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## **In-Service Training Of Head Teachers As Tool For Curriculum Innovation Practice**

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### **Abstract**

This paper tried to find out the competences needed by head teachers in curriculum innovation and also the constraints in curriculum innovation among head teachers' in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. A survey research design was adopted for the study, two research questions and one null hypothesis, tested at ( $p < .05$ ) level of significance guided the study. The study was carried out in Awka Education zone of Anambra State. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. The population of the study was 188 head teachers in Awka Education zone, from the 188 population 108 were head teachers from rural public primary schools while 80 were from urban public primary schools in the same Education zone. There was no sampling. The findings of the study revealed that head teachers in both urban and rural public primary schools need in-depth knowledge in information communication and technology (ICT) as well as in-service training needed in curriculum innovation. The study also showed that fund is a major constraints to curriculum innovation. Recommendations were therefore made based on findings, to increase funding, and training.

### **Background of the study**

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (FRN. 2004) described primary education as, 'the education given in institution for children aged 6 to 11 plus, it rightly stated that, since the rest of educational system is built upon the education at this level, it is the key to success or failure of the entire educational system. Hence, primary education as the foundation of other levels of education is so critical that all efforts should be geared towards transforming curriculum at that level. The notion that the future of every nation depends very much on the children of today is no longer debatable, hence, the quality of the educational system at the primary level is of paramount importance.

Education at every level has different components. The material components of the primary school system are the pupils, teachers, curriculum, books, equipment and the buildings which must harmonise for the educational aims and objectives to be achieved. The task of coordinating is the responsibility of the head teacher which requires much skill and competencies in order to perform well on the job.

The head teacher as a coordinator must be knowledgeable in curriculum transformation, improvement, innovation and implementation. The acquisition of such knowledge require certain training which can come in form of in-service training, workshops, seminars etc, hence Ali (1996), Oranu (2002) and Nwadam (2006) noted that head teachers require in-service training to acquire the professional competencies required for excellent performance of duties. Terrell and Lindsey (2009) outlined the roles of head teachers to include, providing leadership for curriculum development and instructional improvement, creating an environment conducive for the realization of human potentials, influencing the behaviours of staff members and supervising instructional activities in the school.

The word curriculum refers to all that is taught in school including the time tabled subjects and all those aspects of its life that exercise an influence in the life of the children (Farrant, 1990). He further stated that curriculum represents the distilled thinking of society on what it wants to achieve through education and how, it tends to mirror the society itself, reflecting its aims, values and priorities, it also spelt out clearly the knowledge society considers important and useful. Esu (2005) sees curriculum as a set of plans or materials, while instruction is the transformation of these plans into a course of action. Since curriculum as a plan must be transformed into a course of action, it requires skills, competencies, new knowledge and ideas to be done effectively and these skills, competencies, new knowledge and ideas must come through in-service training, seminars and workshops.

Fifty-two years after independence, Nigerian system of education has passed through different stages of curriculum development and innovation and it is still passing. Hardly a day can pass without headline, editorial or feature articles on education without the need for curriculum innovation appearing in either the media, newspapers and journals. Duffy (2009) stated that Curriculum changes and innovations relate to how teacher adjust, adapt and improve teaching and pupil learning strategies through organizational transformation. He stated further that it has been perceived that the existing curriculum of primary school is geared towards a limited level of development, primary school leavers found themselves 'worthless' in the community, even in the nation as a whole. Aigbomian (2010) stated that there appear to be a general discontentment in our educational system which some call educational crisis, arising from this, some bodies and individuals have called on the Federal Government and some state governments to declare a state of emergency in the educational sector. Such bodies have argued that the present education system is not capable of effectively meeting the requirements and aspirations of the society. Educators believe that if there is crisis in education sector there must be a lot of problems with the curriculum. When situations like this arises people clamour for curriculum change or curriculum innovation'.

As a result people clamour for change in curriculum, the joint consultative committee of education (JCC) in 1965 adopted Prof Bab Fafunwa's idea of a National Curriculum Conference which took place in Lagos in 1969. This resulted in birth of a new system in education which is the 6,3,3,4 system of education. Onwuka (2002) noted that the 6-3-3-4 system which replaced the old system of 6-5-2-3 or 6-5-4, was greatly applauded especially for its vocational orientation. Okafor (1999) posits that the greatest

asset of the system is the introduction of pre-vocational, technical course into the mainstream of the national educational continuum. It injects greater relevance to the educational system and makes Nigerian education more responsive to the new world order that set premium on technological excellence. It sets the Nigerian child on the part to acquisition of practical skills and the attainment of education that is more useful for self-employment and self-reliance.

For a Nigerian child to acquire the practical skills and attain educational height that is useful, self-employment and self-reliance, the teachers that are responsible for transforming the curriculum into the course of action must first be transformed, and be exposed, acquainted in certain competencies and skills which is required of him, such competencies and skills will come through in-service training, seminars, workshops, refreshers courses, induction etc. Ogbuvbu (2011) noted that the curriculum content is detailed and is an indication that the planners have in mind the qualifications and methods of teaching by teachers in primary schools. Nigerian primary school teachers are generalists, that is, teachers who teach all subjects to one set of pupils throughout the year. Performance depends on the training received from the head teachers, senior and expert colleagues. Wanga (2001) noted that in-service training opportunities for school inspectors and teachers on school curriculum are hopelessly inadequate, he further stated that opportunities for in-service for headteachers and teachers to keep abreast of development in education, improve their professional skills and enjoy the respect and esteem of teaching profession are highly lacking. As Masarah (1999) noted, currently teachers do not understand and never participate in designing the curriculum they use in teaching.

Ezegbe (2000) described in-service as a programme designed to improve and update the professional competencies of workers for the achievement of organizational goals. It includes seminars, workshops, conferences and internship where participants are involved in practical work or field trip.

Farrant (1999) has this to say, in-service training is constantly learning and adapting to the new challenges of his job. Much of this training is self-directed, is carried out by reading books and articles on education, by discussing with colleagues and supervisors matters concerning teaching and by attending courses and conferences on education. Increasingly, however, the need for in-service training is being recognized by educational authorities and so the teacher may find himself selected to take part in a longer in-service training course that offers help in improving specific teaching skills or enables him to come to grips with new developments such as new curricula, new methods and other innovations. Or he might find in-service training provided to help him prepare to take up a new kind of teaching altogether, such as that of handicapped children, or to undertake a new responsibility such as the post of head teacher. In-service training is now recognized as an essential part of the overall process of teacher education. The world is becoming highly technological, the children and teachers of today need to be taught how to develop in line with the current trends. It is important for every nation to ensure that its citizenry, particularly teachers of primary schools acquire the necessary training and relevant knowledge that will be of help in improving curriculum at the primary school levels to meet up the challenges of the current trend. Hence, the new emerging

technology calls for change or review of traditional method of teaching. Oreh (2010) stated that curriculum innovation focus primarily on improving the current teaching and learning process. She further listed the following reasons why there are curriculum innovation namely: to achieve the goals of education at all levels, it focuses on improving the current teaching and learning processes, to expand and restructure the various levels of education, to meet the needs for capacity and professional development at all level, and to make the demands of the changing and dynamic human society. Curriculum innovation is a must and any dynamic educationist must have burden for it. The key to success in curriculum innovation depends on the contribution of the head teacher, for no teacher will perform wonders from his original training without some kind of in-service training or refresher course especially in the area of introduction of a new curricular hence attendance of in-service training courses cannot be neglected. Curriculum development and in-service teacher training are opposite sides of the same coin and it is impossible to have the former without the later.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria (1998) National Policy on Education was revised in (2004) stated among many reasons for the revision, the introduction of information and communication technology (ICT) into the system (FRN, 2004). Since there has been addition in the policy so also there is a need for in-service training of teachers to acquaint themselves with the new trend. In line with the afore-stated, the need for in-service programmes among head teachers has become compelling, also the advance in educational technology have necessitated modern approaches in methodology. The 'chalk-talk approach which was the main medium of imparting knowledge is gradually being replaced by different types of instructional media such as films, tape-recorder, radio, televisions and computers. The classroom teachers and the head teachers need to be guided through the labyrinth of innovations that have turned the school environment into a power house for generating the most potent forces in the world today. The head teachers instructional leadership roles according to Mgbodile (2004) include planning the school curriculum in accordance with the stated aims of primary education, encouraging teachers and pupils to use available teaching facilities, supervision of the instructional activities of teachers, helping teachers grow professionally by encouraging them to attend in-service training programmes, workshop and refresher courses organized by higher institutions or the Ministry of Education and evaluating and reporting pupils progress in school. This is in line with Billard (2003) when he noted that head teachers are the driving force behind any school. However, international perspectives on Education for all presuppose that curriculum in schools will improve by continuously investing in professional development of head teachers with focus on their curriculum and instructional needs. Experience has shown that most primary school head teachers are out dated, lack the skill and competencies in the new and current styles of administration, even in the use of ICT to store information and collect useful data that will help them in their administrative management. The new trend in administration and innovation can only come through acquisition of new knowledge.

Farrant (1999) noted that one important outcome of this innovation of teacher education is to do away with the long-established belief that training is something that teachers are given at the beginning of their career to last them to the end. In its place

came the realization that the changing demands upon teachers and the speed with which these changes arrive make it necessary to think of teacher education as a series of phases or cycles:

- Pre-service training given before the teacher begins to teach.
- Induction given during the teacher's initial teaching experience.
- In-service training given as needs arise throughout the teacher's career.

These new concepts of teacher education were accompanied by other significant changes too. For example, in some African countries, a good deal of in-service training was introduced that enabled teachers to remain on the job while they received their training by means of correspondence lessons, specially prepared broadcasts and occasional face-to-face meetings with their tutors. Such distance teaching methods have continued to prove very successful in improving professional development.

These programmes are provided in form of workshops, institute, networks and conferences. Mohammed (2006) sees professional development as "all forms of in-service, continuing education on-the job training, workshops, post qualification courses whether formal or informal, teacher-initiated or system-initiated, accredited or not". These programmes must come regularly if the innovation in curriculum must be effective and realistic. The government should help sponsor head teachers for their in-service training as this will help teachers develop and acquire new knowledge in curriculum planning and gather new skills in administration.

In-service training for head teachers have so many advantages, common knowledge alone tells us that nothing in life remains the same. Everything is flux. Education is not in isolation, new laws and regulations must be formulated to align with the new trend in development. In-service training encourages professional development and also network of professional colleague is built through in-service training. For effective curriculum innovation to take place, there must be facilities, equipment and training for both the head teachers and the teachers. Ezekanyi (2007) noted that there are three main factors that enhance any educational endeavour. These are finance, personnel physical facilities and equipment. These are indispensable if any education pursuit is to be achieved. The criteria for appointment of head teachers are basically the possession of teacher grade two certificate (TCII) and some years of experiences. In some cases fresh graduates of National Certificate of Education (NCE) are pointed head teachers without years of experience. It is worth knowing that if people recruited do not have the experience and skills needed for its crucial role of bringing innovation in their administrative role, the aim of change will not come. Some recruited/appointed head teacher have no knowledge of ICT, which is almost the eye and the ear of every dynamic and growing organization. This study is therefore to find out competencies needed by head teachers in curriculum innovation and constraints to curriculum innovation practice in primary school in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State.

#### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of the study was to find out how in-service training of head teachers can act as a tool in curriculum innovation practice in primary schools, specifically, the study seeks to identify:

- The competencies/ skills needed by head teachers in curriculum innovation practice.
- Constraints encountered by head teachers in curriculum innovation practice.

### **Research question**

Two research questions guided the study:

1. What are the competencies needed by head teachers in curriculum innovation practice?
2. What are the constraints encountered by head teachers in curriculum innovation practice?

### **Hypothesis**

**Ho<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the head teachers location and their competencies in curriculum innovation practices.

### **Significance**

The finding of the study will help both Federal and State Government to see the need for sending head teachers and class teachers on in-services training, organizing workshops and seminars for them to improve on their already acquired skills and competencies, in order to learn new skills in curriculum innovation. The finding will help teachers and head teachers to see the need for change, in order to acquire new skills.

### **Methodology**

The design adopted for the study was a descriptive survey. The study was carried out in Awka Education Zone of Anambra State, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research question and one null hypothesis tested at 0.05 level of significance. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire. 24 items' questionnaire homogeneously keyed into two clusters. Cluster one addressed competencies needed by head teachers while cluster two addressed constraints encountered by head teachers in curriculum innovation practice. The questionnaire was structured on four point scales of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The target population of the study were of two groups namely the head teachers in urban public primary schools and head teachers from rural public primary schools. The entire population of the group was 188. This was made up of 108 head teachers in rural public primary schools and 80 head teachers in urban public primary school, making a total of 188 head teachers. All the 188 head teachers in the zone were purposively selected because of their fewness in number. The instrument was face validated by three experts, one in department of science education and two in educational foundations. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts. These experts were asked to examine the instrument in terms of relevance of the items in relation to purpose of the study, ambiguity of the sentences used in framing the questions and the clarity of the items. Materials that were not relevant to the work were expunged. The research questions that were initially one were expanded to two to cover more contents of the research. The experts examined the items and matched them with the research questions, items that were originally 12 were enlarged to 24.

The reliability co-efficient of the instrument was 0.78 using Cronbach Alpha method of establishing reliability for internal consistency.

The researcher used two research assistants that helped in the distribution and collection of the instrument. There was 100% return of the instrument. The data was analyzed using mean statistics and t-test to test the hypothesis. For decision any item with 2.50 and above, will be used as agreement and any item below 2.50 will be seen as disagreement.

## Results

**Table 1: Mean Scores of Head Teachers' on competencies**

S/N	Questionnaire items	$\bar{x}$ Urban	SD Urban	$\bar{x}$ Rural	SD Rural
1	In-depth knowledge of national policy on education on the importance of primary education	3.54	0.67	3.69	0.57
2	Integrating information and communication technology (ICT) in teacher education as curriculum innovation	3.46	0.73	3.39	0.78
3	Attending seminar and workshops on curriculum innovation.	3.78	0.42	3.79	0.45
4	Knowing the needs of the community and society at large.	3.13	0.74	3.07	0.84
5	Required in-service training in curriculum innovation.	3.45	0.59	3.44	0.69
6	The need to integrate administrative issues as part of the curriculum innovation.	3.21	0.72	3.24	0.67
7	Improving on the content of curriculum as required in curriculum innovation.	3.41	0.69	3.48	0.56
8	Integrating the needs of the community in the curriculum innovation.	3.21	0.72	3.14	0.78
9	Make up the curriculum content dynamic and functional to enhance and accommodate changes in the innovation.	3.36	0.53	3.46	0.54
10	Attending refresher's courses on curriculum improvement so as to acquaint stakeholders on changes.	3.45	0.67	3.64	0.48
11	Knowledge that will generate research/critical thinking.	3.30	0.75	3.31	0.66
12	Network of professional colleague is required for head teachers in curriculum innovation.	2.95	0.98	3.04	0.89
	<b>Cluster <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>3.35</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>3.39</b>	<b>0.32</b>

Table 1 presents the view of urban and rural head teachers in Awka education zone of Anambra state on the competencies needed in curriculum innovation. The cluster mean score of 3.35 and 3.39 showed that head teachers both urban and rural agreed that certain competencies are needed to enable curriculum innovation take place in primary schools in Awka education zone of Anambra state in Nigeria. Looking at the table, item 3 is rated 3.78 and 3.79 by urban and rural head teachers indicating that there is need for head teachers both urban and rural to attend seminars and workshops on curriculum

innovation. Both also rated item 5 and 7, 3.45 & 3.44 and 3.41 & 3.48 respectively, indicating the need for in-service training in curriculum innovation and also improving on the content of the curriculum as required in curriculum innovation.

**Table 2: Means Scores of Head Teachers on Constraints**

S/N	Questionnaire items	$\bar{x}$	SD	$\bar{x}$	SD
		Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural
13	Insufficient development of refreshers programme for upgrading head teachers.	3.11	0.99	3.11	0.93
14	Teachers negative perceptions about change	2.74	0.96	3.16	0.84
15	Lack of fund	3.28	2.89	2.95	0.93
16	Teachers non-involvement in major curriculum policies.	3.15	0.59	3.06	0.67
17	Low level of head teachers reading habit	2.91	2.84	3.19	0.83
18	Administrative competencies is lacking.	2.34	0.64	3.17	0.83
19	Lack of internet facilities.	2.16	1.02	2.16	1.04
20	Unconducive school and classroom environment	3.21	0.74	3.14	0.79
21	Lack of basic knowledge in ICT skills.	2.94	0.84	2.93	0.88
22	Insufficient knowledge in curriculum innovation	2.71	1.09	3.12	0.80
23	Network of professional colleague is lacking	3.26	0.64	3.17	0.82
24	Shortage of library materials and facilities.	2.39	0.77	2.62	0.90
	<b>Cluster <math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>2.93</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>3.03</b>	<b>0.40</b>

Table 2 above indicates the mean rating of urban and rural head teachers on constraints to curriculum innovation practice. item 13 was rated 3.11 and 3.11 by both urban rural head teachers, thereby indicating the need to organize refreshers programmes for upgrading head teachers, item 16 shows that teachers non-involvement in major curriculum policies is a major constraint to curriculum innovation, items 20 and 23 with mean scores of 3.21 & 3.14 also 3.26 & 3.17 by both urban and rural head teachers, indicating that unconducive school and classroom environment and lack of network of professional colleague are constraints to curriculum innovations.

**Table 3: t-test: Independent t-test analysis of head teachers location on their competence needs in curriculum innovation practice**

Group	$\bar{x}$	SD	NO	DF	T-CAL	T-CRIT	P $\square$	Remark
Urban	3.35	0.38	80	186	0.71	1.96	0.05	Accepted
Rural	3.39	0.32	108					
Total		0.70	188					

**Hypothesis**



This hypothesis was tested using an independent t-test analysis of location influence on head teachers' competencies needs in curriculum innovation practice. The analysis resulted in at  $(186) = 0.71$ ,  $p > 0.05$  with rural location receiving higher score than urban location. Based on this, the null hypothesis was accepted, hence there is no significant location influence on head teachers competency needs in curriculum innovation. A close look at table 3 entries, show that the mean competence score of rural is higher than that of urban, hence head teachers in rural location is significantly in need of competencies in curriculum innovative practices.

### **Discussion of Results**

The findings of the study revealed that head teachers in both urban and rural public primary school need in-depth knowledge of National policy on education, information and communication technology (ICT), seminars and workshop on curriculum innovation. This is in consonance with Ameruoso (2006) when he stated that the society is dynamic not static, so also is the curriculum, head teachers must keep their competencies up-to-date attending workshop, seminars, in-service training etc. Head teachers also need to know the needs of the community and society at large, Farrant (1999: 233) noted that, A head teacher has responsibilities beyond the confines of his school, for he is responsible not only to his employer but to the public and, in particular, to the community which his school serves. By his efforts, enthusiasm and tact he can forge links with the community that will make his school wanted. Only when there is this relationship can the school play one of its most important functions, namely, an extension of the community's traditional system of training the young for adulthood.

The findings displayed in table 1 show that head teachers both urban and rural need to have in-depth knowledge of the concepts of curriculum and also to make the curriculum content dynamic and functional as to accommodate and enhance changes in the community and society at large. The finding is in line with Offoma (2005) when she contended that functional education is determine by the quality of the curriculum content and its implementation, functional curriculum must be valid, significant, learnable, consistent with the social realities, useful and reflect the interest of the learner.

The findings also revealed that head teachers both rural and urban need new knowledge that will generate research and critical thinking. They also need to align with their professional colleague and share new ideas through an established communication network. With reference to research question two, the respondents (urban and rural head teacher) unanimously agreed that there are a lot of constraints to curriculum innovation in Awka Education zone of Anambra State namely: insufficient development of refresher programme for upgrading head teachers, teachers negative perceptions about change, lack of fund, teachers non-involvement in major curriculum policies, shortage of library materials and facilities, lack of internet facilities, not ICT literate, lack of experience in curriculum innovation, lack of network of professional colleague. This is in line with Aguokogbue (2003), who maintained that inadequate funds often lead to meager libraries, few instructional supplies, cheap buildings, poorly trained staff and non-provision of basic services to students.

Ukeje, Akabogu and Ndu (1992: 379) corroborated this view when they stated that: It is a known fact that money, or lack of it, will govern the way an organization is

managed and the way it succeeds. With regard to an educational institution, it is also an administrative truism that an educational activity or programme may be encouraged by increasing the revenue for it or it may be discouraged, enfeebled or frustrated by denying it sufficient financial support. The above assertion indicates that without adequate funding the curriculum innovation cannot take place in primary schools.

On the hypothesis, the study found out that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of head teachers on the competencies needed by head teachers for curriculum innovation in public primary schools based on location. The result from table 3 shows that t-value calculated was less than the t-table values, hence the null hypothesis is accepted.

### **Recommendation**

The study recommends that the government should organize workshops, seminars and orientation for head teachers and sponsor head teachers from both urban and rural for in-service training in a recognized institutions of higher learning. Fund should be provided to the Local Government Education Authority to enable them build and equip primary school library, also head teachers and even teachers should be exposed to ICT training to enable them acquire the needed skills and competencies needed for curriculum innovation.

### **Conclusion**

From the findings and discussions of the study, the following conclusions are made; head teachers both urban and rural public primary school need in-depth knowledge of national policy on education, ICT, seminars and workshop on curriculum innovation, this is to enable them maintain their professional competencies and also update them.

The head teachers also need to develop new knowledge that will generate research and critical thinking, they also need to align with their professional colleagues and exchange new ideas through an established network of communication.

Finally, since there was no significance difference between the mean scores of head teachers both urban and rural on the competences needed by head teachers for curriculum innovation practices in public primary schools based on location, therefore, there is urgent need for in-service training among head teachers in primary schools.

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