



Globalization, Curriculum Reform, And National Development in Nigeria: Challenges and Responses

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ABSTRACT

Globalization has significantly influenced education systems worldwide, shaping policies, curricula, and access to learning opportunities. This paper explores the interconnected dynamics of globalization, curriculum reform, and national development in Nigeria. It critically examines how globalization affects Nigeria curriculum including pressure for International standards, technological disruption and cultural integration and tensions; analyzes Nigeria's responses through curriculum reform efforts the key features of which are technological integration, incorporation of 21st-Century skills and fostering global citizenship; and identifies the challenges to Nigeria's curriculum reform efforts in the context of globalization including inadequate infrastructure and funding, teacher capacity deficit, resistance to change, policy inconsistencies and examination-oriented nature of the country's education system. The paper finally suggests strategies for reforming the Nigeria curriculum and concludes with practical recommendations for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders to harness the benefits of globalization while safeguarding Nigeria's unique developmental goals.

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INTRODUCTION

Globalization has come to have a dramatic impact on life world-wide, its forces having created a more interconnected and interdependent world, impacting not only economies and societies but also education systems. It involves goods, service, data, technology, and the economic resources of capital (Putko, 2006). The acceleration of globalization since the 18th century due to advances in transportation and communications technology has led to a growth in international trade and the exchange of ideas, beliefs, and culture. Major factors in globalization and have generated further interdependence of economic and cultural activities around the globe include advances in transportation including the steam locomotive, steamship, jet engine, and container ships and developments in telecommunication infrastructure such as the telegraph, Internet, and mobile phones, have been (Subedi, 2022).

Although economic and financial phenomenon are the oft identified aspects of globalization due to its connection with trade developments and financial exchanges, it includes a much wider field involving such dimensions as cultural globalization, political globalization, ecological globalization and technological globalization. Through the globalization phenomenon, millions of people are interconnected through the digital world via platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Skype or YouTube. Globalization is influenced by such factors as technology changes, transportation, deregulation in business, removal of capital exchange controls, free trade, and emerging markets particularly in developing countries (Subedi, 2022). Globalization has received attention from researchers, administrators and legislators around the globe and has stirred activism and social unrest in both the developed and developing parts of the world (Putko, 2006).

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In education, globalization has brought about standardization, new learning opportunities, and intensified competition among education providers. On the other hand, it has widened educational inequalities and introduced cultural and political challenges. Moreover, it has catalyzed significant reforms in curriculum design, pedagogy, and learning outcomes. For countries like Nigeria, the challenge lies in reforming their curriculum to meet global standards while simultaneously addressing local socio-economic and developmental needs. This paper explores how globalization influences curriculum reform in Nigeria and its implications for national development.

Conceptual Clarifications

Globalization, to start with, is seemingly having no precise, widely-agreed definition and can be used with meanings of internationalization, liberalization, universalization, westernization or modernization, and deterritorialization (Putko, 2006). It has also been defined by Subedi (2022) as the system of interaction among the countries of the world in order to develop the global economy and as the integration of economics and societies all over the world. Dey (2007) sees it as a social and cultural process in which individuals of different cultural backgrounds interact with each other in all spheres of life more intensively than before. In this paper, globalization is taken to mean the rising interconnectedness of countries through trade, technology, communication, and cultural exchange. In education, globalization emphasizes international benchmarks, digital literacy, cross-cultural competencies, and global citizenship.

Curriculum reform appears to have no standard definition and is often used interchangeably with curriculum development, curriculum review, curriculum change, and curriculum innovation. It differs from curriculum development which is a process involving planning and evaluation; differs from curriculum review which takes into consideration only the evaluation components of curriculum development; and contrasts curriculum change viewed as any alteration in any of the aspects of

curriculum without necessarily including follow-up. Curriculum innovation is no more than a curriculum change involving intrinsic newness (Ubong & Obomanu, n. d). Curriculum reform is therefore more far reaching than curriculum development involving serious, sometimes drastic and dramatic changes which would have nationwide and sector-wide implications. The present paper sees curriculum development as a process that involves systematic review and restructuring of curriculum content, methods, and objectives to meet changing societal needs and align with contemporary educational standards.

Development development is a multi-dimensional process involving reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social systems and specifically including utilitarian, behavioural, institutional and structural dimensions. National development has therefore been defined as the ability of a country to advance the social well-being of its citizens through the provision of such social amenities as medical care, infrastructure, equality education and other social services (Joseph, Yusuf & Nasiru, 2021). This paper considers national development as a multidimensional concept that encompasses economic growth, social equity, political stability, technological advancement, and cultural integrity. It implies the ability of a country to provide a source of living for the majority of its inhabitants and to elimination of poverty, provision of adequate welfare, shelter, clothing to its citizens.

Influence of Globalization on Nigerian Curriculum

Globalization reshapes global societies, economies, and cultures, thereby exerting a powerful influence on national education systems worldwide, shaping policies, curricula, and access to learning opportunities, assessment, pedagogy, conceptions of learner, the teacher, and the good of life; and more (Ibe, Ekoh-Nweke & Agu, 2020). In Nigeria, globalization has stimulated educational growth, led to the spread of technology, facilitated the advancement of knowledge and enabled e-learning, allowing for the sharing and dissemination of educational resources globally, despite its negative



consequences of exposing the Nigerian youth to Western cultural influences and the proliferation of inappropriate internet content such as pornography and nudity (Kanu, Kanyip, Paul, Omenukwa, Kamai, & Agbede, 2024). Its influence on Nigeria curriculum development are highlighted below.

One of the impacts of globalization on Nigeria curriculum is that it has prompted standardization of curricula, testing, and quality benchmarks, often driven by international organizations and ranking systems. Nations now align their education policies with global goals, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which focuses on inclusive and equitable quality education. For example, the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) serves as a global benchmark for educational quality, pushing countries to align their curricula with global standards (Ahmad, 2024). Globalization exerts a growing pressure for Nigerian students to meet international benchmarks thereby necessitating updates in the curriculum to emphasize STEM, ICT, entrepreneurship, and climate change education. International organizations such as the UNESCO, Education International (EI), World Education Forum (WEF), the World Bank, and UN agencies, are all deeply involved in the policy dialogues with Nigeria to achieve educational targets and commitments (Ibe, Ekoh-Nweke & Agu, 2020).

Another impact of globalization on Nigeria curriculum is that it has brought about a digital revolution in education, characterized by online learning platforms, digital textbooks, and AI-driven tools which are reshaping how students learn and what they are expected to know. These have revolutionized knowledge production, distribution and management and a paradigm shift which may necessitate the emergence of curriculum models and education policies that emphasize interdisciplinary courses, open ended systems, Socratic dialogue, multidimensional assessment and multiculturalism (Omozusi, Okondu, Banjo & Kalejaiye, 2019). This implies that the curriculum be continuously reformed to keep up with technological developments, prepare

students for an increasingly connected and digitalized world, skills that are relevant and in line with the needs of the job market and take care of the diverse needs and backgrounds of students. It also implies the necessity of finding a comprehensive evaluation method to measure student achievement, responses to the curriculum, and the relevance of the curriculum to educational goals (Suwarni, 2023).

Globalization also undermines cultural diversity, deconstructs societal values, destroys group identity and social cohesion, stifles diversity and dissent and spreads western culture which has dominated the world. Having made the present world as global village, globalization has succeeded in pushing nations into struggling to become more conscious of the culture, economy, ideology and general knowledge of other societies by designing educational systems that produce citizens who are not just aware of their immediate surroundings but of the workings of the world (Ahmad, 2024). Nigeria curriculum especially at the tertiary level has therefore been continuously reformed to prepare students for participation in the global exchange of information by building programmes which offer students insight into the culture of other countries into their school curriculum (Waks, 2003).

Curriculum Reform Efforts in Nigeria

Nigeria has been undertaking curriculum reforms to respond to the challenges and opportunities presented by globalization aimed at equipping students with the knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, communication, and values crucial for success in the modern globalized world while also preserving and promoting Nigerian culture and identity (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013). These reforms cut across the various curricula of the different levels of Nigeria education including the Basic Education Curriculum (BEC), Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) and Tertiary Education curricula. Reforms in the 9-Year Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) launched in 2008 emphasize functional education, civic responsibility, entrepreneurship to foster economic self-reliance, and addresses



educational access and equity (John, Oko-Joseph & Eniola, 2025).

The implementation of Senior Secondary Education Curriculum (SSEC) began in September 2011, with the aim of achieving job creation, poverty alleviation, empowerment of the citizens through quality education and value reorientation and entrepreneurial skills (Moyinoluwa & Atijohan, 2025). Reforms in this curriculum include integration of technology into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) education; introduction of more practical, hands-on learning opportunities for students, focus on ensuring that students graduate with practical, employable skills; and diversification of the vocational and technical education curriculum to include emerging industries, with a stronger focus on technical fields such as renewable energy, mobile technology, and advanced manufacturing (Odutuyi, 2014; National Senior Secondary Education Commission, 2024).

At the nation's tertiary education level, the mono-technics, polytechnics, colleges of education and universities are encouraged to revise their curricula in line with the National Universities Commission's Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS), promoting international competitiveness. These institutions are also to remain guided by the provisions in the Nigeria Education policy on the interest of children having special needs, those physically challenged and disabled or handicapped and the provision for integration of Qur'anic school program as well as programs for out of school children with particular interest on *Almajiri* (itinerant pupil) (Amaghionyeodiwe, & Osinubi, 2006).

Key aspects of Nigeria curriculum reform efforts include integrating technology, emphasizing 21st-century skills, and fostering global citizenship. Integration of technology is necessitated by the country's belief that in the present globalized world, digital technology must be embraced by every nation for her to be competitive and to have knowledge-based society as well as information society and by the COVID-19 pandemic which directed countries including Nigeria towards e-learning. Thus, for the last ten

years, the country has been making conscious attempts to integrate digitizing tools into her educational system. The process of integration has gone beyond the technological tools used in teaching and learning to now include dealing with data and information; and all equipment, tools, methods, practices, processes, procedures, concepts, principles, and the sciences that come into play in the conduct of the information activities (Irele, n. d).

Another key aspect of Nigeria curriculum reform effort is the incorporation of the 21st-Century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, communication skills and collaboration, acknowledging their significance in preparing students for the complexities of the modern world (Suwarni, 2023). The basic education curriculum has been undergoing reforms to reflect problem solving, critical and creative reasoning, value orientation, and entrepreneurial skills. NSSEC reforms aim at equipping students with the skills necessary for success, modernization of vocational and technical education, provision of employable skills, and nurturing a generation of young, forward-thinking entrepreneurs (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013). The Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) for Nigerian Universities (2023) also includes several 21st century skills (National Senior Secondary Education Commission, 2024).

One other key aspect of of Nigeria curriculum reform effort is fostering global citizenship. There exists a global recognition that the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that learners need for securing a just, peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure and sustainable world can be imparted to learners through Global Citizenship Education (GCED) (Garba, Abdulhamid & Usman, 2024). GCED is not an additional subject but a framework for learning, reaching beyond school to the wider community which can be promoted in class through the existing curriculum or through new initiatives and activities (Akudolu, 2012). Nigeria has been incorporating elements of global citizenship education into the curriculum involving the promotion of understanding of global issues, fostering intercultural awareness, and



encouraging students to be responsible and engaged global citizens (Garba, Abdulhamid & Usman, 2024).

Challenges to Nigeria Curriculum Reform in the Context of Globalization

Developing a globally relevant curriculum involves multiple and persistent challenges. One aching challenge is that of inadequate infrastructure and funding. Most schools in Nigeria are lacking access to modern learning facilities, ICT tools, and digital platforms required to deliver a globally relevant curriculum. Moreover, there is dearth of people who can take good care of the ICT accessories when they break down (Egbule, 2017). There is also the problem of epileptic power supply which poses a major threat to the effective utilization of the few ICT resources in supply (Onyeatoelu, 2018). Insufficient funding also renders the provision of computers and other ICT facilities that can enhance learning, very difficult (Onyeatoelu, 2018). The expensive nature of the ICT facilities and resources such as computers, projectors, satellite equipment among others, has further confounded this problem (Egbule, 2017).

Another problem confronting Nigeria's curriculum reform in the context of the ongoing globalization is that of teacher capacity deficit. There is shortage of qualified and globally aware teachers capable of delivering reformed curricula that integrate 21st-century skills. Most of Nigeria teachers lack expert knowledge of ICT and are mostly computer illiterates due to teachers' poor background (Egbule, 2017). This is a serious challenge to the implementation of Nigeria curriculum because in many schools, there are no qualified teachers to teach subjects such as Computer Studies/ICT (Awofala & Sopekan, 2013).

The reform efforts are also constrained by resistance to change among some stakeholders due to fear of losing cultural identity or seeing the reforms as externally imposed rather than locally relevant. Teachers, for example, often resist reforms that require them to adopt new technologies, preferring traditional teaching methods. This arises out of the teachers' lack of

understanding of technology's benefits or fear of the unfamiliar, their feeling that they are too late to be digitally informed, and their lack of confidence in the ICT acquisition called technophobia. Moreover, many of even the few Nigeria teachers that are computer compliant prefer to use their knowledge of computer in making money as consultants instead of using them in teaching (Onyeatoelu, 2018)..

One other challenge to Nigeria's curriculum reform efforts is policy inconsistencies. Education policy is fundamental to creating realistic and consistent pathways that will provide a clear-cut direction, stability and the assurance of quality standards in the management of the educational enterprise. Unfortunately, frequent changes in educational policies especially when coupled with lack of sustained implementation strategies hinder the long-term success of curriculum reform in Nigeria, rendering the education sector of the country, breeding poor service delivery, and leading to mass failure in examinations, confusion and conflicts of intentions among stakeholders (Eze, 2023).

The examination-oriented nature of Nigeria's education system is another obstacle to the country's struggle to develop a meaningful curriculum. Nigeria's education system remains heavily exam-focused, limiting creativity, critical thinking, and global competencies. This has led to syllabus-bound instruction; a total lack of consideration for the psychological characteristics, interests and needs of the learners; and massive failure rates. It has also led many students into occasional examination malpractice, result buying, impersonation, bribery, low productivity of the educational outcomes, low functionality of science and technology education; and churning out of certified but unqualified graduates into the labour market (Balarabe, n. d).

Strategic Responses and Recommendations

To address these challenges and harness globalization for national development through curriculum reform, the following responses are proposed:

1. Develop a context-sensitive curriculum:
Make the curriculum inclusive of global



trends such as the 21st century skills of creativity, critical thinking and problem solving while embedding into it, local realities such as indigenous knowledge, civic education, and religious values to promote national identity (Moyinoluwa & Atijohan, 2025). Adapting the curriculum to the needs of students and the needs of the future is key in creating relevant and effective education in a changing era (Suwarni, 2023).

2. Invest in Teacher Development: Fund education adequately to provide comprehensive training and re-training programs for teachers with due emphasis on ICT integration, modern pedagogies, and cross-cultural education. Teacher Trainees should be motivated through onetary incentive (Egbule, 2017). Moreover, in-service teachers in all levels of the educational system should be re-trained in ICT, since most of them never had such training when they graduated from schools (Oleforo, 2013).
3. Strengthen Infrastructure: Adequate funding and resources including technology infrastructure and learning materials should be provided to support the implementation of the curriculum reforms. Governments and stakeholders must invest in digital tools, power supply, and internet access to make the globalized curriculum deliverable and sustainable (Egbule, 2017). This will immensely contribute to preparing students for a globally interconnected world while also ensuring that they are rooted in their own cultural identity and equipped with the skills they need to succeed.
4. Foster Public-Private Partnerships: Public-private partnerships (PPP) recognize the existence of alternative options for providing education services besides public finance and public delivery. (Anthony, Felipe, Osorio & Guáqueta, 2009). Collaboration

between the government and private sector is therefore necessary to enhance funding, technical expertise, and innovation in curriculum development. Where the partnership involves international organizations, it also provides an opportunity to integrate global perspectives into the curriculum, enriching students' learning experiences (Suwarni, 2023).

5. Promote Research-Based Curriculum Design: For curriculum reform to be sustainable, it should be informed by rigorous educational research, evaluating global best practices and aligning them with Nigeria's national vision. As Okeke & Chukwudebelu (2024) put it, the reform should be accompanied by a culture that incentivizes reflection, research, and debate around curriculum transformations.

Implications for National Development

Education is globally acknowledged to be the master key for national development. The level of a country's development is often reflected in its academic curriculum. An effectively reformed curriculum has the following implications to the development of Nigeria:

1. Enhancing human capital: An effectively reformed curriculum produces globally competitive graduates with relevant skills. It nurtures a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity across various sectors. It equips individuals with the competencies needed to adapt to evolving economic demands (Okeke & Chukwudebelu, 2024).
2. Fostering innovation and entrepreneurship: An effectively reformed curriculum encourages creativity and economic self-reliance. It generates creative entrepreneurs and workforce with sufficient resources in academic, vocational and technical

subjects within and outside the school settings, for sustainable wealth creation and shared prosperity of humanity (Oyekan, 2016).

3. Strengthening civic engagement: Meaningful curriculum reform shapes how citizens think, behave, and participate in civic life, generating citizens who are responsible, tolerant, and informed. Such informed and active citizens having been imbued with proper democratic values, political awareness, and civic engagement can effectively participate in democratic governance processes (Okeke & Chukwudebelu, 2024).
4. Promoting unity in diversity: A meaningfully reformed curriculum incorporates multicultural education that mitigates ethnic and religious tensions. It promotes inclusivity, tolerance, and mutual understanding thereby serving as a catalyst for fostering social cohesion and national unity (Oyekan, 2016; Okeke & Chukwudebelu, 2024).

CONCLUSION

Globalization presents both significant opportunities and threats to Nigeria's educational system. A carefully developed and implemented curriculum reform which is context-sensitive funded enough to provide meaningful teacher pre-service training and development and adequate Infrastructure fosters technological integration, incorporation of 21st-Century skills and global citizenship which necessary for national development. Such a curriculum enhances Nigeria's human capital, fosters innovation and entrepreneurship, strengthens civic engagement, promotes unity in diversity. Recommendations given below must however be taken into account.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For Nigeria to attain national development through curriculum reform in the light of ongoing globalization, the following recommendations should be considered:

Nigerian government must partner with private organizations and international organizations to strengthen educational funding for adequate teacher training and development and provision of sufficient ICT infrastructure in schools.

Teachers and lecturers should make personal efforts in updating their ICT knowledge and the trending pedagogies associated with it. Government and other education stakeholders must put hands on deck to reform the curriculum, for integrating into it the necessary skills necessary for personal and collective development in the future. Curriculum researchers and developers should undertake researches that can guide the development of the country's curriculum in line with the demands of the present era.

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