

CHALLENGES OF THE NEW 9-YEAR BASIC EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION EFFECTIVENESS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated implementation challenges of the new 9-year Basic Education Curriculum in Nigeria. Three hundred and fifty one primary school teachers that were selected from all the Local Government Areas of Osun State were involved in the study. Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire (CIQ) was used to generate data for the study. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient estimated on CIQ was .065. Descriptive statistics was adopted to analyse the data. It was found that majority of primary school teachers in the state have the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) as their minimum qualification and majority of them had taught for more than one year. Majority of the sampled teachers were not aware of the introduction of Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills. They also indicated that there were no teachers for the newly introduced subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills) in their schools. The findings of this study revealed lack of the required subject teachers in most schools. In order for the implementation of the new curriculum to achieve the desired success, there is an urgent need to equip schools with specialists in various subjects especially the newly introduced ones.

Introduction

The Universal Basic Education (UBE) is an educational programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria which was officially launched by the immediate past president, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo on 30 September, 1999, in Sokoto, Sokoto State of Nigeria. The UBE programme is one of Nigeria's strategies for the attainment of the goals of the World Conference on Education for All (EFA), as approved in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 and the education-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is also one of the means for realizing the country's economic agenda as enunciated by the National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS) (Oyo Subeb, 2006).

The president signed the UBE bill into law on 26 May 2004 following its passage by the National Assembly. The UBE 2004 Act makes primary and junior secondary education free and compulsory for all children. In December 2005, the National Council on Education (NCE) directed the National Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) to formulate a curriculum for the implementation of the UBE programme (NERDC, 2007a). The aftermath of that directive was the 9-year Basic Education Curriculum. The structure of the curriculum attempts to address the problems of access, quality and equity in primary and junior secondary schools. It is a 9-year educational programme of three years duration for lower, three years for middle basics and three years for upper basic segments (NERDC, 2007b). These three levels of basic education are universal, free and compulsory for all

Nigerian Children aged 6-15. The programme also stipulated learning from early years of 3-5+, which is called Early Childhood Care Development and Education (ECCDE) (UBEC, 2008).

Before the adoption of the UBE now in vogue, attempts had been made severally to formulate educational programmes. Some of these programmes are:

1. Universal Primary Education in Western Region in 1955.
2. Universal Primary Education in Eastern Region in 1957.
3. Introduction of UPE in Lagos Federal Territory in 1957
4. Publication of National Policy on Education in 1977 which has undergone several revisions, the latest being that of 2004.
5. Launching of Universal Basic Education in 1999 (Yussuf and Ajere, 2008).

Table 1 Presents the Curriculum Structure of the New 9-year Basic Education in Nigeria

Basic Education Curriculum Level	Core Compulsory Subjects	Elective Subjects
Lower Basic Education (Primary 1-3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science and Technology* 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education* 7. Cultural & creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious Studies (CRK.IRK) 9. Physical & Health Education (PHE) 10. Computer studies* 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agriculture 2. Home Economics 3. Arabic Language <p>Note Must offer 1 elective but not more than 2</p>
Middle Basic Education (Primary 4-6)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science and Technology* 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education* 7. Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious Studies (CRK?IRK) 9. Physical & Health Education (PHE) 10. French Language 11. Computer Studies* 12. Life Skills* 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agriculture 2. Home Economics 3. Arabic Language <p>Note Must offer 1 elective but not more than 2</p>
Upper Basic Education (JSS 1-3)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English Studies 2. One Major Nigerian Language (Hausa, Igbo or Yoruba) 3. Mathematics 4. Basic Science 5. Social Studies 6. Civic Education* 7. Cultural & Creative Arts (CCA) 8. Religious Studies (CRK/IRK) 9. Physical & Health Education (PHE) 10. French Language 11. Basic Technology* 12. Computer Studies* 13. Life Skills 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agriculture 2. Home Economics 3. Arabic Language 4. Business Studies 5. <p>Note Must offer 1 elective but not more than 3</p>

- Newly Introduced Subjects. Source: UBEC Training Manual, 2007

The implementation of a new curriculum always poses challenges to the nation as a whole and respective states in particular since majority of the personnel and facilities needed were provided by the states. It is sufficient to remark that, commitment to this provision is likely to vary from state to state. The extent to which the curriculum is sensitive to the

values, beliefs, norms, tradition, science and technology, art, religion and customs of the people constitutes a major challenge also. According to Maduewesi (2000), the curriculum must be sensitive to the totality of the ways of life of the society for which it was designed; and the new curriculum attempts to focus on functionality and relevance to the society. Maduewesi (2002) emphasizes the fact that the need of any nation in the present age of scientific and technological advancement, which is further hastened by computer technology and information superhighway, are best determined through appropriate, relevant, pure and applied science curricula and dissemination of existing and new information which is practically impossible without teachers.

Teachers are major implementers of any curriculum. Regardless of the number of workshops organized for different stakeholders, if teachers are left behind, the objectives set for the curriculum might not be fully achieved. This corroborates Maduewesi's (2000) opinion that teachers are largely responsible for the translation and implementation of educational policies, curriculum or course offering, instructional materials packages and assessment of learning outcomes. The new curriculum attempted to integrate new subjects such as 'computer studies', 'civics', to the new 9-year basic education without considering specialized teachers and instructional materials for proper teaching of the subjects. Kwacha (2007) identifies lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) personnel as one of the major problems which mitigate against the implementation of ICT and its related curriculum in Nigeria. He went further by saying that most institutions lack computer literate teachers and ICT experts that would support and manage the internet connectivity and or application of computing in the teaching-learning process. Teachers as Learners Strategy' (Downloaded 2008) stipulates that:

Curriculum implementation relies on teachers having access to high quality materials, developed by the people with expertise in content and pedagogy, as well as sufficient resources and time to design, test and refine the materials for use in classrooms with diverse students. Teachers and professional developers need to work together to decide how the curriculum will be used with the students and the milestones that will be met at different points in the implementation process. Overtime, teachers need to be given different kinds of support, tailored to their changing needs (p.2).

It is important that government and other stakeholders acknowledge the enormous task of interpreting the new curriculum into instructional activities in the classrooms that rests on teachers. The success or failure of the on-going 9-year basic education in Nigeria seems to lie in the fact that teachers are not only being asked to change their roles and take on increased responsibility but they are also being asked to change previously held attitudes and beliefs (Kennedy and Kennedy 1996). Teachers are the change agents needed to bring the curriculum implementation procedures to the grassroots and communicate such. They require information/knowledge both about the background to the new curriculum (which would include information about the approach and the design) and about how they will be expected to manage it, taking on responsibilities for example for designing materials themselves that they may not have had before.

They require training in the skills required and they require the physical resources to implement the changes. In addition they will need time to take on the new ideas and space to try them out and adapt them to their situation (Kennedy, 1996). According to him, time and space are important as teachers adjust their attitude and beliefs and move through the psychological processes associated with change. These may be more or less stressful depending on the psychological 'distress' between the old and the new practices.

The heavy demands on teachers call for training and re-training to update their content – area knowledge especially on the newly introduced subjects. Experienced teachers may be needed for this ‘change’. Level of certification of teachers seems to impact on their knowledge of the subject matter and the teaching gain. Abell – Foundation (2001) reported that highly certified teachers are no better in practice and knowledge of subject than the less certified ones. Darling-Hammond, (2002) was supposed by Wayne & Youngs (2003) that, high level of certification in a particular subject area, within the context of the study of Mathematics, may result in high knowledge of the subject and more effective teaching.

The Federal Government had kick-started the implementation process by providing a rigorous training exercise on the new curriculum for only forty two master trainers from each state and the Federal Capital Territory. Majority of the participants that took part in the training in some states were not classroom teachers. Even if all were classroom teachers, the proportion in comparison with the number of classroom teachers in each state is insignificant. The challenge of carrying teachers along while implementing the new 9-year Basic Education curriculum especially in Osun State of Nigeria is the concern of this study. The qualities in terms of qualification and years of teaching of the teachers used for the implementation of the new curriculum were investigated. Level of availability of qualified teachers to teach the newly introduced subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies and Life Skills) was also investigated.

Problem Statement

Large proportions of the Annual Budget of many countries go to education, since it is believed to be the major means of producing high intellectual capacity for the nations. The teachers that will bring the objectives of education (especially that of 9-year basic education in Nigeria) to the grassroots must be available and should possess expected qualities that will ensure good performance. This study therefore investigated the availability and qualities of teachers engaged in the curriculum implementation and their awareness of the newly introduced subjects.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the qualities of teachers for implementation of the new 9-year UBE curriculum in terms of teaching and highest qualification?
2. Are the teachers aware of the new subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills) integrated into the 9-year UBE curriculum?
3. How available are qualified subject teachers for the newly introduced subjects in primary schools?

Methodology

This study is a descriptive type. The variables were observed without any manipulation. Purposive sampling technique was used by Osun State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB) to select primary school teachers who attended a training workshop at the State Headquarters, Oshogbo from all the thirty local government areas in the state on 8 and 9 October, 2008. The participants for this workshop constituted the sample of this study. Three hundred and fifty one primary school teachers participated in the study.

An instrument titled Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire (CIQ) was constructed by the researchers. It comprised two sections, Section A elicited information on personal data of the respondents, while section B sought information on teachers’ awareness of and availability of teachers for the newly integrated subjects in the 9-year UBE curriculum. The instruments also sought information on other related curriculum implementation process. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient estimated on CIQ was

0.65. Descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentages) and graphs were employed to answer the three research questions raised in the study.

Results

The answers to the research questions are presented in this section.

Research Question One

What are the qualities of teachers for implementation of the new 9-year UBE curriculum in terms of years of teaching and highest educational qualification?

Table 2: Highest Educational Qualification of Primary School Teachers

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Diploma	1	0.3
Grade II	6	1.7
NCE	286	81.5
B.Sc	5	1.4
B.Ed	43	12.3
M.Ed	1	0.3
No response	9	2.6
Total	351	100

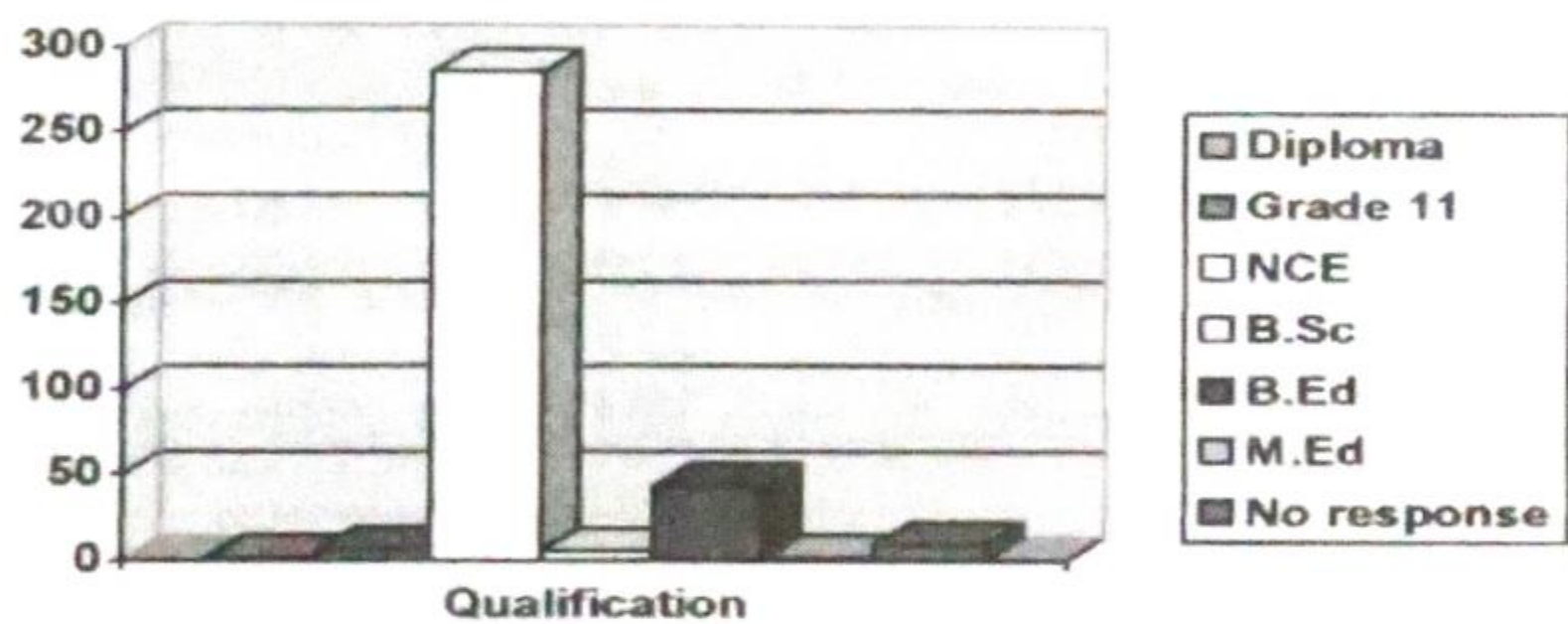


Fig 1: Qualification Profiles of the Selected Teacher

Table 2 and Fig. 1 show that majority of the sampled teachers, i.e.,286 (81.5%) had Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE) qualification while 43 (12.3%) of the sample indicated B.Ed as their highest educational qualification. This result seems to be in conformity with the stipulation of National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) that the minimum educational qualification for primary school teachers should be NCE.

Table 3: Years of Teaching of Primary School Teachers

Year	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0-5	27	7.7
6-10	5	1.4
11-15	24	6.9
16-20	123	35.0
21-25	84	23.9
26-30	76	21.7
Above 30 years	12	3.4
Total	351	100

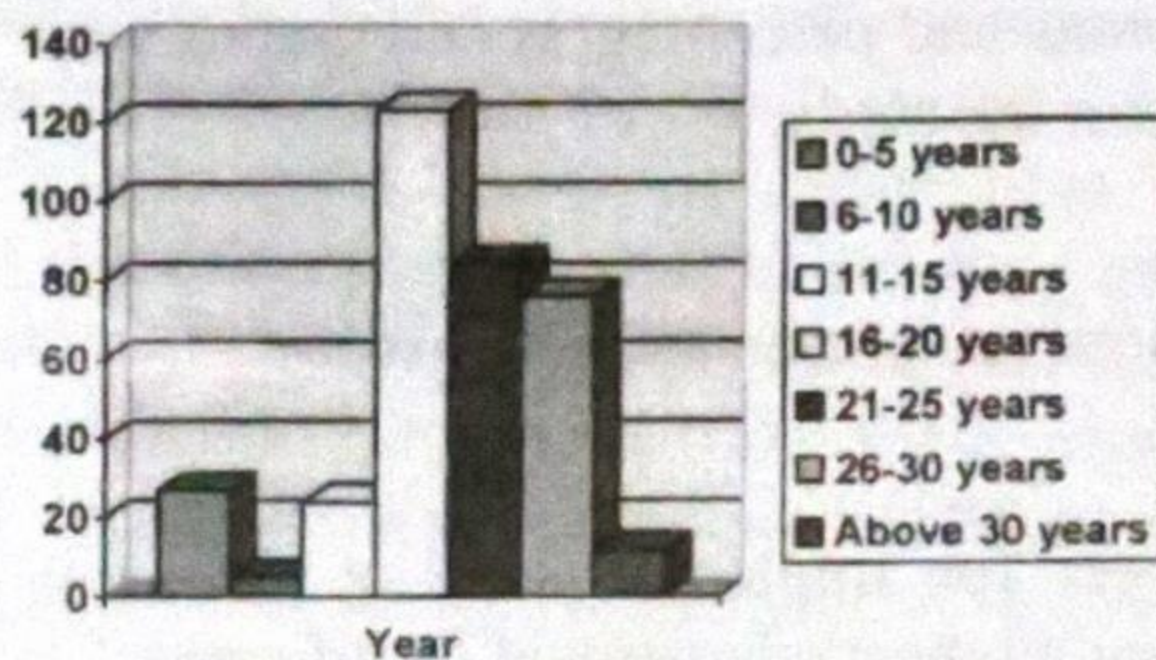


Fig 2: Year of Teaching of the Sampled Teacher

Majority of the sampled primary school teachers as shown in table 3 and fig. 2 are experienced. As many as 319 (90.9%) had more than 10 years teaching experience. This implies that experienced teachers are available for the new 9-year UBE curriculum in primary schools.

Research Question Two

Are the teachers aware of the new subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills) integrated into the 9-year UBE curriculum?

Table 4: Primary School Teachers' Awareness of New Subjects

Subject	Aware		Not aware	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Basic Science and Technology	211	60.1	140	39.9
Computer Studies	151	43.0	200	57.0
Civics	98	27.9	253	72.1
Life Skills	55	15.7	296	84.3

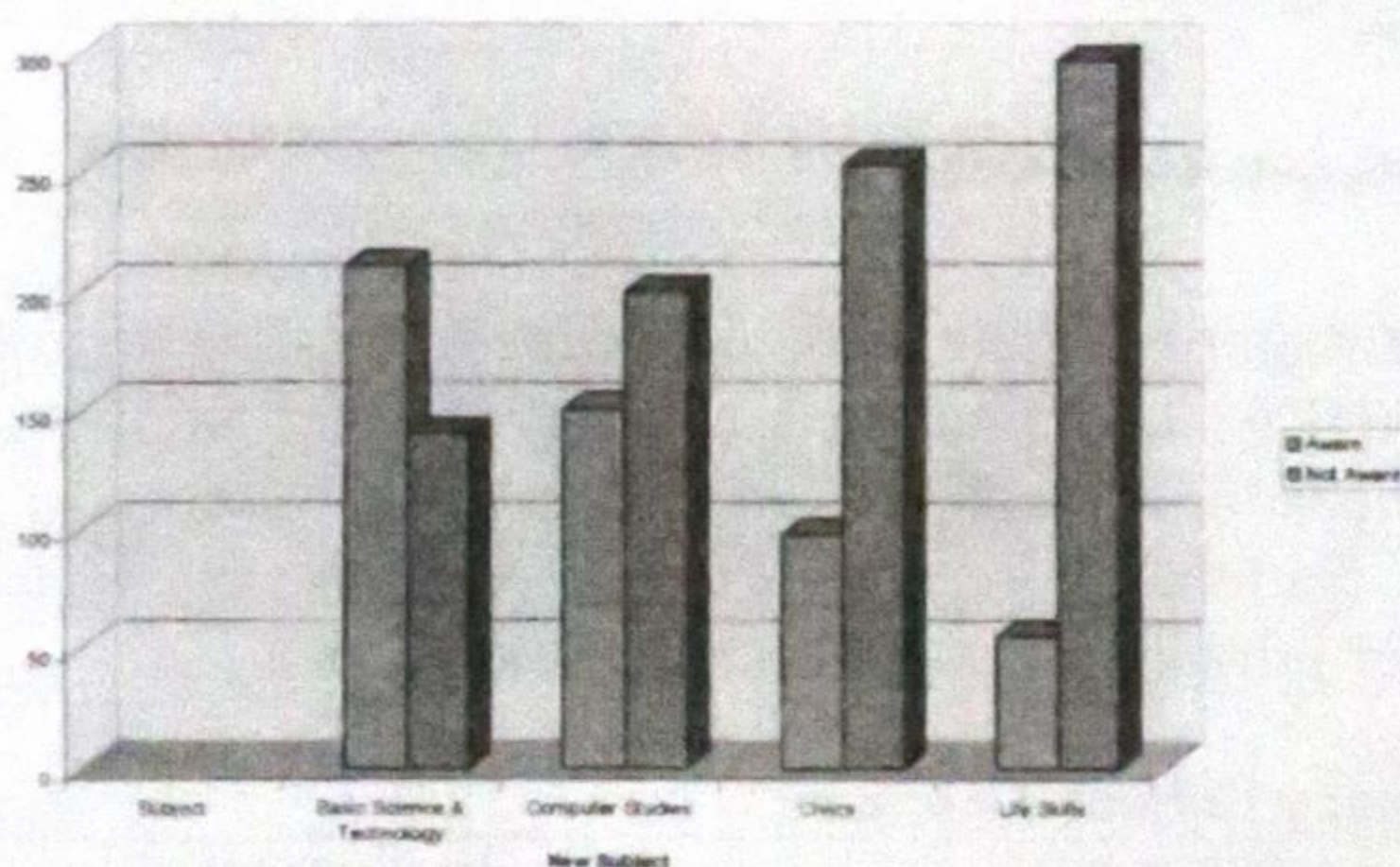


Fig.3. Awareness of the Sampled Teacher of the newly introduced Subjects

Table 4 and Fig. 3 reveal that majority of the sampled teachers were not aware of the newly introduced subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills) in the new curriculum. Among the teacher respondents, 211 (60.1%) and 151 (43.0%) indicated that they were aware of Basic Science & Technology and Computer Studies as newly introduced subjects respectively. Only 98 (27.9%) and 55 (15.7%) indicated that they were aware of Civics and Life Skills as newly introduced subjects respectively. Implicit in this is that if majority of the teachers themselves are not aware of the newly introduced subjects, to what extent then would their pupils be aware of the subjects, needless to talk about being taught?

Research Question Three

How available are qualified subject teachers for the newly introduced subjects in primary schools?

Table 5: Availability of Qualified Subject Teachers for the New Subjects

New Subject	Teacher Availability		Teachers Not Available	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Basic Science and Technology	144	41.0	207	59.0
Computer Studies	37	10.5	314	89.5
Civics	69	19.7	282	80.3
Life Skills	34	9.7	317	90.3

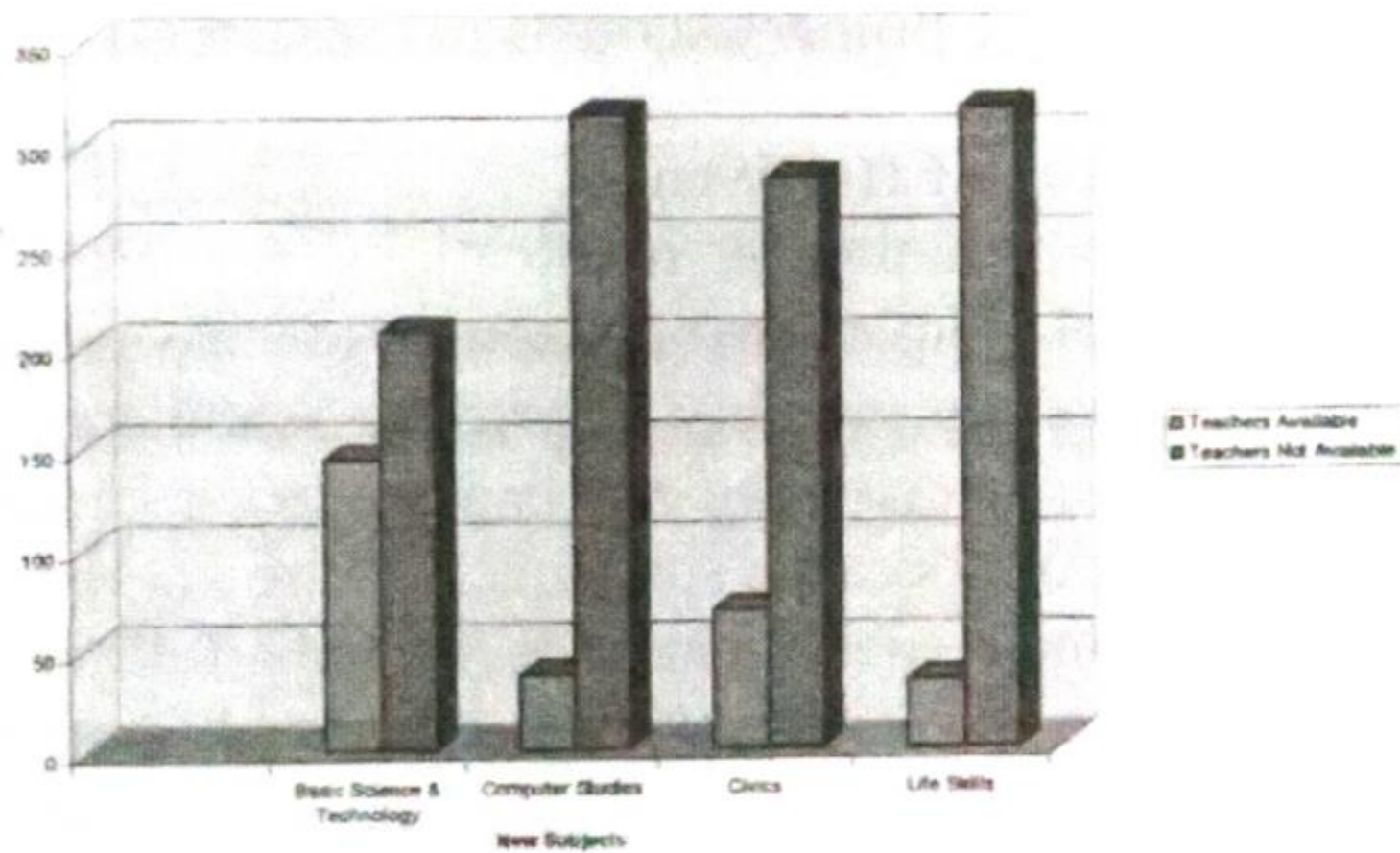


Fig. 4. Availability of Teachers for Newly Introduced Subjects

Introduced subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills) were not available in most of the primary schools in the state. Among the sampled teachers, 144 (41.0%) and 37 (10.5%) indicated that there were teachers for Basic Science and Technology and Computer Studies respectively in their schools. Only few, 69 (19.7%) and 34 ((9.7%) indicated that there were teachers for Civics and Life Skills respectively in their schools. The new 9-year basic education curriculum is already in use since September, 2008 in all the primary and junior secondary schools following the government policy. Yet, there are not sufficient teachers to teach all the subjects, and this poses serious challenges.

Discussion

It was found in this study that majority of the primary school teachers had the minimum requirement of educational qualification, that is Nigeria Certificate of Education (NCE) as specified in the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004). Academic qualification of teachers is a cogent factor that determines the quality of instruction given to learners. Implementation of curriculum will amount to nothingness if teachers are not well trained. Years of teaching of the majority of primary school teachers was found to be above ten years. This means that they are experienced enough to facilitate the implementation of the new curriculum.

The study revealed that qualified teachers were not available in almost all the primary schools in the state to handle the newly introduced subjects (Basic Science and Technology, Computer Studies, Civics and Life Skills). This constitutes one of the major implementation challenges of the new 9-year Basic Education Curriculum. As at the time the data used for this study was collected, the new curriculum was already in use in all the schools (primary and junior secondary schools). Yet, teachers for all these new subjects were not readily

available. In schools where these subjects are being taught, the possibility of having to use the services of unqualified teachers is high. Using the words of Maduwesi (2000), teachers are largely responsible for the translation of educational policies, curriculum or course offerings, instruction material packages and assessment of learning outcomes.

It is observed that many old teachers have gone on retirement without replacement with new ones. In fact, for a period of four years, some states' governments never employed any teacher. With this lackadaisical attitude, there is no way teachers will be adequate in the public schools. If employment of new teachers is not considered by the government, retraining of those on-job might be the alternative that will make realization of the set objectives of the new 9-year basic education a reality. It was found in this study that many teachers were not even aware of the newly introduced subjects. Implicit in this is that, these new subjects are not being taught in some of the primary schools in the state.

Implications for Curriculum Implementation Effectiveness

The findings of this study have meaningful implications for effectiveness of curriculum implementation. The Federal Government seems to have ignored the implementation aspect of the scheme, hence the inability to provide schools with qualified subject teachers for the newly introduced subjects. The newly introduced Federal Teacher Scheme (FTS) may not really serve the purpose because such teachers are not remunerated as expected and this is likely to affect their effectiveness in service. Since a full job demands a full pay, Federal Government should not join private establishments in exploiting the citizens.

A good number of the students for 9-years basic education are in case of private education providers; hence federal legislature should enact a law that makes it mandatory for both private and public education providers to employ specialists in teaching subjects in schools and appropriate government departments. Appropriate policy instruments should also be put in place to ensure adequacy of teachers and other educational resources in schools. Government at both State and Federal levels should rise up to their responsibilities to recruit sufficient teachers who will facilitate the implementation of the new 9-year basic education at urban and rural areas.

Regular in-service training should be provided to update teachers' knowledge especially on the newly introduced subjects. Machinery has to be set in motion for the training of teachers especially those who will be teaching the four newly introduced subjects. It has to be further emphasized that for the laudable objectives of the UBE, being pursued by UBEC and states' SUBEB to be achieved. The training of teachers should involve integrating the use of modern instructional technologies such as the computers, access to the internet, audio-visual equipments and other assorted software used in today's modern and highly sophisticated world.

Conclusion

This study has established that one of the major implementation challenges of the new 9-year Basic Education Curriculum is non-availability of qualified teachers for the newly introduced subjects. Policy makers, public and private education managers should make use of the empirical data made available by this study to better advise the government to have effective curriculum implementation in schools.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Sufficient qualified teachers should be employed by both government and private institutions handling basic education in Nigeria to teach the subjects especially the newly introduced ones.

- It is not sufficient to employ teachers without paying them what they deserve in the labour market. Government and private school owners should remunerate any teacher employed using the new Teacher Salary Scale (TSS) to enhance curriculum implementation effectiveness.
- Adequate and regular in-service training should be organized for the practising teachers for knowledge update in their respective areas of specialization and the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) for global relevance.
- The Federal Government should monitor the provision of personnel as well as instructional materials by the states if the implementation of the 9-year basic education curriculum is to be effective across the nation.
- Inspectorate division of both federal and states should be equipped with adequate and specialized personnel for effective inspection of the curriculum implementation process.

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