



International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation.

Curriculum enrichment programmers as enhancement of students' enrollment in the 21st century commercialized secondary education

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Article Info

ISSN (online): 2582-7138

Volume: 04

Issue: 06

November-December 2023

Received: 26-09-2023;

Accepted: 28-10-2023

Page No: 670-674

Abstract

The paper examined curriculum enrichment programme as an important component for the enhancement of students' enrollment in the 21st century commercialized secondary education. Education is no longer only about learning to read and write or adding and subtracting. It now involves the inclusion of enriched activities that can challenge students' mental, soft skills and physical abilities thereby expanding their opportunities in life and career. The problem in the world of today is that careers in the industries and academic space have been stressed beyond limit and other less exploited areas should be sought for survival. Curriculum enrichment programmes in schools is one of the ways to accomplish this. It is expressed in extra-curricular and co-curricular activities and offers learners enviable career opportunities. The focus of this paper is to advocate for a robust investment in these activities by school owners and operators. This, apart from enhancing students' experience, would soar enrollment leading to improved return on investments. Nigeria is among many nation of the world where ownership and operations of educational institutions have been liberalized and commercialized. The paper views curriculum enrichment programme as that aspect of the curriculum learning experiences that has received less attention in the past, but now a latent weapon for attracting students to enroll in an institution, keeping them to completion and sustaining the system. This investigation relied largely on secondary data and empirical findings. Suggestions put forward amongst others are that secondary schools owners should invest heavily in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities as a way of increasing and sustaining enrollment in the volatile and highly competitive education service market.

Keywords: Curriculum enrichment, Students enrollment, commercialized secondary school

Introduction

21st Century no doubt brought with it an avalanche and vista of discoveries in areas that were before not taken seriously. Such neglected fields though equally important as cognitive based learning over time put great pressure on the most emphasized academic careers. Though widely known, that learning is segmented into three main domains learning; cognitive, affective and psychomotor. The cognitive has been preferred over the years. These three domains are loosely referred to as head, heart and hand or simply Triple H. The present situation of most economies characterized by regular job losses due to poor economic realities and other issues have led to a quest to explore career related to heart and hand mostly skills of physical activity-oriented acquired outside the classroom.

In the school setting curriculum programmes comprises of three main programmes; programme of studies(involving academic disciplines and courses of studies), programme of activities that embody learning referred to as experiential and incidental and thirdly programme of guidance that includes professional advising and assisting learners.

It is argued therefore that the neglect of the last two types of programmes was to the detriment of learners as their learning experiences would fall short of being holistic. For all sound development of learners the three sets should be given equal attention in order to groom and nurture the total child or man. A total man or child is referred to as a man or child who develops the various capacities fully. Such a man would hardly lack what to do for sustenance and survival in life and career. After all, the essence of education is for the educated to be useful both to himself and the society, in most cases the opposite is the case.

One of the credible routes to enriching and designing relevant curriculum in a stressed learning environment beyond the four walls of the classroom is to involve students in real-life and creative problem-solving situation by means of extra-curricular activities. This paper attempts to contribute to current discourse on extracurricular activities by expiating perspective on avenues through which Nigeria secondary schools programmes might be exploited to provide out-of-class activities learning experiences for students thereby acting as a funnel for more intake of new students, preserving existing students and sustaining the school.

Commercialization of education is broadly an authorization given to private individual to operate school. In Nigeria, the National Policy on Education (2004) succinctly puts it thus; government welcomes the participation of voluntary agencies, communities and private individuals and others wishing to establish secondary schools. The providers of the products and services in this field engage in stiff competition as one of the characteristics of free market economy. Regulation of those activities is however provided by the government through what is referred to as minimum standard. The ensued competition and quest for survival would make the search by this paper indispensable.

The Concept of Curriculum Enrichment

Enrichment as a concept is simply the act of enhancing something to have higher and more value. It is an activity carried out with the aim of improving the quality or value of something (Cambridge Dictionary). Curriculum enrichment therefore is giving better and higher meaning to a curriculum by adding utility. It is a description of such activities which schools bring on board to extend students experiences beyond their normal classroom subject offerings (Raja and Mythilye 2018) ^[16]. The focus is given to the holistic development whereby students are taught skills that are relevant to real life stand point. These acquired skills will help students develop an embellished professional life. Okoro (2015) ^[14] referred to it as programmes of activities.

Curriculum enrichment is commonly referred to in popular parlance in education as both co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities are such activities that are carried out outside classroom but force the classroom experience in meaningful ways (Khan and Iqbal, 2014) ^[13]. These activities do not fall into regular and certificated as the subjects taught in the classroom and their schedules not included in the regular time table. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are carried out during breaks, after regular schools activities and weekends. That implies that they are supplementary to education indulged in the classroom. They rather allow students to engage the learning experiences in real-life. Student's report card shows that a particular student performed certain of these activities and in some rear occasion may be certificated.

There are several types of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities carried out by schools and selection of the right activities at school can be of great relevance to polish the students' skills and keep him engaged during and after schooling. Danoa (2017) ^[8] grouped curriculum enrichment activities into eight as follows;

1. Leisure related activities
2. Academic related activates
3. Social development co-curricular activities
4. Picnics and excursion
5. Art and crafts
6. Physical related activities
7. Cultural development and
8. Civic values related to co-curricular activities

Co-curricular activities should be chosen carefully. As it is meant to be supplementary to classroom learning, balancing should be emphasized during their schooling. If these activities are planned well it should not affect the classroom attendance, it is something each student would enjoy doing hence the students should be involved during the selection process. Parents should collaborate with both school and the pupil because they are highly important.

Medium.com (2022) gave eight importance of co-curricular activities, they are;

1. Improves overall personality
2. Enhance ones physical and mental health
3. Attracting responsibility and initiative
4. Promote specialized skills
5. Nobel activities development
6. Build a sense of responsibility
7. Boosting self-esteem
8. Development of team spirit and time management skills.

Student Enrollment

The process involved in establishing a school is rigorous and complex. An operator would have to approach the government for approval first and foremost. After approval, the school owner should seek out students to attend the classes same as customers patronizing other businesses. As without customers business folds up so is a secondary school without students. This is the stage where competition ensures as the various existing schools have to seek for the perspective students all from the same society, hence, what the school would offer as a bait and attraction because so important.

Enrollment is simply a process of arranging to attend a desired institution and the specific class and/or co-curricular activates. (Collins English Dictionary). It is severally referred to as enlistment, admission, acceptance into a given institution. It is an annual ritual at the beginning of each school year. This process is completed after a prospective intake is granted admission to particular school (Top Hat Glossary, n.d). School enrolment can also be referred to as the number of existing students of an academic institution. This admission process usually started long before a student signs an application form for an entry into a particular school. There are some vital factors to consider before enlisting a prospective student in a school. According to Ahmad, Raheem and Nawaz 2014 ^[2]; Adachi-Mejia, Chamber, Zhigang and Serjent (2014) ^[1] the prospective student and his parents have to consider the values and culture of the school, fees, nearness, location, enrolment, security, previous achievement by the old boys, testimonial and helpful extra-

curricular activities (Tribuneonline.com, 2022; India Today, 2021) ^[19]. After the initial survey the student fills the application form whether virtual or physically at the school plant. He is later invited to register whereby personal data would be confirmed and documents delivered and eventually accept the agreement.

Admission into a school is like a marriage contract. The student so admitted has certain basic rules and regulations to abide in while in the school. The school now assumes the pivotal duty of taking adequate care of the new intake till eventual graduation. The school assumes the obligation as an “in loco parentis” or surrogate parent while the student remains with them. It is a useful journey of life hence should be meticulously pursued. It is a period where one explores his interests, talents, discovery and passions.

In addition, Kaul (2023) ^[12] noted that for the knowledge and socialization students are expected to garner, personal growth and character are equally developed. During this life stage, extra-curricular activities such as art; music, sports and debate enable students to pursue other laudable interests outside the classroom and become balanced and prepare for life either in regular job or such careers different from these traditional professions or careers.

Commercialization of Secondary Education in Nigeria

One of the major indices of development in a country is the high demography of literate population. The government realizing this threw the door opens for private sector participation in the provision of education to the ever increasing population (Uchendu, Nwafor, and Nwaner (2015) ^[20]. The Federal Government of Nigeria also confessed that the funding of education is enormous and far beyond her coping independently hence broader participation would be needed (Harma, 2010) ^[10]. Nigeria for some decades now has private investors’ participation in education from crèche to the university levels.

According to Borgohain (2016) ^[3] commercialization of education is the trend whereby the provision of education is made profitable and business oriented through private sector participation against government solely providing same with public fund. Here individuals who is willing can operate any level of education after due approval by relevant governmental agencies. Almost all factors that affect other business venture are applicable to the business of education as operated by these entrepreneurs. The schools owned by private investors at whichever level are referred to as private schools as distinguished from the ones owned and operated by the government are referred to as public schools. Privatization and commercialization of education in Nigeria became full blown during the 1979/1983 regime of Alhaji Shehu Shagari after the collapse of the Universal Primary Education.

Many have argued against this innovation, as to them, commercialization of education runs against the backdrop that education is a human right of every child and the age long pattern of education was as not-for-profit (Tao, Berci & Wayne in Chukwu and Ezepue, 2018) ^[5] and Chijioke, 2014 ^[4]. To the investors, the implication was envisaged before venturing into the investment. Scot cited in Uchendu, Nwafor, and Nwaneri (2015) ^[20] noted therefore that the survival in this set up is largely dependent on individual operator’s capacity to have constant supply of new students and sustain the currently enrolled ones. It does not stop there but the readiness to timely mobilize resources, success of their students and in making their programmes attractive to the environment they serve. To ensure survival and make the business sustainable appropriate and verifiable marketing strategies must be employed and frequently focused at the prospective clientele (parents, the regulating authorities and prospective students). Notwithstanding this enhancement of enrolment in private secondary schools is still very low as shown in the table below

Table 1: Private Enrollment (Percentage of Secondary School in Nigeria)

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018
Value	11.85	13.68	12.90	19.98	21.53	24.18	18.70	18.72	22.65	22.27	19.03	22.80

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics (<http://uis.unesco.org/>)

A closer look at the statistics in the table above revealed that the percentage of the market share of enrolment of the private enrolment is grossly low if compared to the number of such schools in the Nigeria landscape. If this was all the market share of private enrolment so far, is it not worthwhile to investigate as to whether more will be achieved with curriculum enrichment?

How Curriculum Enrichment Programme Can Enhance Student Enrolment

Many factors shaped a competitive market. Secondary school and indeed education has been commercially enhanced government and non-governmental organizations are no longer the only players when it comes to ownership and operations of educational institution. Private owners who are in the market for profit have increased the number of operators and ownership and this account for stiffer competition, all demanding and jostling for market share. To get a sizeable market share of students through enrolment, attractive and noble products have to be offered. It is all about niche and differentiation. This shows how school owners use

various marketing strategies in bid to attract both parents and students (Uchendu, Nwafor and Nwaneri 2015) ^[20].

Advertising using television, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, school websites are common features. However, it should be noted that the above means are often stories told by the owners themselves. Some of these activities are often showcased without third party collaboration. This is where publicity usually done by third party becomes useful. Extra-curricular activities usually engaged in schools were used for competition with other schools locally, nationally and even globally. A school that features constantly in competition, reported in the news for participation and winning prizes would be envied by parents and their children. A school reported for winning sporting contests, debates, music, dance, recitation, etc. would definitely attract greater enrolment.

It should be emphasized that the level of awareness is growing among parents. This could be seen in the greater demand they are placing on the school. The educated parents could read relevant research findings on this and look out to such school offering robust extra-curricular activities for their children overall development. As the awareness increases,

knowledge of down-turn in many economics resulted into scarcity of job offerings especially academic careers. Parents and their wards are searching out for wider career opportunities outside the regular white collar careers for skill-based careers found in psychomotor domains. Co-curricular activities offer these alternatives. Sportsmen, music, artists, acting egg-heads in Hollywood etc. are making waves financially and popularity wise. What does one needs in life but to be financially independent and socially popular. Football stars, modeling personalities, athletes who were seemingly unknown when indulging in other careers or lacking one came into prominence in sports, boxing, music, acting, beauty contests etc. the catalogue of famous Nigerian athletes according (Patheon.world 2021) ^[15] to include Francis Obikwelu, Jade Monye Glory Alozie, Chioma Ajunwa, Sunday Bada, Blessing Okagbare and Mary Onyali among others. Famous football stars such as Jay-Jay Okocha, Mikel John Obi, Rashidi Yecine, Nwankwo Kalu among others cannot be forgotten in a hurry both in Nigeria and the world. In Music, acting, debates there are legends who took their careers to the top, their testimonies are attractions and their alma mater could gain popularity and goodwill from them. This could attract prospective intakes to the school.

In the light of the above schools should constantly remind parents and their wards of the possibilities in programmes of activities in schools. The schools in their advertising and publicity should remind parents using the testimonies of these legends schools that can invest in these activities, deliberately pursue these ideals would in time use their testimonials to attract new intakes to their institutions. After all, a trusted referral influences more and visibility would lead to more credibility (Cube Creative Design, 2021).

Conclusion

In order to achieve a dynamic and enriched learning environment, the integration of the enrichment programmes is critical for a robust learning experience in Nigeria school's curriculum. This is because learners deserve to have value for the time spent acquiring skills for career and professional development. Also, through the enrichment programmes, learners' innovative potentials such as critical thinking, creativity and other lifelong soft skills are developed. This work x-rayed the concept of curriculum enrichment, commercialization of secondary education in Nigeria and student enrolment. In addition, the paper examined the market share of private secondary school enrolment, the influence of curriculum enrichment programmes on enrollment and among others. The evolution of the commercialized secondary education and its growth pattern as seen in the market share which was slow. From the market share curve, it was revealed that increased investment and adoption of programs of activities severally referred to as curriculum enrichment, extra-curricular activities and co-curricular activities will make a faster and greater inroad into the market space.

Suggestions

Based on the above the following suggestions are thus put forward

1. Secondary school education providers should invest heavily in curriculum enrichment programmes as a way of enhancing enrolment in order to remain in the volatile and highly competitive education service market.
2. There should be deliberate advocacy by private

secondary school owners for the total child.

3. A robust alumni association of various private secondary schools should be encouraged to keep track of past graduates in order to use their achievements to launder the image of the former schools.
4. A strong and formidable association of private school owners should be fostered in order to engender one voice while advocating for enabling environment by the government in order to enhance education services.

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