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# HISTORY CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS: REMINISCENCES OF THE ROLE OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION

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## Abstract

Monitoring and evaluation is a crucial aspect of any endeavor for success. The history curriculum in the Nigerian secondary school setting has suffered serious neglect in relation to its proper implementation. This neglect in schools manifests in terms of lack of personnel, instructional materials, unfavourable government policy, infrastructure and the issue of funding. These have affected the implementation of the history curriculum negatively. This paper explored the role of monitoring and evaluation in ensuring that the issues of adequate staffing, instructional materials, physical facilities, unfavourable government policy and funding are addressed for the proper implementation of the history curriculum at the secondary school level. The various ways forward such as recruitment of staff with education and history background, and provision of funds to acquire instructional materials and infrastructure for archives were put forward.

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**Key Words:** Curriculum, Evaluation, History, Implementation, Monitoring, Nigeria, Secondary Education,

## Introduction

It is the constitutional responsibility of Governments, school authorities and teachers at all levels, who are the closest to the populace to embark on meaningful efforts at ensuring that the curriculum of every discipline at the secondary school level is fully implemented in order to realise the aims and objectives of teaching such a subject (history). There is no nation that develops without the contribution of history because history serves as the society's mirror to look at its deficiencies and correct them for a better society. In Nigeria however, and until recently, Government removed history from the curriculum of junior secondary schools and also made it optional at the senior level. The idea of monitoring and evaluation in this context is supposed to ensure that the basic requirements for the effective teaching of history at the secondary schools are available but this is not usually carried out by those who are vested with the responsibility of such a pertinent task at ensuring quality and sustainability in history instruction.

This is largely because it is through monitoring and evaluation that all stakeholders in the implementation of the history curriculum would be made to carry out their duty in ensuring that history is effectively taught leading to the achievement of the aims and objectives of teaching the subject. Where these objectives are achieved, it will ultimately translate to the development of the Nigerian state in general.

Curriculum on the other hand according to Ark (2017,p.14) refers to:

the knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, which includes the learning standards or learning objectives they are expected to meet; the units and lessons that teachers teach; the assignments and projects given to students; the books, materials, videos, presentations, and readings used in a course; and the tests, assessments, and other methods used to evaluate student learning. An individual teacher's curriculum, for example, would be the specific learning standards, lessons, assignments, and materials used to organize and teach a particular course.

The term history curriculum itself according to Sanda (2015) connotes a series of structured intended learning experiences for educational institutions to achieve predetermined goals which consist of objectives, subject matter, materials, teaching methods and evaluation procedures. There are four basic goals of secondary school history curriculum which, if implemented faithfully, will benefit the society just like any other curriculum. These include: enhancement of critical thinking and analytical skills;enhancement of writing and communication skills; acquainting students with the basic tools of interpretation; and developing student awareness of the diversity and complexity of human social, cultural, political, and economic institutions. In order to achieve the goals of the history curriculum in secondary schools, indices such as adequate history teachers, funding, and physical facilities like classrooms and instructional materials need to be properly put on ground. However, in the current situation, these facilities are not available in secondary schools largely due to the near absence of monitoring and evaluation so as to report the unavailability to relevant authorities for necessary action.

For the purpose of this paper, issues such as introduction, conceptualizing monitoring and evaluation, relevance of monitoring and evaluation to the successful implementation of the history curriculum, challenges to the monitoring and evaluation of the history curriculum and suggestions would be discussed in trying to address the variables in the topic.

### **Conceptualizing Monitoring and Evaluation**

Although the tendency to misconceive monitoring and evaluation as one and the same remains high, the two are, infact, two distinct sets of organizational activities which are related but not identical. Shapiro (2012) perceives monitoring as the systematic collection and analysis of information as a project progresses. It is aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of a project or organization, and in this respect, the

implementation of the history curriculum being effectively monitored. It is also based on targets set and activities planned during the planning phases by helping management know whether things are going right or wrong.

Monitoring could also be referred to as the regular observation and recording of activities taking place in a project or programme. It is a process of gathering information routinely on all aspects of the on-going project to monitor means to check on how project activities are going on. In other words, it is a purposeful and systematic observation. Monitoring also involves giving feedback about the progress of the project to the donors, implementers and beneficiaries to the project.

If monitoring is properly done, it is an invaluable tool for good administration because it provides a very useful baseline for evaluation. Here, it enables monitors to determine whether the resources in secondary schools are available, sufficient and are being well used, whether the capacity is sufficient and appropriate, and whether secondary schools are doing what they are supposed to do especially in relation to the implementation of the history curriculum.

Evaluation on the other hand is the comparison of actual project impact against the agreed strategic plans. It considers what you set out to achieve, what you have accomplished and how you accomplished it. Evaluation could be formative i.e. taking place during the life of a particular history curriculum with the intention of improving the strategy or way of making it more functional to serve the purpose for which it is originally designed. It could also be formative or summative in nature and scope i.e. drawing learning or conclusions from starting point or completed goals.

Educational evaluation according to Duzan (2001) is an ongoing process involving the gathering and organization of data collected on a teacher's academic activities. Peers, administrators or outside observers conduct the evaluations to gauge a teacher's effectiveness and make recommendations for possible improvements.

However, monitoring and evaluation according to Bartle (2008) have three things in common which include: efficiency, effectiveness and impact. These shall be highlighted thus:

**Efficiency:** It tells you whether the input into the work is appropriate in relation to the output. This could be input in terms of money, time, quality of staff, equipment, etc. When you embark on a project and are concerned about its replicability or scale, then it is very pertinent to get the efficiency element right.

**Effectiveness:** This is a measure of the extent to which developments programme or project achieves the specific objectives it sets to achieve. For example, if we set out to improve the qualifications of all qualified teachers in a particular part of a local government, we ask ourselves whether we have succeeded in doing so or not.

**Impact:** This helps tell you whether or not what you did made a difference to the problem situation you tried to address. In other words, was the strategy useful? Did ensuring that teachers were better qualified improve the pass rate in the final year of school examination? Thus, before you replicate the project elsewhere, you need to be sure that what you are doing makes sense in terms of the impact you want to achieve.



## Relevance of Monitoring and Evaluation to Successful Implementation of History Curriculum

There are a number of factors that have made monitoring and evaluation very pertinent for the successful implementation of the History curriculum. These according to Bartle (2008) include:

- i. **Analyzing the situation of the history curriculum:** Governments and/or administrations exist to serve the immediate and long term needs of the community. Essentially, before any curriculum (history) is conceived, it must have been dubbed a necessity and worthwhile to the benefiting community. This could only be done through monitoring and evaluation. In other words, administrators need to monitor the existing statuesque in the society and evaluate in terms of the extent of needs and the expected outcome or viability of such a project. In this case, formative evaluation comes to the fore, where the history curriculum could be assessed before its commencement or while it is on-going. Analyzing the history curriculum here connotes the emerging issues especially in our contemporary society of security challenges, political thuggery and religious intolerance where history as a subject will teach the students, who are usually used as cannon fodder on issues like this, the need to respect each other's choice of religion, or political party as a right of the individuals.
- ii. **Determining whether the inputs in the history curriculum are well utilized:** To ascertain the level of utilization of inputs made by those directly teaching the subject, monitoring and evaluation comes to the rescue. Inputs here could be in form of finances, expertise, and materials. If it is well carried out and challenges or other issues observed by the monitors and reported to the relevant authorities, it is expected that such issues like shortage of history teachers will be addressed to ensure quality of instruction which will speak for itself or otherwise. In other words, it is only through monitoring and evaluation that quality inputs would be made to the history curriculum.
- iii. **Identifying problems facing the history curriculum and finding solutions:** Monitoring and evaluation offer administrators the opportunity to come to terms with the changes confronting and on-going curriculum implementation such as the history curriculum and whether it is serving the needs of the community it is meant to serve or not. Problems there could be in relation to the need to provide relevant instructional materials for the content update in the teaching of history, and adequate classrooms which enable the history teacher to handle some aspects of the history curriculum properly.
- iv. **Ensuring all activities are carried out properly by the right people in time:** As a result of monitoring and evaluation, other teachers from other subject areas like Government and Social Studies who sometimes teach history due to lack of manpower desist from doing so because the school does not know when monitors will come and in order not to be found wanting, conscious efforts are usually

made by the school authorities to recruit history teachers to teach the subject. In other words, the issue of using teachers from other disciplines to teach history especially in private schools so as to maximize profit is, to a very large extent, kept in check by the activities of monitors who are effective.

Therefore, it is in the interest of ensuring quality instruction in the secondary school system in consonance with the proper implementation of the history curriculum that monitoring and evaluation should be frequently carried in view of the many benefits to the system as discussed above. Shapiro (2008) in support of this also outlined some importance of monitoring and evaluation to include: helping to identify problems and their causes; suggesting possible solutions to problems; raising questions about issues and strategies towards addressing them; providing information and insights to issues; encouraging the school to act on the information and insights.

### **Challenges to Successful Monitoring and Evaluation of the History Curriculum**

As relevant as monitoring and evaluation are to the successful implementation of any curriculum such as a history curriculum, they have their constraints which shall be considered below:

**Finance:** The constraint of finances sometimes limits the frequency of monitoring and evaluation because it requires a lot of financial commitment to send experts round secondary schools to keep an eye and advise on a regular basis and also report back to the relevant authorities for decision making. This is the more reason why monitors scarcely go out for the monitoring and evaluation exercises, as important as they are. This challenge is in relation to the proliferation of private secondary schools due to the inability of Government to make her own functional. Resources are regarded as the most important support structure because curriculum monitoring and evaluation depend largely on resources available in ministries or department of education or zonal education offices. Effective monitoring and evaluation of a curriculum without the relevant financial resources to carry it out would cause stress and strain leading to dire consequences and subjecting the team to a lot of vulnerabilities thereby impacting on their morale to carry out their assignment properly and objectively (Singh, 2012).

**Time Constraint:** Monitoring and evaluation requires considerable time commitment because in a situation where there are numerous programmes going on, it means that the staff involved must also be dedicated to commit time and energy to keep going round and monitoring lectures, comparing the courses being mounted in the schools with the ones approved by the Government so as to enable them to advise appropriately. In some instances, an M & E assignment designed to last for five days is done within two days largely because administrators lack adequate staffing to accommodate the team being away for many days.



**Corruption:** There is the tendency of the monitoring and evaluation team to be bribed by school administrators who have deliberately defaulted from the implementation of the curriculum content as specified by the educational policy like having adequate classrooms and history teachers, availability of instructional materials and sometimes introducing alien contents to the ones approved by the Government. Where this happens, the monitoring and evaluation team is likely to give a false report of everything going on well with the implementation of such a curriculum even where it is not (Danladi, 2018). This is evident in the report of accreditation exercises by some teams sent to tertiary institutions in Nigeria where the report given by the teams might not be a true reflection of the situation on ground.

**Expertise:** This revolves around the fact that the team may not be specifically trained in monitoring and evaluation to a high level to be called real experts in the field of educational monitoring and evaluation. Evaluation requires specific skilled individuals who can really assess the quality of teachers, materials, facilities, etc. available in secondary schools for effective teaching and learning of history in secondary schools. History in secondary schools in Nigeria is a discipline which until 2019 was optional and only taught at the SSS I level and above. This has made the teachers of history to be scarce. It is thus difficult to have qualified staff with history background in the M & E unit of the education ministries, zones and departments to carry out the work effectively. In view of this, sometimes evaluators from other disciplines like Social Studies, Government and Civic education are engaged to monitor and evaluate implementation of history curriculum and because they are not experts in the field of history, they are not likely to discharge the work well due to lack of competence (Dangana, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of history curriculum is an exercise aimed at sustaining quality history instruction by having adequate history teachers, available instructional materials, etc. at the secondary school level in Nigeria. The indices of such monitoring are ensuring qualified history teachers, adequate classrooms, facilities and financing. The monitoring and evaluation units of the ministries of education and area offices are the Government departments saddled with this responsibility. However, as relevant as this exercise is towards quality assurance in secondary education in Nigeria, it is sometimes marred with myriads of challenges as discussed above.

## **Suggestions on the Way Forward**

- i. Deliberate steps or efforts should be made by administrators to finance monitoring and evaluation to ensure the quality of the projects. Sometimes administrators who are ignorant of the vital role of monitoring and evaluation seem to think that the exercise is a mere waste of time and resources which is not usually the case.

- ii. Administrators/Governments need to ensure that their staff are specially trained in monitoring and evaluation. In some cases, what is obtainable is that people with no knowledge and experience are just randomly posted to the monitoring and evaluation units of the Local Government and ministries of education and as a result, are not in any position to offer qualitative service to the administration. Where such inexperienced people are made to do the work, deliberate efforts should be made to train such people either through workshops, seminars or higher education.
- iii. Administrators are advised to try as much as possible to regulate and monitor the kind of staff posted to the monitoring and evaluation unit because of its sensitive nature. People who have been found not to be credible should not be vested with this sensitive task as they could be easily bribed by contractors thereby compromising the whole objective behind the exercise.

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