating learning in school is called curriculum. The second group of definitions of curriculum is a very popular view and this sees curriculum as all the experiences of the learner under the supervision of the school. There are different variants of this view, some of which are shown by the following:

- All the experiences a learner undergoes in school;
- All the things a child is expected to learn at school; and
- The school's programme for learners.

The third group of definitions views curriculum as all the experiences of children for which the school accepts responsibility. Various claims under this definition includes the following:

- The authority of the school to guide educational experiences of child; and
- The right of the school to organize, design, plan and control the sequence of events that would lead to learning outcomes.

It is in consideration of these claims that all activities authorized by the school for the children, but which are not necessarily examined, are referred to as extra-curricular activities or co-curricular activities. Initially, they were regarded as extra-curricular because they did not feature on the school time table. However, later consideration of their complementary role to school subjects on the school timetable saw them as another set of un-examinable subjects or activities that complete the expected experiences of learners in school. Such activities are varied and may include the following:

- All sport practices and competitions;
- All games practices and competitions;
- All literary and debating competitions;

- All science and technology quiz, fairs, exhibitions and competitions;
- All field trips, excursions; and
- All activities of approved clubs and societies.

Teaching

According to Oxford Advanced Learning Dictionary, International Student's Edition (New 7th edition) edited by Sally Wehmeier et al., Teaching is defined as (i) the work of a teacher (ii) the ideas of a particular person or group, especially about politics, religion or society, that are taught to other people.

According to the same dictionary, to teach is:

1. to give lessons to students in a school, college, university, etc;
2. to help somebody learn something by giving information about it;
3. to show somebody how to do something so that they will be able to do it themselves;
4. to make somebody feel or think in a different way; and
5. to persuade somebody not to do something again by making them suffer so much that they are afraid to do it.

The teacher does all these. Who is a teacher then? The understanding of who the teacher is summarizes what "Teaching" is. Therefore, let us concentrate on who the Teacher is. According to Olarinoye (1999), a teacher is a personification of reality for the child. A child here refers to a learner. The child sees him as a model for behaviour and appearance in his interaction with his immediate community and society at large. This role demands a lot from the teacher. He has to be honest, accurate and sincere in what he teaches and how he teaches it. He has to watch his dressing and appearance generally in and outside the classroom.

A teacher should be a specialist in the knowledge of students. Students differ in age, mental ability, and readiness for a particular area of knowledge, behaviour, family background and others. They therefore have to be treated with care if they are to benefit from the knowledge the teacher is imparting. To do this successfully, the teacher has to be knowledgeable in relevant areas of human psychology. As a matter of fact, many teachers fail in their duty because of lack of knowledge of their students. A teacher should be an excellent technician. This means that he must be professional in every sense of the word, fully the master of professional technique, if he is to set the whole tone of learning process. He should be the kind of person who commands the respect of the students by virtue of what he himself is. The good teacher does not openly demand respect; his bearing is such as wins it. He should be a

personal friend of the individual student. To be good, a teacher is to be a good friend. He should be a person who awakens in his pupil the desire to learn. How does he do this? He accomplishes this through counseling, good preparation of lesson, self-composure, and clarity of presentation, the use of appropriate teaching and motivational methods, and effective evaluation techniques.

He should be a master in the art of living and can bring up his students accordingly. He should know that he is a co-worker with God in perfecting his students. He should be one who capably communicates his subject. This is of course, part of good presentation of lessons. He must be one who appreciates the subject he teaches and hence enjoys teaching it. He should be a maker of democracy.

If the teacher fulfills his entire role as stated above, he would be an apostle of progress.

Examination

The Oxford dictionary under use sees examination as:

1. a formal written, spoken or practical test, especially at School, College or University to see how much one knows about a subject, or what you can do;
2. the act of looking at or considering something very carefully for revelation of something vital; and
3. a close look at something/somebody, especially to see if there is anything wrong or to find the cause of a problem. For example: a medical examination, a post-mortem examination or cross examination.

The most relevant definition for this paper is the first one because the paper is on Curriculum, Certification and the World of work. The world of work would be considered separately but it is sufficient here to define work as the day to day occupation of people either as individuals or groups.

The examination as used in this paper is to determine whether or not the relevant Curriculum contents have been learnt. After teaching, the next stage before certification is examination. Thus, Curriculum, teaching and examination play vital roles in certification. We would expatiate on this later.

There is a lot to write on examination but we are limited in this paper as we are concerned with bringing out the concept of examination so as to understand the relationship of Curriculum, Teaching, examination, and certification. Examination, like evaluation, generally can be formative, summative, diagnostic or for placement.

Certification

I intentionally refused to combine Examination and Certificate as a sub-heading. I know you cannot talk of certification without examination. Examination has become a common word that does not need clarification anymore. It is this “common-ness” that causes the issues and controversies over examination and certification. There must be examination or test in any form before a certificate can be obtained if successful, although certificate can be obtained for failure also. However, it is the certificate based on success that is useful.

According to the same Oxford dictionary cited earlier, certification is:

1. The act of satisfying something. An illustration of the use here is; “ the medical certification of the cause of death”; and
2. The process of giving certificates for a course of education. An illustration, according to the Oxford dictionary is, “ the certification of the examination modules”.

Certificate, according to the same dictionary is:

1. An official document that may be used to prove that the facts it states are true. For example: birth/marriage/death certificate; and
2. An official document proving that you have completed a course of study or passed an examination; a qualification obtained after a course of study or an examination, for example: a Post Graduate Certificate in education.

The second meaning is more relevant for this paper. The certification we are talking about here is the process of giving certificates for a course of education. Better still, certificate is the process of giving an official document which proves that one has completed a course of study or passed an examination. Another way of looking at certification is the process of obtaining a qualification after a course of study or an examination. Certificates are awarded after completing a course of study and ended up with an examination. The examination is to determine whether or not the relevant curriculum contents have been learnt. Thus, examination as well as curriculum play vital roles in certification. We would expatiate this later in the paper.

According to Wikipedia, “Certification refers to the confirmation of certain characteristics of an object, person or organization”. This confirmation is often but not always provided by some form of external review, education, assessment or audit. Accreditation is a specific organization’s process of certification. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary sees certification as “the act of certifying the state of being certified”. Cambridge English Dictionary sees

certification as “proof or a document proving that someone is qualified for a particular job or that something is of good quality”.

According to Business dictionary, Certification is a “formal procedure by which an accredited or authorized person or agency assesses and verifies (and attests in writing by issuing certificate) the attributes, characteristics, quality, qualification, or status of individuals or organizations, goods or services, procedures or processes, or events or situations, in accordance with established requirements or standards”. These definitions are also applicable to this paper as the second definition of Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary cited earlier.

The World of Work

According to English dictionary for learners, “the World is the planet that we live on”. Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th Edition) defines ‘World’ as “the earth with all its countries, peoples and natural features”.

There are other definitions. This is sufficient for the paper. The word ‘World’ is used here to describe all kinds of works or occupations of human beings. These are many and the word ‘World’ covers all of them.

According to Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, any of the following words describes the work done by somebody in return for payment, especially for a long period of time; employment, career, profession, occupation and trade.

Work is seen as the job that somebody does especially in order to earn money. The world of work therefore encompasses all kinds of work, which are grouped under employment, career, profession, occupation and trade. Work is the entire scope of a project encompassing all people, equipment, materials and other goods and services required to fulfill the contractors obligations under a contract (<http://www.businessdictionary.com>)

It is also defined as an activity that involves physical or mental effort (<http://macmillandictionary.com>) / dictionary/British). Work here also refers to a general activity that individual performs in order to accomplish something.

The relationship of Curriculum and Certification has been explained in the previous sections. The two are intimately related. To the best of my knowledge, Curriculum at the various levels of Nigerian Education system is well prepared. A lot of attention is paid on Curriculum development by Curriculum experts at the various levels. After development and use for a few years, the Curricula are reviewed because of global changes in societies. Some of the contents are dropped while others are added. For the various areas of works in the world of work, the appropriate certificates based on relevant Curricula are available after students or learners have gone through the rigour

of examinations which in turn are based on the implementation of the Curricula. If learners go through normal teaching and learning processes, they will end up with certificates which are acceptable in the relevant areas of the world of work. They will enjoy their work particularly after relevant training.

Every area of the world of work has attached to it relevant Curriculum and certificate. However, before entering the world of work after certification, intending candidates are to apply and get interviewed by the proposed employers or their representatives.

It is not easy to enter the world of work even with the best certificates. The main reasons for the appropriateness of the subtheme for this paper are the issues and controversies involved in obtaining certificates and entering the world of work. There are many of these particularly in the Nigerian context. The next section will be on these issues and controversies.

Issues and Controversies in Curriculum, Certification and the World of Work

The terms Curriculum, Teaching, Examination and Certification have been clearly defined and their relationship clearly brought out.

Certification is the ultimate process before entering into the world of work. Under normal situation, there should be no certification without examination. There cannot be examination without teaching in any form which includes training. Furthermore, there cannot be teaching without what is being taught: the content of a Curriculum.

However, these days, there are many issues in certification. The issues have something to do with the Curriculum in the final analysis though the Curriculum remains intact as it is always available. Strictly speaking, the issues and controversies lie with the teaching, examination and certification. Issue, according to Oxford Dictionary of English, is “an important topic that people are discussing or arguing about”.

Controversy, according to the same dictionary, is “Public discussion and argument about something that many people strongly disagree about or disapprove of or are shocked by”.

Controversies therefore are over issues. Both words go together in terms of meaning and applications. The controversies are on certification at all levels of Nigerian Education System particularly at Senior Secondary School level. It extends to all levels of education but that of secondary school level is a common public debate.

This is because of the importance attached to the terminal certificates, the West African Examination Council (WAEC) certificate, the National Examination Council (NECO) certificate and other equivalent certificates.

These are basic certificates required for entry into Tertiary Institutions. Teachers, students, principals, proprietors and parents are involved. Even the general public members are involved. The centre or schools where the issues arose are usually referred to as “Miracle Centres” and the act involved is usually referred to as “giraffing” or “short-cut”. There are many names given to both the center and the act. Students intentionally choose to write examinations in these centres for the purpose of the act mentioned.

The content of the act is the writing of examination for students by the teachers or capable members of the public in exchange for money. Teachers or invigilators could go round examination halls to dictate answers to students writing examinations. These are always pre-arranged.

The worst of it all is the involvement of the parents. Parents pay for this act. They even arranged for the children to attend the miracle centres for this act of cheating. Students usually attend schools free of this act but finish up in schools that have become miracle centres. Teachers, principals, proprietors, etc. are involved in the act because of the money involved. The act gets so bad to the extent that the external supervisors or invigilators connected with the relevant examination bodies are involved!!

Where Curriculum comes in this act is its implementation by teachers solely or mainly for the purpose of passing examination. The passing of examination is an indication that what was taught has been achieved. Yes, this is true but teachers are not expected to spend the whole periods of teaching on past question papers just for learners to pass examination.

Students are in schools to learn. It is just that we have no other ways of confirming that learning has taken place but to go through examinations in different forms. The related issue that causes controversies is the non-completion of the Curriculum or syllabus before examination. Some teachers complain that they are unable to cover the syllabus before examination. I do not agree with this. A well-trained teacher should be able to cover the syllabus before examination. Any examination is supposed to cover topics covered in teaching. On the whole, the damage created in not completing the syllabus or Curriculum before examination is not as serious as the act of “giraffing”.

The consequence of giraffing is inability to succeed in tasks or work related to the certificate obtained. You cannot perform miracle when it comes to applying what you have learnt particularly in the world of work. Eventually, such worker would lose his/her job because he/she cannot perform.

The Way Forward

The menace of examination misconduct or practice in form of “giraffing” is disturbing. How on earth can parents be parties to such an

exercise that can ruin their children's future career? In my locality, as the "Baba Ijo" (father of the congregation of Anglican Church) and a prominent figure in the town, I have taken it upon myself to address parents on the evil effects of giraffing. No one can give what he does not have. If students do not go through all stages of their certification, there is no way they can carry out related 'work' after their education. The Curriculum must be well implemented by teachers and all those concerned. The teacher must be qualified in the subjects they teach and they must teach well for students to learn. It is the learning that is the ultimate not getting the certificates at all cost!! In curbing the evil effect of incomplete certification process, the following recommendations in form of way-forward are made:

1. As the beginning of the certification process, the Curriculum must be available to teachers. In fact, there is the need for orientation workshops for teachers, the content of which includes "the review of the Curricula". Appropriate Curriculum experts should be invited as resource persons;
2. The implementation of the Curricula should be well monitored through supervision or inspection of teachers' activities both inside and outside the classroom;
3. Teachers must write lesson notes containing the teaching procedure, materials for teaching, content of what to teach and evaluation procedure. These must be endorsed by the Head of the educational Institution or his representative(s).
4. Students must attend classes. In fact, certification process should include class attendance up to certain percentage;
5. Teachers must have teaching materials including textbooks and teaching guides.
6. Students should have textbooks and other learning materials including work-books;
7. Students should complete their studies in one school or institution except for cogent reasons. If a student does not complete his studies in a school, no leaving testimonials should be given except for terminal stages like completion of Junior Secondary School (JSS) or Senior Secondary School (SSS);
8. Government should close all miracle centres including institutions involved in giraffing;
9. Any teacher or other officials involved in giraffing should be dismissed; and
10. Examinations should be thoroughly supervised or invigilated

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